



# *Forever* YOURS

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
LIBERTY PARKER

FOREVER YOURS

---

RAGE RYDERS TEMPLETON CHAPTER BOOK 2

LIBERTY PARKER

# CONTENTS

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Character Bible](#)

[Blurb](#)

[Prologue](#)

1. [Malibu](#)

2. [Malibu](#)

3. [Kassi](#)

4. [Malibu](#)

5. [Kassi](#)

6. [Kassi](#)

7. [Kassi](#)

8. [Malibu](#)

9. [Kassi](#)

10. [Malibu](#)

11. [Malibu](#)

12. [Kassi](#)

13. [Kassi](#)

14. [Malibu](#)

15. [Malibu](#)

16. [Malibu](#)

17. [Kassi](#)

18. [Malibu](#)

19. [Malibu](#)

20. [Kassi](#)

21. [Kassi](#)

22. [Kassi](#)

23. [Malibu](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Bonus Scene](#)

[Stalk Liberty Here:](#)  
[Other Books by Liberty](#)

*Forever*  
YOURS  
*USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR*  
LIBERTY PARKER

# COPYRIGHT

Forever Yours  
Rage Ryders Templeton Chapter Book 2  
Copyright © Liberty Parker 2020  
Male Model: Roberty Kelly  
Female Model: Kayce Kyle  
Photographer: Dante Dellamore

This e-book is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This e-book may not be resold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each person or use proper retail channels to lend a copy. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please return it and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author. To obtain permission to excerpt portions of the text please contact

[authorlibertyparker@yahoo.com](mailto:authorlibertyparker@yahoo.com)

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. All of the characters in this book are fiction and figments of the authors' imaginations. No part of this story is based on any true events or anyone's life. If any MC names are used by any real, or true person, it is coincidental and in no way based on them or any real-life human being, living or not.

## DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to all of the Rage Ryders fans. As you waited patiently for Kassi and Malibu's book... I thank you.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First off, I want to thank my two PA's. Nicole Lloyd and Sharon Renee. Without the two of you taking care of me, I'd be lost and never keep a schedule.

Darlene Tallman, thank you for having my back and being there to lend an ear and offer up advice as I needed it throughout the writing of this book. This was a hard one, and you listened to me as I emotionally struggled to pull off a few scenes.

Liberty's Luscious ladies... as always, you support me and keep me motivated with your love of the written word.

To anyone else I've missed, I apologize, I could go on all day thanking and acknowledging all of my friends in the indie industry.

# CHARACTER BIBLE

Kid  
Riley  
Ryder  
Skylar  
Malibu  
Kassi  
Tumbler  
Sadie  
Travler  
Kaci  
Jackson

Introduced in Faithfully Devoted  
(Supporting Characters)

Tyler \*Dust\*  
Riptide  
Julius  
Andre

## BLURB

What happens when a part of you is destroyed? What happens when you're betrayed by your remaining partner? Who do you trust? Who do you turn to?

Malibu has more questions than answers after Fern's death. Questions that he's sure Kassi has the answers to, only she's not talking. He can't go to his brothers because she's 'club' and also 'blood' while he's merely a brother.

Kassi feels the divide between them but has no idea how to bridge the gap. She knows he thinks she has answers, only she doesn't.

Or does she? Strap on your helmet and hold on tight, the latest installment in the Rage Ryders is about to get bumpy.

## PROLOGUE



Malibu

TRUST.

The one thing that should automatically be a given when you're in a committed relationship like I am.

Control.

The one thing that I no longer feel like when it comes to my life in general.

Loss.

The one thing I feel deeply. Fern was the love of my life and I miss her with every breath I take.

Freedom.

The one thing that was stolen from me young in life.

Love.

The one thing that I should feel every time Kassi is in my arms.

Betrayal.

The one thing that has embedded itself into my soul.

Fuck All's.

The one thing I don't have nor do I have two shits to give.

Kassi

Wishful thinking.

What I have when it comes to Malibu still loving me.

Reality.

What I have that slaps me in the face every single fucking time he comes through the front door.

Faith.

What I have lost when it comes to matters of the heart.

Forever.

What I have in the memories I shared with Fern. The one person who knew me and understood me better than even my twin.

Understanding.

What I have lost when Malibu turned his back on me and stabbed me in the heart.

Life.

What I have lost the will to do.

All of my give a damn's are busted.

What I have in my heart on a daily basis. I no longer care how anyone feels about me or for me. Malibu has ruined me for any other person...dead or alive. I feel nothing but numbness; and it's all his fucking fault.

## MALIBU



MY LIFE HAS FOREVER CHANGED THREE TIMES DURING MY SHORT lifespan. Once was the day I met Fern; then when she introduced me to Kassi, making that the second time. The third, was the tragedy that still rocks me to my core and wreaks havoc in my life on a daily basis—the loss of the love of my life. My Fern. Forever gone, and I still don't have all the answers as to why. Kassi has had some form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from that night and she claims to have no true memory of the tragic events that unfolded.

I've seen the anguish clearly written on her face; she had nightmares at first. They've dimmed as much as they can for someone who went through something so horrific that her mind hides it from her. But the phone call I recently received has me now unsure if I believe her tale of not remembering. I love her, but I don't trust her... not any-

more. And that is something I'm unsure I can live with. It's something I *don't* want to live with. I want trust; to have complete honesty, unwavering love and most importantly; I want longevity—a love story books will be written about.

That doesn't seem to be something that's written in the cards for us. I thought maybe it was after Fern passed, but now; I feel like she's holding something back, something important, something life-altering. The call I received was the tip of the iceberg as far as I'm concerned. I've been receiving notes and letters for months now, more than a handful, claiming that Kassi has intimate knowledge of what led to Fern's death. Every single motherfucking time I think about the possibility, the feeling of hot lava running through my veins ignites a fire deep inside of my gut. Acid settles into the pits of my belly, causing a wave of anger and despair to cause my mind to spin. I hate not knowing if the woman I've promised my life to is a liar or a victim. Now, I'm the one having nightmares, waking up in cold sweats, thinking that she could've not only betrayed Fern, but me as well.

I want to call her out, force her to answer for her supposed sins. I want to banish her from my life... but at this point and time, I can't. Not until I have solid proof that she's a manipulative, lying bitch. She's club, a princess, born and bred. I'm nothing more than an interloper in her world. I wasn't born into the Rage Ryder family, but they're buried deep in my soul. I'm a brother, and the brotherhood surrounding this MC is the utmost important thing in my life. Therefore, I can't take the chance of stepping out of line without undeniable, unquestionable proof of her perceived betrayal. That's the one thing that's intolerable' no one is allowed to break that, not even the Ol' ladies. You cannot betray the club, nor a brother, and expect to stay in good standing within the club. The fact that she's Ryder's sister makes this even harder for me. Because he'll want a trial within the compound walls to prove her unworthiness. Trial by peers, which means there can be no holes in my proof. Ryder and Kaci won't let her go easily; Ryder's been working hard, making up for not being a big part of their lives growing up, he's taking the big brother role to extremes. There've been times that his protectiveness is so severe that the girls... all of the Ol' ladies, have banded together in a stance against him.

*I do not envy him.*

*Not in the least.*

But then, I've never had the bond of being someone's blood brother. I have no siblings, which is why I feel so humbled by the relationships I've gained and have with my club brothers.

"Malibu! What the fuck is going on between you and my sister?" Ryder strolls up to me as I'm sitting on the stool in front of the bar enjoying a cold brew and a Cuban cigar.

"Didn't realize my fucking love life was any of your concern." My voice comes out husky and annoyed. I'm sick and tired of her family thinking they have the right to voice an opinion when it comes to us. I keep my damn nose out of his and Skylar's shit, and I've never once jumped into Travler and Kaci's disagreements. It's fucking bullshit that they think they can call me out on mine. I'm pissed already, and he's only adding fuel to my already blazing fire.

"Anything that involves *my* sisters is my concern, fucktard. What the hell is going on with you? You've been distant, and quite frankly, I'm personally getting a little sick and tired of the attitude you're sportin' these days. You need to let someone in and help you, man. You're drowning and sinkin' us all down into the depths of hell with you." He places a hand on my shoulder and I shrug it off. He's fixing to end up with a fist in his face if he doesn't get out of my personal space. VP or not, my tolerance will only stretch so far before I lose my cool demeanor and snap.

*This is nobody's fucking business!*

"Ryder, what happens between Kassi and me is no one's business but our own. I need you to stay the fuck out of this. We'll either resolve it or we won't; either way, it's our burden, our problem," I sternly answer back through gritted teeth.

"This is what you aren't getting. You made certain promises to her, and to me, when you brought her into yours and Fern's relationship. So far, all I've seen is you being a dick to my sister and I don't appreciate the treatment, *brother*." He sneers and I see that his buttons have been pushed and have far exceeded what he usually allows

then to be. "I'm fixing to fuck you up, if you keep up with the way you're speaking to me. I'm your motherfucking vice president!" He jabs his finger into his chest while speaking. But then, I see that finger coming in my direction and I see motherfucking red. I don't like to be touched when I haven't given someone the green light to do so.

I stand abruptly at the impending threat. The way I'm feeling today, a good fistfight may be in order to calm the raging beast residing inside of me. My stool falls to the ground and I swear I feel the floor pulsate at my feet. I step over it and invade Ryder's personal space. I want him to feel what he's made me feel these last few minutes. "VP or not, I don't appreciate being threatened," I grit out through my clenched jaw. I'm so angry and full of fervor, that it won't take but a few more unpleasant comments and meddling in my relationship, before I physically even the score.

"What the fuck is going on in here?" Kid, the newly appointed president of the Rage Ryders, Templeton chapter, treads heavily down the hallway, making his presence known. "Whatever the fuck it is, needs to stop right goddamned now!" He stops and stares the two of us down, but I know if it came down to backing me or his VP, Ryder would win—no doubts about it. They grew up together in the clubhouse; they were club kids who were raised more like brothers than friends. They are a team to be reckoned with, a powerhouse that most men would cower from if they came upon them. But somewhere inside, I must have a death wish, because I don't stop my verbal attack on my friend. My brother—my, for all intent and purposes, brother-in-law.

Kassi

Pulling up to the clubhouse, we—Kaci and I, can feel tension straight away upon entering the gated parking lot. I don't have to see who's inside the circle of men to know that Malibu has gotten himself in some sort of trouble... again. I can feel it deep down to the marrow

of my bones. We see Skylar standing on top of a tabletop, screaming and pointing in the middle, like a woman possessed. "Ryder must be involved," Kaci says to me as she hurries to get out of the car.

"And Malibu," I drone. Closing my eyes, I say a silent prayer, as I let out a deep-seated sigh, then grab the handle to release the door. The creaking of the hinges is deafening as I make my way out. The sound is supersonic to my sensitive ears, causing yet another flinch to make its way through my body. I take a deep breath, scared to find out what the hell is happening between my brother and my Ol' man. Those two are like oil and vinegar, always finding a reason to verbally brawl like siblings. I think they annoy each other purposefully, just so they can take their frustrations from life out on the other.

"Why do you say that?" she asks as she rounds the side of the car at a fast pace, meeting me halfway in the front of the car. My perceptions are on high alert. I can figuratively hear the engine trying to cool itself and the heat that permeates from it scathes my skin. The hair on the back of my neck is standing on end as I overhear the commencement of a physical altercation. Chills course their way down my vertebrae, I don't particularly care for Malibu himself at this point in time; but I know what both he and my brother are capable of when they're fighting. Personally, I'm not in the mood to kiss anyone's boo-boos.

"Because Malibu has been... unstable, I guess is the correct word. He snaps at every single thing and any fucking one. No one does anything right; and I swear he's been looking for someone to fight. He doesn't get a physical one from me, but we have a verbal square off on a daily basis. I don't know how much longer I'm gonna be able to stand beside him, be in the same house or room as him and not chop off his damn balls." I look away from Kaci, not wanting her to grasp that my words are truer than she's potentially giving them credit as being.

"Do you need me to supply the machete?" my sister asks me. I'd normally laugh at such a comment as this, but I'm so fucking tired of living this life; absolutely nothing makes me smile anymore. Not even the humor or bond that I have with my twin.

"No, a machete is too quick for him. I need a chainsaw." I go for a normal 'Kassi' response. I know I shouldn't cover up my feelings from my sister; but I'm fearful of what she'd do, and she has my nephew, Cash, to raise. Plus, I don't care what anyone says about orange being the new black, the color is just god-awful with her complexion. And if anything, I reserve the right to protect my twin's unfashionable senses.

"When you're feeling more like yourself, you will tell me what's going on." Kaci gives me a sideways frown. "Don't think for a second you have me duped. This is more than about Malibu. Don't forget, I know you better than anyone ever will." Fucking twin extra sensory perception bullshit. Sometimes it's as if we share a brain which is a scary thought, because I don't really wanna know everything she's thinking. She's a ballbuster, someone that doesn't take shit and says exactly what is running through her head. She literally gives no shits if she hurts anyone's feelings; especially if you ask for her opinion. Be ready, because she's not going to hold anything back. I once made the mistake of asking how some jeans looked on me and she told me I looked five months pregnant. It may be perceived as rude to some, but that's just how she is.

And I love her no matter what.

"I'm not trying to hide anything from you, Kaci." I rejoin the conversation, picking up from her previous observation, saying, "If I need you, I promise I'll let you know." We finally make our way to the circle and I step up on the bench seat, then climb on top of the table where I join Skylar. "What the fuck!" I holler out as my hands come up to cover my eyes from the blazing, blinding rays of sunshine. Ryder and Malibu are both painted in blood, a crimson red shade of color that has me clutching my stomach muscles from the sickening display. Malibu's nose looks twice its size, and Ryder has a blood-shot eye; you can clearly tell that my man gave my brother one of his infamous uppercut punches. "How long have they been going at it?" I grill Sky.

"Long enough for them to fuck each other up. Both of them are having trouble staying on their own two damn feet. I'm gonna fucking massacre Ryder!" She rumbles out, cups her hands around her

mouth, and once again, begins yelling and screaming cuss words that would cause a sailor to blush. She's very inventive with her threats. My brother's balls in a vise are one of the things said that captures my attention... for a moment.

Kaci joins me and I hear her hiss as she takes in the scene before us. "You know that's gotta hurt," she snickers. I look over at her in shock.

"That's our brother and my man in the center." My words come out with distress and alarm. "I'm not impressed by this show of machoism."

"Ah." She waves her hand in the air at me. "They're men, gotta let them blow off some steam somehow," she states as she tries to defend their behavior.

"Come tomorrow, you may not have a living, breathing brother. Just saying." Sky shrugs her shoulders as she continues to watch Ryder go berserk on Malibu. "How do you think he's still standing?" Sky looks over at me, and this time I'm the one shrugging my shoulders in reaction.

"I have no clue where the stamina, or the ability to not fall flat on his face is coming from. Ryder has fucked him up pretty damn good." My brows furrow, because I'm not sure if I should be upset by this, or jumping up and down in amusement. He's been treating me like a second-class citizen for too many weeks to count. I'm not sure that I should or shouldn't care if he makes it out of this unscathed or not.

"Ryder! That's enough!" Kid hollers out as he runs his hands through his hair. It's standing up on end and looks more like he's been trying to rip it out by the roots.

"Kid, they're like two men on steroids. Neither one of them is backing down... make them stop!" Sky cries out to her brother, then sticks out her bottom lip. It's a tactic she's used since she was little to get her older brother to succumb to her wants.

"Stand down. That's a motherfuckin' order!" Kid's face is now red and the expression he's wearing on his face lets everyone around him know he's not playing around. He looks like the role of Presi-

dent that he's recently become, his father would be so proud of him and all he's accomplished. Finally, having had enough of the two assholes not listening to a word he's been saying, he steps into the middle of the circle containing the stupid asses, and marches up to where the two of them are throwing punches. He reaches down and grabs Malibu by the back of his collar, dragging him out of the circle as Travler and Tumbler go in, grab Ryder and hold Ryder back. "Officers in my office. Now!"

"Skylar?" Travler calls out to her, "come tend to your man."

"That's my cue to go babysit. Talk to you ladies later." Sky hops off the table and marches over to her man with a permanent scowl etched on her face.

"Let the good times roll," Kaci, forever the smartass says as she grabs my hand, giving it a small, but comforting squeeze. "It'll all work out." I snort in response, because at this point, I could care less. My stress level would lessen if I let this relationship go and move on.

"Yep." My one-word response causes her to lift her eyebrow in question, to which I only shrug my shoulders... nothing else to say. I don't want to get into this conversation with her. I just want it all to go away. Fern was our glue; now that she's gone, things are unraveling. I haven't felt loved or wanted since the day Malibu received a phone call that seemed to change everything between us. I just wish I knew what was said so I could try to fix things.

Even if we separate, I would like to leave the relationship with clarification and resolve. I don't want to disappoint Fern; even though she's gone, she will forever live in my heart and soul each and every day. I just know she's looking down on us and shaking her head in disapproval.

## MALIBU



“SIT!” KID SNARLS OUT AS WE ALL MAKE OUR WAY INTO THE OFFICE. I have a Kleenex placed on my bleeding nose. I give Ryder a *‘fuck off’* look as I take my seat. Skylar threw some stuff at him and stormed away as we were heading into the meeting. He gives me a *‘you’re fucking dead’* look in return. He has a bag of frozen veggies on his eye, one I’m assuming was what Skylar tossed his way before leaving him. It takes every ounce of restraint in me to keep from jumping over this table and finishing what we started. A low rumble oscillates from my chest as I think about the fact that my brother came at me with fists flying the way he did. Brothers are supposed to have each other’s backs at all times; women come second to the club. “A bunch of fucking children! That’s what the fuck I’m dealin’ with on a daily basis around here. All the while, I’m tryin’ to grow a club and

get us off the fuckin' ground. What the hell is wrong with you two?" Kid bellows out his question.

"Everything would be copasetic if Ryder didn't think he has a voice or opinion in my relationship with Kassi," I inform him with venom laced in my voice.

"Fuck off, motherfucker. That's my goddamned sister you're treating like trash! I forewarned you, asshole, what would happen to you if you ever treated her the way you are!" The poisonous tone he uses causes my head to snap up in his direction. He's beyond pissed, he's fucking livid. I can't begin to fathom what the fuck his actual problem is!

"Sister or not, she's *my* woman. I will treat her, and deal with situations with her, how I see fit, Ryder. You should mind your own damn business, fuckface!" I shout.

"Is that right?" Kid asks, but it comes out more of an allegation than a question needing to be answered. "Because the way I see it, is that she's club. She's a sister, a founding member's daughter, and she's to be regarded as such at all times." His scoff causes bumps to form on my arms.

"Respect is earned, it has to be kept. It's not given freely," I answer. Not in such a respectful manner either. I know I've hit a nerve when I see all of the men sitting around this table's shoulders stiffen as a look of anger is plastered on all of their faces.

"Come again?" Travler questions. His eyebrows have risen high enough that they are virtually connected with his hairline. I know he's close to Kassi; she is his Ol' lady's sister and the aunt to his son. But again, this is my motherfucking relationship. It's no one else's business.

"Everyone needs to mind their own! I don't put my foot in any of your relationships. When you fuck up, or y'all are fightin', I let you work it all out without any input from me. Where do you all get off getting in the middle of mine and Kassi's?" I'm wound up and can't keep my mouth shut any longer.

"Kassi *is* my business!" Ryder yells out as he stands up from his chair. As he rose up, it was so dynamic that his chair went flying back and crashed on the floor.

"Not when it comes to her and me!" I shove myself up and place my hands on the table, leaning over it. I get as far into his face as I can with this slab of wood between us. "She's mine, my responsibility and mine to talk to and treat as I see fit! I've had enough of you all interfering where it's none of your damn business!" I seethe. I can feel the veins bulge in my neck as my rage spikes higher.

"We pride ourselves on family, Malibu. Sniper was a founding member..." I don't let him finish what he was fixing to say before I blow up.

"He abandoned the club!" I jab my finger at him, continuing, "he left his brothers, his kids, all of us! As far as I'm concerned, he's no longer a brother *I* have to show respect for." When I say the word *I*, my finger goes from them and points to my chest.

"But I am," Ryder replies. "I am a member, I'm your officer, and as such, I deserve your respect. My family, my sisters, we all deserve it. My father may be a coward, Malibu, but that's not on me nor is it on my sisters. Our guilt is free where he's concerned. Fuck you very much for throwing that shit in my face! Is that what has you up in arms when it comes to Kassi? Is that why you've withdrawn and treat my family as if we're the shit out of a cow's ass?" The anger that was present on his face now holds a look of hurt and disbelief. "Fuck you, Malibu. I'm outta here, Kid." Kid, Travler and Tumbler all call out his name as he struts away and slams the door closed behind him.

"You just fucked up, brother," Tumbler sighs. "I don't know what's wrong with you, but I know it's not Sniper turning his back on us all. That was a bullshit thing to bring up, it's been years, we've all moved forward. Sniper was weak, but Ryder and the girls aren't." He looks me right in the eyes before shaking his head at me. "You need to get your priorities straight and remember who you are, who we are."

"I think Kassi should come stay with Kaci and me for a bit. At least until you get things sorted and know what you want," Travler informs me.

I shake my head no. I can't get pertinent information from her if she's living somewhere else. I need to get this figured out, and soon. "She stays where she is. She's mine, and we'll fix things. Can't do that if she's living elsewhere." Without waiting on permission to leave, I get up and walk out of the room. I can't share with them what all's wrong with me, because without a mountain of proof, I'll be the one hanging in the wind without my brothers and family. That's not something I'm willing to risk.

## Kassi

I end up sneaking away and leaving the clubhouse, walking down to the local park. It's a beautiful day outside and the fresh air will do me some good. What was it about that *one* phone call that changed everything? We were just moving forward in our grieving process without our girl. We were learning to deal with a duo conjunction instead of a trio relation. I first fell in love with Fern, gave her my heart, my body, my trust and she loved me back just as fiercely. Many of my friends and family didn't understand the dynamics of our relationship, they all wholeheartedly believe we shared Malibu, and we did; but he shared us with each other too.

Fern understood me like no one else in my life ever has. Not even my twin sister, Kaci, gets me the way that she did. I've always been a free spirit, artistic, dressed a little wild, did my hair with multiple colors streaming through the locks. Some were bold when I was a teenager, now as I've grown, I enjoy the blondes and black mixed colors. Kaci always goes with one solid color, it's our way of making sure we can be told apart. Looking exactly like someone else does leaves no room for individuality. When I look in the mirror, I always see Kaci looking back at me; not that it's a hardship, we're both pret-

ty hot after all, but sometimes I want to see my individual reflection gazing back at me. So, I started dressing differently; wild, more provocatively, that's when others started seeing a difference between the two of us when they looked at us, but me, I still see her. Especially since losing Fern. I've lost my identity, and I need to find it again. I miss who I was. I long for her to find her way back to me.

I finally felt like an independent individual, not Kaci's twin—but Kassi, the beautiful, intoxicating woman she couldn't keep her hands off of. *Why? Why did you have to leave me?* I wish it'd been me, that way everyone would still be happy. I'm not feeling sorry for myself; I'm feeling sorry for all of those she's left behind. I have two people who would miss and mourn my loss on this earth. Fern, she had an entire family, a brother, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and a shit load of cousins. Ryder has Sky, and Kaci has Travler, they'd both be able to be happy and move on with their lives.

Not liking the dark, unchangeable path my thoughts are leading me down, I decide to begin thinking about the next project I want to start. No one knows, but I've been writing a memoir, I'm using it as a way to express my grief. It's begun helping me deal with the struggles I've been facing when it comes to Malibu, my parents' abandonment, and my memory loss from the night from hell—which is what I refer to from the night the light dimmed in my life. When I reach the swings, I sit down and shove my feet forward to get some leverage, so I can swing my legs forward and backward to gain some air flow beneath me. Once I have gained the wind underneath me, I close my eyes and let the breeze take me away. I feel the sunshine on my face as the wind goes through my hair. Letting all of my worries go, I enjoy the freedom swinging is giving me. It's not as good as a bike ride through the city roads, but I can almost imagine that's what I'm doing right now.

Used to, when I was having a restless fit, Malibu would take me on a long ride, help me let the worries and stress of the day go—where I would feel absolutely nothing. He no longer offers, and I'm nowhere close to the mindset to ask him for a ride. Wishing, not for the first time, that I knew how to ride and that I owned my own Harley, crosses my mind. Then, I could get my own brand of mindless freedom while feeling the wind in my hair from the open road. As I'm

thinking this, I hear the engine of a bike roaring down the road, the gears are shifting quickly and I know it's someone who's in a hurry to get away. I open my eyes and look over to my right and realize I know that bike... intimately. I'd know it anywhere; I've had my thighs wrapped around it.

Malibu.

He's flying down the road at an astronomical rate of speed, not even wearing his helmet. The fool. I fear he's going to crash and get severely hurt. Slowing the swing down by dragging my feet, I grab my phone from my pocket and send a text to Traylor. I begin furiously texting, letting him know what I just witnessed. I watch the screen, can see that he opened the message, but no reply comes. I sigh, knowing that something must've gone wrong in the meeting Kid called, but discern there's nothing I can do to retie the binds that have unraveled over time. That's up to them to fix.

All I can do is hope and pray that my family comes out of this hard time intact. Myself included. Malibu and I may not correct the issues between us, but my prayer is that we can all remain friends and family. No matter what happens in life, family should always come first and foremost in our lives. A pipe dream I'm sure. I doubt there's any way after the suffering we've endured that we'll come out being friendly to one another.

Getting involved with a brother was a mistake I wish I'd never made. I stand to lose everything, while he will come out shitting rainbows and still be included in all things club related. I'll be on the outside looking in when we go our own way... and I'm feeling like that's the way things are going to play out in the end. Me on my own, and Malibu living the lime life.

Story of my life!

## KASSI



I WAKE TO THE SOUNDS OF CRASHING AND HIM CURSING. I JERK UP IN BED and pay attention, tuning into my sense of hearing. Sweat is beading on my head and my chest is heaving with panic. I've been in this scenario before, only last time I wasn't by myself, Fern was asleep in the bed beside me. A memory tries to come back, but just as quickly vanishes, leaving me with a splitting, blinding headache.

"Stupid motherfucking chair. Everything is always in the damned way." Malibu's speech is slurred and I know he's spent the day and night drinking his sorrows away. I moved myself into the guest bedroom today, not wanting to share the same bed and not have his arms wrapped around me before and after he succumbs to the darkness. It seems that while also in sleep, he needs to be separate from me, keeping the distance that is offered to me through the daylight

hours. I lay back in bed and listen as he hits the wall several times as he walks down the hallway to our... I mean, his bedroom. The door swings open and I can hear it bash into the bedroom wall. "Oops, where'd that wall come from?" he snickers. I can't help but roll my damn eyes at his lack of quietness. "Kassi! The fuck are you at?" he bellows, and I now know he's made it to the bed and noticed it's empty.

Recognizing the signs, knowing that he's fixing to go ballistic, I crawl out of the bed and adjust my nightgown. I normally sleep in the nude, he has always insisted on it, but I need a barrier from him. And if wearing something to sleep in helps give that to me, then I'm gonna use every weapon in my arsenal I have and can use to protect myself. Walking out into the hallway, I quietly creep down to the bedroom. I'm not sure why I'm slowly walking that way, but I'm in no hurry to make it to him.

"Kassi!" he yells out again, stumbling down the hallway. I close my eyes not knowing how lightly I'll be walking on eggshells this time. He eventually bumps into me, causing me to lose my balance and fall backward, hitting my head on the edge of the wall on my way down. Black spots dance in front of my eyes and my chest is tight, I'm having a hard time catching my breath. "Dammit, Kassi. The fuck are you doing sneaking around in the dark?" He doesn't sound concerned, more annoyed that he ran into me.

"I was just coming to tell you I was in the other room." I place my hand on the back of my head, thankful that I don't feel any blood and am grateful that I am beginning to breathe normally again. I'm still in pain, but the panic has subsided.

"Why the fuck are you not in our bed?" he asks, once again slurring his words.

"Do you really even care, Malibu?" I'm not sure how it is I want him to answer. A part of me wants him to beg for forgiveness and hold me in his arms, letting me know that our love is no longer one-sided... that he still wants me to be his. The other part of me wants him to finally cut me loose so that I can move on... Lord knows I don't have the strength right now to let go of him. I need him to be the strong one and make me leave.

"If that's where you wanna sleep, then go for it." He stands up and walks away. Not once does he ask me if I'm okay, if I need anything.

"Thanks a lot for the help up, asshole," I murmur sarcastically underneath my breath. "Yeah, I'm fine, no need to bother making sure I don't need any medical attention or intervention." Annoyed, I get to my hands and knees then use my hands to climb up the wall as I stand on my wobbly legs. I sway just a little before regaining my bearings. Walking into the guest room, now mine, I lightly close the door then lean against it. The tension between us isn't getting any better, if anything, it's worse each day.

Deciding I have to do something about my current predicament, figure out what my next move is going to be, I climb into bed. Tomorrow. I'll figure everything out tomorrow. Tonight, I'm gonna try to get some sleep. It's the only time I don't worry about all of the wrongs in my life. It's also the only place I see, feel and am loved by Fern again.

## Malibu

I wake up sprawled out on the king-sized bed. All of my clothes are still on my body, including my damn boots, and I have a brain splitting headache. Attempting to open my eyes, I realize that's a mistake as soon as the sun, streaming through the window above my bed, hits my sensitive eyes. "Fucking hell," I groan as I roll on my side feeling my world turn on its axis. My stomach rolls which gets me moving as I head into the bathroom. After worshipping the toilet bowl for twenty minutes, I then hop into the shower and wash the stink and stench of the night before's drinking and smoke smell away. Enjoying the heated water sliding over my head and down my back, my thoughts drift to the notes, letters and phone calls I've been receiving. I wish I could talk to one of my brothers about it, have them give me advice and help me figure things out. But I can't go to

them, and I can't go to Kassi. I feel alone, angry, vindictive, hurt and I hate living with this red haze coating my vision.

The need to kill and dole out justice rules my thoughts. I want to make every one of the fuckers pay who took one of my women away from me forever. The other woman in my life has no memory of the night they were attacked; they've managed to put it into my head that Kassi isn't loyal and has betrayed me in the worst kind of way. I've been living with a bad feeling about the entire situation since the night it went down. Things are much worse since Kassi has no recollection, making me wonder if the whole thing is a performance on her part or if her memory loss is actually authentic. If I'd been the one who betrayed those around me, I'd act as if I didn't remember a damn thing either.

My contemplations are beginning to feel like a broken record, forever playing on a repeated loop in my head. Living like this is weighing down on me and it's causing me to lose the respect of everyone around me. Something has gotta give; I'm going to have to do something drastic.

And if what I'm planning backfires on me, I'll lose everything I've worked so hard for.

Possibly, my life.



It takes a full day of lying in bed, drinking clear liquids and sleeping to get past this doozy of a hangover. I've not heard a peep from Kassi, not that it worries me too much. She's either hiding out in her room, or she snuck away before I had the chance to wake up. Then, most likely ended up coming home after I passed out. Either one is a possibility; either way, I want to have a plan in place before I seek her out.

The lies are done, I'm ready to get to the bottom of this shit... now! One way or another, the secrets surrounding that night need to be unfolded.

## Kassi

I know it's cowardly of me, but yesterday, I was as quiet as a mouse when I left the house. I haven't returned yet, instead I decided to get a motel room and have a night free of all the emotions and drama I deal with when I'm at home. I had the unusual chance to peacefully soak in a bubble bath, enjoyed watching some mindless television shows, snacked all day on junk food and slept undisturbed. For the first time in weeks, I slept like the dead, I wasn't up and down all night feeling sorrow and crying for all that I've lost. The bags under my eyes had bags; today they don't look as swollen and dark. I needed that uninterrupted time to myself.

Dawning recognition takes root; I need to go home and face the music. I put on the clothes I wore yesterday and unhappily leave the motel. Today, I have to think and figure my life out. What's sad is that even though Malibu hasn't held me lately, loved on me, showed me any form of comfort or even been nice to me, I miss being near him. This tells me that my love for him hasn't diminished as much as I'd thought it had. I've allowed my anger and hurt to overrule my head and heart. I don't want to lose him; I've decided instead to fight for him... for us. I'll do whatever it takes to make him love me again.

I don't want to lose everything.

I've worked too damn hard to throw it all away.

It's time to hold my head up high and fight for what's mine.

Getting into my car, I decide to head to his favorite coffee shop and get him the java and breakfast that usually makes him happy and has always put a smile on his face. I'd love to see his dimples again; they brighten up his eyes and light up my world. Don't get me started on his laugh, no matter what sort of mood you are in, you can't help but join him in said laughter, it's contagious.

I know I can do this. I can bring him back from whatever darkness inside of him is trying to swallow him up. I won't allow his demons

to win this war, I will be the victor. He will be mine again. With or without Fern, we're meant to be.



I walk into our house, after grabbing his cup of joe, his blueberry muffin and cherry filled pastry, to find him sitting in the recliner, staring at the blank television set. "Malibu," I call out; his head swiftly turns in my direction, yet he says not one word to me. "Um," I clear my throat, "I got you your favorite coffee and treats." I quickly walk over and set them down on the table sitting next to his chair. His eyes travel from my eyes, to the table, then back to my eyes. He nods his head and grabs his cup. I nearly sigh in relief when he doesn't bite my head off with his nasty words.

"Thanks," he eventually says after his first sip has been swallowed.

"You're welcome," I respond with a wobbly, unsure smile on my face. My eyes begin to water but I hold them at bay. I won't make him feel guilty or have him feel like he needs to run away from me before we get a chance to talk. "Do you need a napkin or anything?"

"Nope. I'm all good." He doesn't look at me as he speaks to me, but at least he's not ignoring me. It's progress from how it's been lately.

"I know things have been tense between us, but I'd really like to work on fixing it," I blurt out, hoping that his top won't pop.

He nods his head before saying, "I've been thinkin' about that all mornin'. You're right, we need to figure it out. We need some time away from all of the prying eyes and obstruction from our family. Our relationship is just that, Kassi... ours. I'm tired of your brother and sister always interferin'; we'll never conquer this if they keep it up."

Hope blossoms in my chest at his words. "What are you thinking?" I ask, ready to run away this very second if that's what he requests of me.

"Let's take a road trip, get the fuck out of here, there's too many people surroundin' us. We need to be able to talk uninterrupted in a

neutral settin', spend some time together—alone. Reconnect, you know?" He looks up at me with hope swimming in his eyes.

"I know. When do you want to leave?" I question him, ready to jump when he says the word.

"Now, tonight, in the mornin'. Whenever you're ready." I close my eyes and thank whoever it is above for answering my prayers.

"Can you give me an hour? I need to let everyone know we're leaving and make sure Kaci can come and water the plants and bring in our mail while we're away. Any clue as to how long we'll be gone for?"

"As long as it takes, baby. I don't care if it's a day, week or month. We'll take however long we need to get back to us." I brightly smile at him and skip over to him, kiss him on his cheek and head to my room to pack and call Kaci.

Things might just work out after all.

## MALIBU



I RECOILED WHEN KASSI'S LIPS TOUCHED MY SKIN. I WAS REPULSED, BUT grateful she didn't witness or notice it. If she did, she just ignored it. That's when the phone call I'd made earlier, while she was away, seems justified. My gut is screaming no, but my head is hollering yes. I need to figure out which side of the coin I should believe in. Heads or tails, whichever, I just need to make a final decision and stick with it.

When I called Kid earlier to let him know that we were hitting the road for a non-disclosed amount of time, he was ecstatic, thinking this little road trip would help 'cure' the things wrong in mine and Kassi's relationship. If he ever finds out what my true intentions are, he'll string me up by my balls and let my body rot for the vultures to find. This trip is going to go one of two ways; I'll either find out

what I need to and have evidence to take to the club of her betrayals, or I'll have just signed my death warrant. Either way, I'm gonna have the answers I seek by the time we make it back. Death may be worth it if I finally find out the truth.

As we pulled out of the driveway on my bike, she wrapped her arms around me and laid her head between my shoulder blades. For a minute, I forgot that I was pissed at her, it made me want to place my hand on her knee and squeeze it the way I usually do... then reality reared its ugly head and I remembered the mission I'm on and kept my hands firmly planted on my handlebars. I promised Fern I'd always love and protect Kassi, and I do even though she's hiding things from me, but Fern deserves justice for her death—I plan on being her avenging angel.

"How much longer?" Kassi asks me through our Bluetooth helmets. I used to love and enjoy that I had synced headsets, but now, I wish I'd grabbed the other ones. It's habit I suppose, but I need to have my head cleared out by the time we arrive at our destination, and hearing her voice isn't helping me accomplish that.

"Two hours. You need somethin'?" I ask.

"Bathroom, but I can wait until you need to stop for fuel," she answers.

"We have two more miles until we hit the next truck stop. I'll pull over for you and go ahead and top off," I respond.

"Thank you, Malibu."

"You got it," I reply through gritted teeth. I need to settle myself down, or I'll end up giving myself and my plans away before I'm ready for it all to be revealed. I can't let her bolt, and unfortunately I can't hog tie her to the bike with so many witnesses around.



As soon as Kassi comes out of the restroom, she begins the whole annoying twenty-question thing, making me wanna gag her ass. "Where exactly are we headed to, Malibu?"

"I found us a secluded cabin where we'll have a chance to reconnect. No interruptions, just us walkin' through the woods and talkin'. There's no internet and there most likely won't be any cell phone reception. If you need to make a call, make sure you do it now," I inform her.

She raises her eyebrows up at me in question. "Why so secluded, Malibu? How will we know if there's an emergency we need to be home for? Something could happen to our family and we'd never know."

"Nothin's gonna happen, Kassi. I've cleared it with Kid and he knows that we'll be where reception is spotty at best. I told him I'd head up town to call him and check in every couple of days. I promise you, if anything happens, we'll know soon and head back home."

"Okay, Malibu. I trust you," she says as we mount the bike. If I didn't have a wall up shielding my heart, I'd feel like a real asshole as she says these words. As it stands, I don't feel any damn thing. My body, mind and soul are numb. I get up in the mornings, bathe, shit, eat and sleep, then get up and do the same exact thing the next day. I'm not living anymore, I'm a zombie treading my way through life.

Exactly two hours later, I turn down the dirt road that will lead us to our hideaway. It's a long driveway that is five miles deep. No way for her to manage to get to the road without me noticing she's gone. I have no plans on harming her physically, but I've hired someone to help me get her to talk. He has a good reputation of pulling information out of someone who's determined to hold onto their secrets. If she really does have memory loss as claimed, he has experience in bringing out the things a person's mind has locked away.

The man I've hired's name is Creed Johannsen. He is the military's go to person when they need someone to open up and talk. He's been trained in mind fucks, he's hireable to the outside world... this man feels nothing. He is cold as ice, calculating and lacks any sort of socialization skills. He was referred to me by one of my old friends who happened to serve with him. I didn't tell Henry, my childhood friend and confidant, who I'd be using the services for, just that I needed someone with his abilities. He assumed it's for the club, oth-

erwise he wouldn't have helped me. I didn't correct his thinking, because he's met Kassi a few times, and he adores her... he'd rat me out for sure if he knew she was the source of the upcoming interrogation.

My conversation with Creed was short, sweet and to the point. I made sure he understood without a shadow of a doubt that she is not to be physically hurt or harmed under any circumstances. He guaranteed me that his method with women was different than that with men, and she'd have no damage done to her. She'll come out of this a little worn out mentally and emotionally, but he swore there'd be no long-term effects.

"Wow! This place is stunning," Kassi says through her mic. "The way the sun is setting through the top of the trees is like something you see on pictures or in the movies. I can't wait to watch the sun rise in the mornings. Thank you for being thoughtful of where you brought me. I can tell you put a lot of thought and consideration into what would be a romantic getaway."

"Yah, babe. I wanted this place to be perfect for us." The lie rolls off of my tongue, leaving a bitter taste in my mouth. I begin to waver on my plans, again, but know there's no other way around it.

Kassi

As we grab our things out of Malibu's saddlebags, I can't help but notice how standoffish he's acting. I can tell he's trying hard to be interactive with me, but the distance between us is heartbreaking. This time away is going to be a lot of work for the two of us, but I'm confident that we'll leave here stronger than we were before. I'm determined to show him that I'm what he needs and we can be whole with just the two of us in this relationship.

I follow him up the slippery rock-paved path to the mountain retreat style cottage-cabin. It's a two-story log 'cabin' with a porch that has

wicker chairs, a couch and a coffee table. I envision myself sitting out here with a cup of coffee in the morning enjoying Mother Nature at her finest. I love animals, and thinking about watching squirrels harvest nuts and deer trolleying in the wild has me excited.

I watch Malibu key in a code and watch as a key falls out of a black box that was hanging from the doorknob. It's one of those real estate ones that are used for people to be able to go in and check out a house to see if it's their forever home. If I had to pick one, it would be something like what we're fixing to walk into. It's a dream place for an artist to lose themselves in their work. I'm happy that I downloaded my manuscript onto my laptop from online so I can work without the use of the internet while being surrounded in this peaceful environment. We walk in and the wooden floors catch my attention... they're so beautiful and natural looking. I need to take a picture before leaving, I'd love to have these running throughout our home. Looking up, I notice there's a stairway that leads to a loft, it's got a huge bed peeking through the railing. I hope it's as comfy and cozy up there as it looks from down here. I also notice a long hallway that leads to the back. I'm imagining there are several bedrooms there as well. I doubt we'll be staying in the loft; it doesn't look secure enough from impending danger to make Malibu happy.

"It's bigger than it was in the pictures," he says as he sets our bags down. "It don't look like no damn cottage; it looks like a mountain home I've seen in a home and garden magazine. Wanna check things out?" I smirk at his comment, I have a hard time picturing him reading those sorts of things.

Yet, he knows me so well. I'm itching to search each and every nook and cranny in this place. "Yes!" I excitedly squeal. "This place is a dream come true." I see a little smirk form on his face, but it's more than he's given me, I'll take it. Baby steps, I remind myself.

I was right, there were rooms down the hallway and a master bedroom with a huge bathroom attached. It's got a jacuzzi bathtub that I can't wait to sink down into. The loft must be used for kids or visitors. I'll have to explore it on my own at a later time.



Later that evening, I'm rummaging through the fridge and cabinets and am happy to see someone has fully stocked it full of food for us. It has some of our favorites here, not just meal wise, but snack wise. Our favorite sodas and liquor are stocked in here. Figuring a good place to start rebuilding our relationship is putting food in his tummy, I start thinking about what I can cook. If what they say is true about a man's happiness being his stomach, I'm off to a good start.

I notice two good looking, thick steaks in the freezer and pull them out. I start making my own marinade and am happy when I find a meat injector. Since I wasn't able to let them soak for twenty-four hours as I normally would, thankfully this will help with the flavor and tenderization. I thaw the steaks out in cold water and go to find my phone where I have some music downloaded. Grabbing my headphones, I place them in my ears and put on my favorite playlist. Walking back over to the sink, I look out the back window and a smile lights my face when I see a shirtless Malibu chopping wood. He's sexy and would make a good-looking cover model for my book when I am ready to release it. I then begin to ponder if I should change my hero's occupation to that of a lumberjack. Shaking my head, I go over to the pantry and grab some sweet potatoes. I know my man loves fries made from these so I begin slicing them up into strings. I lose myself in cooking while dancing around the kitchen and jamming to my favorite tunes.

## Malibu

Taking out my anger and anxiety on the wood I'm chopping, I get lost in the picture and thoughts of those motherfuckers whose heads need to be dismembered. I can't wait to get to the bottom of this and figure out who was behind the unraveling of my life. Every single time I try to move past Fern's passing, all I can see is her dead body lying in my arm while I scream out to the universe that this can't be happening... begging her not to leave me. Kassi, in my other arm as I rock them both back and forth praying like I never had before that

somehow, they both make it out of this alive and well. In reality, I knew Fern was gone, but in the back of my mind, I'd hoped that I was wrong.

Letter after letter begins running coarsely through my brain, coming across like a slideshow of pictures opening up and displaying individually in slow motion. Each one causes chills and anguish to run up and down my back. If the accusations in those letters are correct, along with the phone call I received, Kassi knows what led to Fern's death. The fact that she didn't tell me something bad was coming so that I could protect them makes my blood boil. Does this mean she was in on it? Is this the reason she's still alive and my Fern isn't? Did she help them in any way? If she did, I'll kill her my own damn self. I can't put my finger on it, but something has been wrong with her since that night, could this be why? God, I fucking hope not, but can't help but feel like that it's a real possibility.

I put the axe down and look up toward the house. I see Kassi with her ear buds in and her whole body is jiggling up and down as she dances and prances her way through the kitchen. It brings back memories of a better time when my two girls would be making us dinner. They had such a good time and rapport; the house was always full of giggles and the annoying as fuck pop music they always insisted on listening to. I personally have a preference for listening to rock-n-roll or heavy metal, but to each their own I suppose. Creed won't be here for another day; tomorrow I'll keep her occupied by walking in the woods and having a picnic by the creek that the owner informed me is a mile hike from here.

One of my biggest reservations is that she's possibly innocent in all of this. I haven't slowed down long enough to give myself time to feel that out. My heart wants finalization, revenge, blood coating my hands and I can't do any of those things unless I know who it is I'm fighting against. This having no memory shit she's proclaiming to have, has made things feel up in the air and unreachable... I haven't been able to grieve for my woman because all I wanna do is smash everything around me.

I spend the next two hours chopping enough wood to get the owners through winter. Granted, it's months away from now, but I had

to find something, some way to keep my hands and brain occupied. Otherwise, I'm afraid I'd choke the damn truth out of her. I need to let this play out the way it's planned or I'll look like the bad guy at the end of the day.

Creed will incapacitate me in front of Kassi, so I look more like a victim than the villain. Hopefully, with the plan in place, it'll never be uncovered that I set this entire thing up.

## KASSI



I'M SPREAD OUT ON A BLANKET NEAR A BEAUTIFUL CREEK, ENJOYING THE picnic lunch Malibu packed for us. He's been so sweet and compassionate where it comes to me today, that I know this was the best decision for the two of us. I'm feeling closer to him than I ever have before, even before the 'incident' as I've taken to calling that atrocious night. The one all of my nightmares are based off of; the night that changed everything. Closing my eyes, I deeply inhale, breathing in the fresh air; I'll never get tired of that particular sense being on overload. I would love to live here forever, leaving the worries, and stress of our lives behind us. "Do you want any more grapes?" Malibu asks me, drawing me out of my daydream.

"No. I couldn't stomach another bite. I'm so full, this was the most filling meal I've had in a long time. It's the sweetest thing anyone's

ever done for me. Thank you for this. We really did need this time alone." I roll over on my side and look up at him. He's putting things away in the bag we used to carry everything here, never once looking over at me or in my general direction. Fuck, I really would love to see the pearly white of his teeth as he smiles over at me.

"I'm trying, Fern." He sighs, but right now, I'm glad he isn't seeing the crestfallen look I know is on my face. I can't believe he just called me by her name. I quickly look away, then stand up and walk over to watch the flow of the water. I see little minnows swimming close to the shore and small fish making their way upstream.

I place my hands on my hips and lower my head before responding to him calling me by another woman's name... even if she is a woman we both loved. "I'm not her, Malibu. I'll never be able to replace her or be like she was. I'm me, I can't stand here and pretend to be someone else. If that's what this getaway is about, we might as well pack up and head back home. I'm sorry I can't be her for you. I wish with all of my might that it'd been me that night instead of her."

"What the hell are you talkin' about?" He sounds exasperated with me, but how would he feel if I called him by another man's name? I have had other lovers in my lifetime, I could just as easily slip and call him Adam, my ex's name, especially seeing as he's acting just like the fucker lately. I dumped Adam for a lot less than I've put up with from Malibu. I'm trying here, I love him and need him, can't he see that? Doesn't he care? I can't see my life without him in it, I don't want to even try.

"You called me Fern." I respond to his question.

"No, I didn't," he confusingly says.

I turn my back around to where I'm facing him so he can see the tears falling in streams down my face. "Would I be reacting this way if you hadn't?" I don't put on my poker face, I let him witness all of the emotions I'm currently feeling. I know he can see it all; the fear, rawness, suffering, heartbreak... I don't hide a single thing from him.

"Fuck, Kassi. I'm sorry, she's been on my mind a lot lately. I didn't mean to hurt your feelin's." He hangs his head down and balls his hands into fists. "I loved her, loved her so damn much that each minute I spend without her by my side hurts." He bangs a hand on his chest in emphasis.

"I know. I loved her too. The thing is, I also love you and you're still here. I'm still here. We need to let the other in so we can help the other one deal with the loss and begin to heal. I need you to let me in, please." I don't know how else to explain to him that I want to experience the love he used to show me again. My life is hollow, incomplete without his arms wrapped around me at night. I want my best friend, my lover, my partner, the man I love so desperately back. I know we still have a rough road ahead of us, but I want us to at least try.

"It would be so much easier for me if I understood why she died. What happened that night, was she the target or were you? I just need answers, Kassi."

"I wish I had them for you, Malibu. I've done everything the doctor has suggested to remember. It's a blank spot, void of any memory. I don't even remember what led up to it. All I remember is us being in bed and hearing crashes... that's it. I'm sorry, I'm so fucking sorry that nothing is there. I really have tried," the last part comes out soft, more of a whisper.

"I don't know how to fix this. How to change the way I feel, what thoughts are always runnin' through my head. I crave vengeance, I need it, Kassi, unlike anythin' I've ever wanted in my life. I. Need. It." He stabs his chest with his finger. Finally, I see some sort of emotion from him. He's hidden it all from me, well... other than his disdain to be as far away from me as he physically and emotionally can. I can't help but wonder if he's been feeling as lonely as I have been.

"Let's head back and get dressed. I'll take you out explorin' the town this afternoon and we'll grab dinner before we come back," Malibu says.

"Sounds good to me. It's been a long time since we've been out to dinner. Too long, I am really looking forward to spending the day

out and about with you. I wonder if they have an antique store in town?" I love antiquing, restoring old things and making them appear to be new. I always wonder what the story behind each piece is. Was it passed through each generation in a family? Was it a gift for a loved one? It helps me with bringing life to each thing I acquire.

"It's been a long time since I've helped you look for somethin' special. Remember the last time when you found that desk? We bought it for four hundred and you sold it for what, two grand?" I nod at him that he has the correct numbers. "It was a masterpiece, I know you hated to part with it, but those people's faces when they thought they'd gotten the better of you was priceless."

"It always feels good when one of my pieces finds a good home." He folds up the blanket and places it under his arm. As he leans over to grab the basket our food was in, my eyes wander to his muscular back and ass and I internally groan. It's been forever since we've been intimate with each other, and I'm longing to feel his arms wrapped around me and his dick inside of me. Making love isn't a cure for all that ails our relationship, but it's a start down the right path to redemption.

## Malibu

The lies are starting to weigh heavily in my chest. For the first time since I set this entire thing up, I'm beginning to regret what's fixing to take place. After Fern first passed, I firmly thought and believed Kassi and I could make it through anything. We're both strong, fierce people. Neither one of us is known as a quitter, we fight with claws extended outward for what we want. And we both wanted each other with a passion.

But the anonymous letters and phone calls leave me with doubts where she's concerned. I shake the feeling of betrayal off and continue to get ready to paint the town tonight. I have to pretend that I'm working hard on fixing things between us, even though deep inside,

I am beginning to wonder if that's really what I want. The feeling of desperation and loneliness are fucking with my mind. Wavering back and forth with what I do and don't want is making me feel like a crazy man waiting to board the train to Lunaticville.

Can I just let this go without unearthing the truth of the matter? That seems to be the million-dollar question floating through my mind. If I let it go, do I have the adeptness to forgive and forget? Somehow, I doubt that's a likelihood. There will always be a hurdle between us that I won't be able to jump over and I'll always blame her for Fern's death. I can't survive a life like that, and neither can she. I'd lose her in the end anyway, so I may as well continue on the path I've paved.



We've hit several small antique stores here in town, and Kassi has fallen in love with several generational pieces. We've acquired a few and I've made arrangements with the owners to pick them up at a later date and time. She's fucking magnificent when it comes to restoration, and I hope I'm around to see what she has planned to breathe life back into these derelict items.

"Want Italian or do we wanna hit the local steak house?" I ask her as we straddle my bike.

"Steak, potato and lobster sounds scrumptious," she answers.

"Meat and potatoes; you know the way to this man's heart," I tease, trying to be like and find a way to being my old self once again.

"I've always suspected as much," she jokes back.

"You've always suspected, huh? Well, I'll just lay it out there for you now, it is. You want me in a good mood, give me red meat and I'm a happy man."

"What other meat makes you happy?" For the first time in weeks, my dick stands at attention. Down boy, we can't fuck someone who's possibly jacked us over, I remind him. He doesn't quite lay down, but he does finally deflate to the point where it'll be manageable to ride and walk.

As we pull up to the restaurant, she unclasps her helmet and reaches out to grab my hand as I'm sitting my lid on the handlebars, hanging by the strap. It takes everything in me to lace my fingers with hers, not pull my hand away and wipe her germs away on my jeans. It seems childish, but I can't help the angst and fury that I feel. Walking through the door, the hostess greets us with a smile on her face.

"Hello. Welcome to Staton's Steakhouse. Just the two of you?" I look around us like the smartass I am and raise an eyebrow in her direction. Kassi elbows me in the ribs and an *oomph* leaves my mouth at the contact. She has a bony elbow and that shit hurt like a motherfucker.

"Yes, just the two of us. Thank you," Kassi sweetly responds.

"We have a table in the back near the fireplace. It's a beautiful setting, please follow me." She grabs two menus and I follow her and Kassi. Usually, I'd place my hand on Kassi's back like the gentleman I was raised to be, but instead, I put my hands in my pocket. I see the disappointment and scowl on her face, but I act as if I don't notice. "We have a few specials tonight, they're on the back side of the menus. Our steaks are well-known and loved in the area. Your server will be here shortly to get your drink order and put in for any appetizers you'd like." She walks away before either of us have a chance to thank her.

"Thank you," Kassi says to me as I pull her chair out for her. Once she's sitting down, I help her push her chair under the table. There are some things so ingrained in me that I can't help but use them despite how I feel right now.

"You're welcome," I say back as I make my way to the other side and sit across from her. She once again sends a scowl in my direction, but I don't want to give her any reason to place her hands on me. I don't believe I'd be able to contain my mouth and not spew out all of my mistrust when it pertains to her. I pick up my menu, place it in front of my face and intently look at it. I'm not actually looking at the meal choices, kicking myself in the ass for the way I'm acting. Like a spoiled motherfucker who didn't get his favorite candy bar at the grocery store. I'm a fucking asshole.

"The number four looks good," she breaks the silence. "It's a lobster tail, six-ounce sirloin steak, with a choice of mashed or baked potato and coleslaw." Her tongue comes out and lightly touches her bottom lip. She's always done this when she finds something that excites or entices her.

"It does look good, but I'm thinking I'm gonna go with the number seven," I inform her as I scan the menu and find a picture that captures my attention. Good enough.

"If you can eat all of that, I'll be highly impressed," she snickers. I look back at my menu so that I don't roll my eyes in her direction.

"I'm a growing boy," I tell the scrap of laminated paper in front of me.

She places her finger on the top and pulls it down, "Malibu, please look at me when you're speaking to me. I feel like an annoying fly who's been pestering you when you do that. We can't work on us if we can't even look at each other."

"You're right, I'm sorry." The fake apology appeases her somewhat and she nods her head at me.

The night is filled with good food, pretentious conversation and me worrying over how everything will play out. I second doubt my plan and decide to call Creed and cancel it all when we make it back. I can't do this, as much as I need details, I won't become that man. There has to be another way, maybe hypnosis? Yeah, I'll find a therapist in town and talk Kassi into doing it.

With that settled, the knot in my stomach lessens and I feel almost human again with my decision.

## KASSI



“DIDN’T WE LEAVE THE FRONT PORCH LIGHT ON WHEN WE LEFT?” THE hairs on the back of my neck are standing on end. Something feels off, but Malibu is acting as if everything is normal and fine. I usually would trust his gut, but I’m wondering if it’s off a little with all of the things he’s been going through.

“I can’t remember, maybe I forgot,” he mutters as he steadily leads me to the dark house. “Maybe the lights went out,” he continues saying. But he halts his progress for a minute, then shakes his head back and forth.

That’s a distinct possibility, and there aren’t any houses nearby that I can look at and see if it’s a true statement or not. Ugh, I’m not looking forward to tromping around in a pitch-black house. I was anticipating a hot bubble bath and relaxing with a good book, but maybe I

can use this to my advantage. Light a few candles, set the mood, and seduce him into making love to me. It's been too long since I've felt the intimacy that I've found myself recently craving from him. Everything is looking up for us, and I cannot wait until I feel my walls clamping on his dick as he pumps in and out of me. I feel my core begin to ache and dampness invades the lining of my panties. Yes, the lights being out will be the perfect setting to get my wicked way with my man.

Following him up to the porch, my hands begin to sweat from my anxiety. I don't want him to shoot me down when I initiate plan 'make Malibu mine'. He has a hard time inserting the key in the lock with as dark as our surroundings are. "Here," I say initiating the flashlight app on my phone. It doesn't give out a lot of light, but it'll be enough to where we can see the keyhole.

"Thanks," he drones as he finally gets the door open. "Fuck it's humid as fuck in here."

"Let's open up some of these windows so there's a breeze coming through," I suggest.

"I'll get the back of the house if you wanna grab the front," he says, leaving me and walking towards the bedrooms.

As he saunters down the hallway, I begin unlatching and opening all the windows in the living area. As soon as the third window is up, a nice cool breeze begins sweeping throughout the overly warm room. I breathe in heavily, letting the cool night air wash over me. As my body begins to relax, I hear a scuffle coming from the bedrooms. "Malibu?" I call out, concern and fear heard clear as day through my trembling voice. "Everything okay?" I try again, but receive no response. This is where I should run, all the movies with the scary theme songs have proven that, but my worry over my man wins out in the end. "Malibu, if you're fucking around with me, it isn't funny!" My voice is full of trepidation as I slowly make my way along the darkened hallway. "Fucking pull yourself together, Kassi. This isn't a Halloween special." I try to convince myself that my imagination is just that... overreacting. Once I breach the master bedroom's door jam, something, or should I say someone, grabs me from behind, placing a hand over my mouth. I'm struggling to catch

my breath, my fighting instincts should be front and center; yet, I find myself frozen in place. Time stands still as I'm dragged back down the hallway from the direction I first entered. As soon as we make our way back into the living room, my fight or flight response takes over and I begin scratching my captor's arms and hands. I try to bite down on his hand covering my mouth, but it's in a position where I can't lock my jaws down.

"Yes, fight me, bitch. I like it," his breath coats my skin as he speaks these words to me. "We're fixing to find out what all you remember about what happened to your friend. Fern was her name, wasn't it?" My watering eyes close, Fern. Why does it always come back to her? Everything bad that's happened in my life boils down to the friendship and love she and I had. I once thought she was my salvation, now, I find that she keeps bringing mayhem and mishap into my everyday life. Even in death she haunts me. *Fern, what the hell did you get me involved in?* I know she can't answer me, but I always ask this of her. Why can't I remember? I try to speak through the muzzle over my face. "Ah, are you trying to tell me something? If I remove my hand and you scream, I will make you pay. Understand?" I emphatically nod my head. I'd do and agree to anything to get his hands off from my face.

Once his hand is removed, I'm held in the same position. My back to his front; my legs begin to tremble and my body begins to shiver. My adrenaline begins to crash as my mind begins to contemplate how to get out of this mess. "I-I don't know anything. Complete memory loss of that night," I rush out the excuse. "Doctor says I may never recover those memories. Post. Traumatic. Stress. Disorder." I verbalize each word individually. "That's what he says I have."

"Is that right?" His tone comes out sadistic with the question that I don't get the feeling is really that... a question. I get the vibe that this man is menacing, he won't accept the truth easily. It makes me question if this will be my final night alive.

"I can't help you. I'm sorry," I sob out, wishing my mind wasn't drawing a blank. God help me, I feel like I'm gonna be pushing up daisies beside my friend soon.

Maybe death won't be so bad.

## Malibu

That motherfucker, Creed, hit me over the head hard as fuck. My assault was supposed to be more for show than tell, but I have to hand it to the guy... he takes his job seriously. Moaning as I stand up, I become dizzy and have to grab on to the dresser to gain my balance. I feel a sticky substance leak down the side of my face. My hand comes up to swipe it away; only to come away coated in a metallic smell, and a crimson shade of red. I feel a whelp already forming, and know that I'll have a killer headache for the next few hours. Shaking it off, I quietly creep down the hallway to the office where Creed was to set up the monitors so I can keep an eye on the interrogation. I want to go in and stop him, but my fear overrides my good intentions. Now that things have progressed as far as they have, I can't give myself away to Kassi. I have no other choice than to allow things to play out.

*Please forgive me.*

I just hope he's as good as everyone proclaims he is. I need answers so I can avenge Fern. I want to ensure the safety of my brothers, my club, my family. Kassi. I don't know if what happened to her is linked to the club or not; but I will leave no stone unturned to make sure we're all safe. Including tormenting Kassi. Fuck! Even if she can't remember what happened; those secrets and memories are buried in that brain of hers somewhere. Creed won't stop until she's made to remember. I should feel like an ass, feel something about her reliving that nightmare all over again... but I can't allow myself to go there. I have to keep the anger I always feel front and center, or I'll never make it through this. Even if it's no longer what I want. I just need to find my balls and let this happen.

"I'm sorry, Fern." I feel the need to apologize to her even though she's no longer here with us. She'd have my ass if she witnessed what I was doing. She was as much in love with Kassi as she was

with me. I should call it quits right now, but then; I'd never know what really happened. Could I live with that? Shaking my head at my own question, I know there's no way I can. I can't move forward with or without Kassi unless the truth is revealed.

*"Please."* I hear Kassi whimper, drawing my attention back to what's happening with her. Creed is working on containing her to one piece of furniture. He's strapping her in, tightening bindings around her limbs. She looks petrified as she turns her head in all directions. Is she looking for me? I can't help but wonder. *"My boyfriend, is he hurt?"* her wobbly voice asks.

*"He'll survive, for now,"* Creed informs her with a smirk on his face. I want to punch his face through the monitor screen, his smugness toward her pisses me the fuck off.

*"W-what do you mean for now? Please don't hurt him, he doesn't know anything. I swear, he wasn't even there. He uh,"* she licks her bottom lip, *"he loved her very much, still does. If he knew anything, he'd have already taken action with his club to back him up."*

*"Yeah? He doesn't know anything, huh?"* The sly fucker asks her, *"but you do, don't you?"* He leans down over her and I see her visibly shiver. *"Don't worry, love. Before I'm finished with you, you'll remember everything and all questions will be answered. It's what I do."* He innocently shrugs his shoulders causing me to snort in response. I hate the fact that he called her love, it should be a term of endearment, not one to cause her undo stress. But that's what this is about, isn't it? Fucking with her head to make her mind open up to that traumatic night.

*"Oh, God."* She whimpers and I close my eyes tightly to keep from running out there and beating that fucker into a bloody pulp. She may not be mine once this night is done and over with. She may catch on to the fact that I was in charge of this entire thing. Then, I'll have a tough decision to make.

Do I let her live to go back and rat me out to her brother, my brothers? I hope that's a decision I don't have to make in the end. It's not something I take lightly. It scares the ever-loving fuck out of me. I want her to talk, I want to possibly have a future with her, one that's

secret free. I'm a contradiction to myself, I'm wishy-washy when it comes to her... to us. I want the woman I fell in love with, but I also harbor some ill-will when it comes to her. I need to make a final decision where it pertains to us, but I can't... not yet, not until I have all of the facts laid out before me.

I'm a motherfucker. But a desperate one at that. One who can't rest, no matter how much my body craves it. I can't filter this desperate need to know the truth. Who does this to the one he proclaims to love? Me, the selfish son-of-a-bitch who resides deep within. That's motherfucking who. I desperately watch as Creed pulls out a vial and a syringe.

*"Do you know what this is?"* he asks her.

*"No."* Her eyes are wide and terrified.

*"It's truth serum. No matter what secrets you're trying to hide, this will make you speak the God's honest truth. You won't be able to withhold your secrets, no matter how much you wish to."* He chuckles, but it's not one of those used between friends. It's malicious and even makes me quake a little in my boots.

I watch her squirm around in her seat, fear evident in her eyes. As he comes closer to her with the needle she begins to whimper, then beg him not to hurt her. I have to close my eyes for a minute and breathe through the pain of watching her plead for mercy.

What the fuck have I done?

## KASSI



ONCE THE NEEDLE PRICKS THE SKIN OF MY NECK, I IMMEDIATELY BEGIN to panic and have a hard time catching my breath. Who is this person? How did he find us? These are just a couple of the questions plaguing my mind. “Why are you doing this to me?” I finally wheeze out through my tears.

“Because the truth needs to come out. What are you hiding?” he asks me.

“Nothing! I’m hiding nothing from anyone. I can’t remember anything.” I feel my body growing tighter. My speech is beginning to slur with the heaviness of my tongue. My mouth tingles, I feel like I’ve swallowed gravel and the taste in my mouth is indescribable. My eyes keep shifting to the hallway, hoping and praying that Malibu is alive and well. This man claims he is, but until I see him with my own eyes, my body and mind won’t relax.

I've accepted my fate. I most likely won't make it through the night to see tomorrow's sunrise. I'm good with that. I've often wished that I'd followed Fern in death. Now, it seems my wishful thinking will be coming true. My eyes grow tired, my head lobs to the side, I have no control of my functions. It's an odd feeling, almost like I've heard the date rape drug works. You're aware of everything around you, but can't control anything taking place. The man steps in front of me, lifting my head by the roots of my hair to meet his eyes.

"Ah, it won't be long now. Soon, you'll be sharing all that you've kept hidden away."

"Fuck you," I try to holler out, but it sounds hollow to my ears.

He chuckles, and I wish more than anything that I could control my fingers to flip him off. "As long as you cooperate, you'll make it out of this just fine." He pats my head like I'm his dog who's followed a command well.

"You're gonna die," I happily inform him. I'm not sure if my smile is present on my face, but I can see it clear as day in my mind.

"Good, you'll need that feisty spirit to get through this. Are you ready?" Is that a rhetorical question? Of course I'm not ready! I'd rather be in bed curled up with a good book than dealing with this motherfucker. Hell, I'd rather be wallowing in a mud pit with some pigs than do this. "And as far as me dying," he leans into my face and continues, "they'd have to find me first."

"They'll find you," I emphatically inform him. "And when they do, you'll wish you'd never set eyes on me."

"Honey, I'm a ghost. No one can find me when I don't want them too. But I'll enjoy watching your friends squirm in their seats." I hate him! I hope he falls into a pit of snakes and they saturate his veins in poison. I try to spit on him, but dribble runs down my chin from the attempt. "Let's get started, shall we?"

"No." My stubborn side is still present and snarky as ever.

"Well then, let's see if we can change your mind." I don't like those words nor the way they came out of him. I cringe when I see him

pick up a toolbox. My mind wanders off to what all he could carry in there. It's not large, but big enough to capture my attention. "I don't torture women in the same manner as I do men, but this right here," he says and I recognize the taser in his hands. "This girl right here, she has the potential to send some shock waves that could scatter your brains. We'll start off on the lowest level and see how well you do."

No. no. no. no. no. I chant in my head. He presses on a switch and I see the electricity dancing from the probes. "No!" I finally manage to blurt out right before he strikes me on my lower belly. My entire being begins to thrust and pulsate as the current flows through me.

"Ready now?" He chuckles. My body feels as if it's caught on fire. I don't want to cry in front of him, give him that power over me, but I can't seem to stop the flow that's streaking down my face. "Let's go back to the night that Fern was killed." No, please, I don't want to remember that night. It's been buried in the back of my mind for a reason. "What were the two of you doing before your night was interrupted?"

I whimper; thinking of how loving and caring Fern had been with me that night makes me want things I can no longer have. Unfortunately, I have no choice but to share the intimacy that was Fern and myself. "We took a bath. I'd had a hard day so she was pampering me."

"You two took a bath together?" he asks.

"Yes," I sneer the best I can at him.

"Were you two intimately involved?" Is this really any of his business?

"Yes."

"What happened after your bath?" he continues.

"She blow dried my hair." I lovingly remember the way she made me feel as if no one else in the world existed beyond the two of us. Everything around us vanished as she pampered me that night.

"Then?"

"We settled into bed and watched a movie." My throat becomes clogged with the loss of my friend, my lover, my world.

"Did you stay awake through the entire movie or did you fall asleep at some point?" I wrack my brain trying to remember, it's becoming hazy.

"I t-think we fell asleep."

"Okay, what's the next memory you have?" I feel as if we're beating on a locked door, it wants to open, but stays firmly shut.

"I-I can't remember." A pain so intense hits me like a wrecking ball. I moan from the torment. "It hurts, make it stop."

"That's your memory trying to seep through," he informs me. "Fight, Kassi. You have to remember."

"No-no please," I implore.

"Someone or multiple people have invaded your sleep. Who were they? What did they want?"

"I can't remember. Please stop!"

"What did they want, Kassi?"

"Granger. Drugs. Money!" I scream, as it all comes back.

## Malibu

Granger! That motherfucker is the reason his sister is dead? What the fuck? He and Fern were as close as two siblings could be. Where she went, he followed and vice versa. There toward the end of her life, they had slowly started drifting apart, Fern always worried. He started pushing her away, began hanging out with some thugs. I

thought it was a phase he was going through. He was at that in between place, not a young boy, but not quite a man. I had her convinced that's all it was, but now I wonder if she knew more than she shared with me.

*"It's okay, Kassi," I hear Creed consoling her. "What happened? How do you know that's what they were after?"*

*"They broke in. The crashing of the door is what startled us awake. At first, I thought Malibu had stumbled in drunk from hanging out with his brothers. So, I closed my eyes and nestled back into Fern's arms. Just as I'd settled back in, nearly asleep, I was yanked out of the bed by my hair." My anger for my women spikes as my fists clench at my sides.*

*"What did they do once they grabbed you from your bed?" When Creed asks this, all the hair on my body stands on end. This is what I asked for, this is what I wanted, so why is it that suddenly I feel sick to my stomach?*

*"We were tied to chairs in the living room. Our brand-new kitchen chairs! I was so upset because I worked hard to refinish that table and the seats. I'd refurbished them as a gift to Fern. I was so proud of those chairs that now held me prisoner. I had just given them to her two days before this, she was so grateful that she cried. This time, she was crying for a completely different reason all together. I hated myself for it. How could a gift that was meant to bring someone such joy end up being the worst thing you could give someone? They would've had no furniture to tie us to if it wasn't for those fucking chairs!"*

*"Tell me what happened once you and Fern were immobilized, Kassi?"*

*"They started saying all of these vile things to us. How they were gonna tear our pussies up. That they'd show us what a real man was like to where we wouldn't be disgusting lesbians. It's as if they didn't even know we were Malibu's as much as we were each other's. It made me angry, I spit on one of them for their chauvinistic words. Who were they to preach about what's the right way to love someone and what's wrong? My judgment day didn't lie in their hands. The man ended up backhanding me for it. Fern screamed to leave me alone. They started taking turns slapping and punching us. To the point where it hurt to talk, cry, scream, beg for them to stop. And we did, we pleaded with them to leave us alone. Nothing worked! They started*

*asking all sorts of questions about Granger. We didn't have the answers they were looking for, which infuriated them more."*

Her words are like a slap to the face. I wasn't there to protect them. No, I was at the clubhouse that night, drinking and hanging out with my brothers. What I should've done was go home after my workday was over. I wanted to give the girls some time alone; I knew from day one that I'd have to do this for them from time to time. Things were strenuous between the two of them at home; I thought some time together was what they needed. What was meant to be my good intention, turned out to be the worst time in any of our lives. Our trio became a duo that night... we lost the person who united the three of us in the first place. She was our rock, our glue, and once she was gone, we crumbled. I take my part of the blame for that, but I won't take it all on my shoulders. She's just as much to blame for our downfall as I am.

*"What information did they want to know about Granger? What were they wanting you to share?"* Creed's question brings me out of my reverie.

*"Where was he? Where was their money and drugs? They thought we were harboring him and what they claim he stole from them. They already knew Fern was his sister and would do anything for him. They know she met with him a few days before, and wanted to know what all he said to her. She sealed her mouth and refused to acknowledge their questions. They tried using me to get her to talk, no matter how much they beat on me, stabbed my leg, everything, she refused to answer them."*

*"Go back, Kassi, how did they use you to get her to talk?"*

*"Please, I don't want to talk about it."* Her tears are breaking my heart. What else did they do to her? I knew she'd been stabbed and beaten, but I have a feeling it was much more than that. Please don't let it be what I'm thinking.

*"Kassi, we have to know. What did they do to you?"*

*"T-they, um, they made me l-l-lick their cocks. They played with my tits, grabbed my crotch. I could see how it affected her; I begged her a few times to tell them what they wanted to know so that they'd leave me alone. But she wouldn't! It was then I realized that Granger meant more to her than I*

*did. It hurt. My heart broke. Over and over again they shoved their dicks down my throat. They pinched me so hard it ached. They moved on from there, punching me... again. I lost count of the blows to my face, arms, legs, stomach and back. Pain laced my entire body. I was used as a punching bag. Her eyes stayed on me the entire time, but she also had this faraway look. It's as if she was there, but she wasn't. At some point, I blacked out and woke up in Malibu's arms. I remember him rocking us, me, but I couldn't speak, forcing my eyes to open and alert him that I was there... alive. He begged us to live, to fight, for him, for us... but I didn't want to. I didn't want to fight; I wanted the darkness to take me. At least then, I couldn't remember, relive what they did to me. I hated her then, she didn't care about me. She let them do those things to me. I didn't want to remember that! I couldn't! She destroyed me with her silence. I just wanted to float into oblivion and never wake up again."*

*"Fern, how could you have done that to her?" I murmur. I understand the bonds of blood, but this was her woman... our woman. I'm going to put Kassi back together, then, I'm gonna track down these pieces of shit and make them wish they'd never crossed me and mine.*

*"One more question, Kassi. One more, then we're done. Can you do that for me?"*

*"W-what's the question?" she quivers out her response.*

*"Who were they, Kassi? The men that did this to you and Fern."*

*"The Bloodthirsty Bastards."*

*Motherfucker! They are a bunch of thugs who think they are an MC. We brushed them off, thinking they'd die out on their own. We let them be, my brothers and I... we are responsible for the destruction of my family.*

## MALIBU



CREED GAVE SOMETHING TO KASSI TO KNOCK HER OUT. AFTER I CARRIED her to bed and changed her clothes, I walked back out into the living room. I watched her closely for a bit, making sure she wouldn't wake up. She never stirred, so I finally left her side, even though I was heavy hearted by doing so. My body's simmering in heat from my ire. Bloodlust is in my veins. I hate myself, despise them; want them obliterated, decimated, destroyed, and am determined to rid the world of them. Every single member will die at my hands.

The doctors never said a word to me about her being mouth raped. They never even indicated they had a clue. Did they even check? I notice Creed has packed up, his things settled at the front door, but he's looking at me with contempt. "What?" I snarl out at him.

"She's going to need aftercare, man. That was brutal, what she had to relive. Therapy would be my advice. She's gonna need a profes-

sional to go through all of those emotions that just crashed in on her.”

“Don’t worry about my woman, Creed. I’ve got her,” I insist.

“If you say so,” he rebuts.

“I say so,” I defend. Right now, I’m ready to crush his face into a thousand fragmented pieces if he continues pretending he gives a fuck where Kassi’s concerned. He had a job to do, it’s done, it’s time for him to move the fuck on now. We’re not all fixing to become one big happy family. I don’t know what world he’s living in, but there’s no room in mine for him to join.

“I’m outta here,” he huffs like an irate child.

“Bye,” I hiss as I turn my back on him. I need to put up the chair he had her tied to. Fuck, if I’d even taken a moment to think, I would’ve told him she couldn’t be tied to one after that night. I knew they had been, the remnants of that night, and the setup of our furniture, will forever be ingrained in my mind. I still see ties hanging from the legs of the kitchen chairs, blood on the carpet, my two women’s bodies lifelessly sprawled out on the floor. They weren’t left in those chairs when the Bloodthirsty Bastards left our home, they’d placed them on the floor, side by side. Was that a message left for me by them? For Granger? I may never have these answers; another piece of the puzzle that hasn’t been put together.

“Think, Malibu, think. Where do we go from here?” I ask myself as I continue to clean this cottage style cabin spotless. I don’t want Kassi to wake up, walk out here, and see the remnants of tonight’s interrogation. Everything needs to be put back to rights, the way it was when we left for the day.

Kassi

*"Fern, please tell them what they want to know!" I beg her with not only my words, but with a pleading look. I don't know how much more I can take. My legs are throbbing from where they've been stabbed. My body feels like it's gone a round in the ring with Muhammad Ali. My eyes are swelling, my jaw feels like it's being ripped apart from my body. All she does is shake her head 'no' at me, and just like that, my hope fades away. She doesn't care what they do to me, as long as they leave her brother alone. She's determined our fates, without consulting me. "Please," I try again. Her eyes fill with tears as she tries to look away from me. The guy behind her grabs her head in his hands and forces her to look. "Why?" I mouth, but she simply shuts her eyes.*

*"Your friend asked you a question, bitch," the guy over me says to Fern. She simply narrows her eyes at him and doesn't say a word. "You willing to give her life for that of your brother?"*

*When she doesn't stammer a single syllable out of her mouth, the guy behind her yanks her head to the side so he can look clearly into her eyes. "You're a brave, tough bitch, huh? Let's see how tough your skin is once my brothers force your girl to swallow their cum." Fuck, the guy behind Fern must be the guy in charge. A whimper escapes me at the things he's insinuating will happen to me. "Look at that, do you see how scared she is? This is all on you and your brother. You're both spineless assholes. You don't love her, do you? Not really, because if you did, you wouldn't be able to sit by and let my brothers have their way with her, now would you?" His words hit home. Like a wrecking ball slamming into my chest, my breath leaves me in one whoosh. My Fern, the love of my life, just doomed me to my death.*

*My mind leaves my body, I go to my happy place as man after man feeds me their dick. I gag, my reflexes are still aware of the activities even if my mind is elsewhere. I'm floating above my body, witnessing these acts of violence happening to me.*

*"No! Stop!" I suddenly startle awake from this endless loop of a nightmare. I don't want to relive this! I want it all to go away, I want to be oblivious to what's happened to me, what I suffered, what I witnessed. "Malibu!" I remember that he was hurt, I didn't see him once that man took hold of me and forced the memories to resurface.*

*"Kassi," he calls out as he comes limping into the room. His face is swollen, I see dried blood coating the back of his shirt. "It's okay,*

baby. It's over," he hushes me as he crawls onto the bed, bringing me into his arms.

"Why did I have to remember that? It hurts," I cry into his shoulder.

"Shh. You're so damn strong, Kassi. If anyone can overcome this, it's you. And I'll be right there by your side while you fight these demons."

"Who was that man, Malibu? Why did he come here? How did he find us? What was the purpose of forcing me to relive that nightmare?" My sobs become inconsolable.

"I don't know, but we'll figure it all out." He continues to hold me throughout the night. I wake several times, but he's there, holding me, comforting me, lulling me back into oblivion.



The next day, we wake up around one o'clock in the afternoon. The sun is shining, penetrating through the opened window and I can't find the energy to climb out from the bed. "I don't want to be here anymore," I voice to the man beside me, holding me tightly in his embrace.

"I know, Kassi. But we both need time to heal." He pulls me firmer into his body. I know he's sore, hell, I'm sore as well, but it's not right being here. This sanctuary now feels like a house of horrors.

"I can't be here, it doesn't feel safe anymore," I utter to Malibu.

"Then we'll go somewhere else," he counters.

"Where? Where else will we be safe? He found us here, who's to say he's finished with us? What if you're next on his torture list? We need to be home, where the brothers can help protect us," I implore through my wobbly speech.

"You don't think I can keep you safe?" he bewilderedly asks me. Does he not remember the events that took place last night? Nothing

against his manhood or anything, but how well did that work out for us?

"It's not about whether or not you can or can't, it's about having backup in case we get caught off guard. One of us could have died." I leave out the again part of that proclamation.

"I guess I just don't want to face my brothers with this shame. I wasn't able to protect either of us last night. It makes me feel like they've been right all along, you deserve someone better equipped. My head is still in a fog from losin' Fern."

"Fuck her," I hiss. "She didn't care about me, she allowed those savages to abuse me in the worst ways possible, Malibu. She didn't give a rat's ass about us."

"Kassi, she was caught between a rock and a hard place," he defends her. Anger spikes inside of me, a spark has been lit and the fuse is fixing to explode.

"Seriously! That's excusable to you? She was caught between her brother and me! I call bullshit." My anger has ramped to an all-time high. How dare he!

"What would you have done, Kassi? If it was Ryder, Kaci or Fern, who would you have chosen?" What the actual fuck? My family would've never put me in that predicament in the first place.

"Not someone who was innocent," I begrudgingly proclaim, not hiding the ire one iota. "I didn't deserve to suffer the consequences of her brother's actions, Malibu. I wasn't aware of his misgivings, yet I'm the one who was worked over and fucked up. I was the victim!"

"Yet, she paid the ultimate sacrifice. She's *dead*, Kassi!"

"And I was right there next to her. Left for dead for a crime I didn't commit! You know what? Fuck this shit. You want to protect her, fine, you can live with her ghost. I'm not going to do this with you anymore. I've tried to keep us together, but I'll never be enough for you. Go to hell, Malibu. Take me home, we're finished."

## Malibu

The fuck if we are! "We'll never be finished, Kassi. I fuckin' love you."

"I don't think you do. I believe you love the idea of us, but without Fern, I'm a nobody in this relationship. I'm tired of being the only one who cares about us." Her words cut me open like a knife to my humanity. Her words wound me, even though I comprehend how true they are.

"I do love you, Kassi. To the depths of my soul, I do. But I'm strugglin', baby. I wasn't there to protect either one of you. And what they did to you..."

"You heard it all, didn't you?" she asks me.

"I did. It was heart wrenchin' to hear," I admit. "Tore me wide open and flayed me into pieces."

"Then why are you still defending her and what she did?" Her tears would bring me to my knees if I wasn't already lying in bed.

"Because I was in love with two women. I never got the closure of losing one of them. I've never battled so hard with anythin' in my life. I want to hate her on one hand, and avenge her on the other. I'm stuck in a crossroads here, Kassi. Please try and understand, it's not about me lovin' her more than you."

"Then what's it about?" The quiver in her voice as she asks this, fucks me up.

"It's about comin' to terms with the two sides of her. Lettin' her go, findin' myself. Most of all, I need to avenge you both so I can move forward from here. I won't be at peace with myself until I do."

"And us, Malibu? What happens to us in the meantime?"

"We hold tight, and ride the wave until it's done. Then, we fight to hold onto what's left of our fractured life. We may struggle; fight,

hate each other, but we never let go.”

“Then we better get started,” she inserts.

“On what?” I question.

“Getting revenge and finding us,” she conscientiously responds.

## KASSI



WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH IN THE COTTAGE STYLE CABIN TO PACK UP. WE called the antique store and arranged for a prospect to come with a truck and trailer to grab my things later next week. We had to pay a hefty storage fee for the owner to ultimately agree, but it was worth it to get the fuck out of dodge. We head straight for the clubhouse, never looking toward turning down the street we reside on. We need the brothers, I need my sisters, we need them all. Tension deserts me as the clubhouse comes into sight. It's my safety net. I know we'll be safe and protected behind these walls.

The clubhouse used to suffocate me, cause my skin to crawl with claustrophobia. Now, all I want is nothing more than to hide behind the fenced-in brick building. Malibu only wants vengeance against those who took Fern from us, I want to destroy whoever set up that man forcing me to relive those horrific memories. I want them all to pay... whoever they may be.

As he shuts the bike down and backs it up, my nerves kick into high gear. I know that my brother and sister are going to lose their shit once they hear about what Malibu and I suffered. The romantic, re-connecting get away, turned into a nightmare of epic proportions. I never imagined that I'd come back home with memories that should've stayed long since buried. Now that I remember it all, my memories are tarnished and ill-conceived where it comes to my love for Fern. Malibu assists me off the bike, removes my helmet, then laces his fingers through mine as he hauls me into the clubhouse. I'm numb, I'm angry; whereas I was anxious to share our story while on the road, I now want to run and hide in the safety of Malibu's room. Telling them about what happened over our time away, also means I have to relive and tell the story of the night that changed me.

*Forever yours*, that's what she used to say to me as we'd finish making love, or while just holding each other tight at night. Was everything she told me and shared with me lies? I can't help but wonder if I even knew her at all. *"What would you have done if you were in her place and it was your siblings?"* Those words that Malibu asked me, are playing on repeat in my mind. Would I have stayed silent or spoken up? I doubt that I would've hurt someone I claimed to be in love with, or would've put them second to one of my siblings, if they'd made the choices that her brother, Granger did. If Ryder or Kaci had been selfish enough to steal from a gang of outlaws, they'd have to answer for their own indiscretions. I'd never put Fern nor Malibu in the position that I was put in. When we make it into the main room, Ryder is sitting on a stool, drinking a cold beer with Skylar nestled into his lap. I stop and admire the love they share with one another. Her head is casually laid on his chest as he bullshits with Travler and Tumbler. I can feel her happiness radiating off of her in spades. Yes, he drives her insane sometimes, but I don't think she'd have it any other way. He is who he is, and she wholeheartedly accepts him for that.

"Kassi!" I hear my twin holler. My head turns and I watch as she rushes toward me. "You're home earlier than we anticipated," she says as she pulls me in for a hug.

"Yeah, things got... complicated," I inform her, trying not to seem as down in the dumps as I feel. I notice Ryder's head turn in my direc-

tion; when he sees my face over Kaci's shoulder, his eyes narrow in on me. He's trying to read me, but he'll have no luck in this instance. Malibu squeezes my hand that's still entwined with his before announcing, "Kassi and I need to speak with you all."

Ryder slowly lifts Skylar up from his arms, then places her on the stool. He leans over and whispers something in her ear, her eyes shoot to me before nodding her head 'yes'. He struts over to me, pulls me from Kaci and Malibu and begins escorting me down the hallway. His hand stays plastered to my back as he leans over and kisses the top of my head. Ryder's never shied away from public displays of affection when it comes to Kaci and me. "You okay?" His voice is soft when he asks me this.

"No, but I will be," I try to reassure him.

"Did that fucker hurt you, Kassi? If so, say the word and I'll bury him personally."

"No, Ryder. He didn't hurt me. But what we have to say, I wanna say it only once. You'll understand once we close the doors," I insist. Because living this again and again, is destroying me. I want to say it, then shut the memory down like I did before... if that's a possible thing.

Malibu comes and yanks me away from Ryder, walking me over near Kid's desk and sitting me in the chair next to the one he sits at. Kid walks behind his desk and sits in his chair, Ryder takes the corner of Kid's desk, as Tumbler and Travler stand behind us, leaning against the door.

Funny, I never noticed what an imposing sight those two make... not until just now that is. They've always just been my friends; the soft-hearted, fun-witted, easy-going twins. One eventually ended up being my brother-in-law; another a protective brother in another way. After the childhood Travler survived, I admire and look up to him as an ally, a strong person—someone who understands devastation and the ultimate, personal betrayal.

## Malibu

This isn't going to be an easy conversation to make it through. I'm not just lying to Kassi, but to my brothers. The men who trust me most in this world. The men whose backs I'm supposed to always have and vice versa. The shame of the situation I find myself in has me wondering if I'll ever get away with this scandal. Kassi's eyes have looked dead since the encounter she suffered with Creed. I had no idea the effect these memories would have on her. No, I thought of no one outside of myself and my need to exact revenge. I've never been so disappointed in anyone like I am myself at this moment. I vow right here and right now to make it up to her. To put her above all others from this time forward. No one will ever be more important to me than her. I will make her feel so loved and cherished that she'll never look out and not see me there; hearts, flowers and all.

She was right about one thing; Fern should've put her first and foremost. Why did I have such a hard time saying that to her? I should've ranted and raved about the hardship and trauma she endured. Fucking Fern, I bet she knew what her brother was up to and still chose to protect him.

"Okay," Kid begins by banging on the table, "Please enlighten us as to why you're home early and Kassi looks as if she's been put through the ringer."

"It's a long story, brother. One I'm ashamed of since I wasn't more cautious about our surroundin's." Kassi reaches under the table and squeezes my hand with hers. The small comfort makes me uneasy. If she was to ever discover I'm the reason for this, she'll put a damn knife in my heart and call it a day.

"Then I guess you'd better begin," Ryder grumbles; he looks ready to jump across this slab of wood and hand me my ass. Not that I blame him, as a matter of fact, I'd welcome it since it's much deserved in this instance. When I go to open my mouth, there's a banging on the door. It shocks us all and Ryder and Kid jump up out of

their seat simultaneously and head toward it. When Ryder unlocks it and pulls it open, Skylar, Kaci, Sadie and Rylie come busting through, shoving the men out of their way as they do.

"The fuck are you doin'?" Ryder grounds out as he grabs Skylar's wrist, stopping her from entering further into the room.

"Here's the deal, Ryder," she says, yanking her wrist from his grip and crossing her arms over her chest. "We get that this is your guys' sacred room and all. But that," she says pointing over at Kassi, "is our girl. And she looks distraught, we will be here for her. She's our sister." All the women take the same stance as Skylar and nod their heads in confirmation. A smirk develops on my face as I look at how fiercely they are taking a stance against the men.

"Kassi?" I call out her name, "would you like them to stay, babe?" Because this is her decision to make, no one can make that for her. I'll stand behind her and make sure that what she wants, she gets.

"Yes," she quietly answers. "I'd like them to stay. That way, we only have to share the story once. I don't want to live it again every time I have to inform one of them of what's happened. I'll never get a moment's peace from them until they've heard every last, horrifying detail." I nod my head and squeeze her hand this time.

"Let them stay," I inform the men. Each woman comes over and hugs Kassi before making their way to their man and plopping down onto his lap.

"Where are the kids?" Kid asks Rylie.

"We grabbed two of the prospects. They're on babysitting duty," Rylie answers back.

"Great, our little hellions are going to scare our prospects away," Kid drones.

"Then they aren't strong enough for the club anyways," Rylie counters as the women all agree with her opinion. "If they can't manage our children, then they won't be able to deal with the problems that come with the MC lifestyle."

"All right, woman. You've made your point loud and clear," Kid says as he slaps Rylie on the ass. "We were fixin' to learn what happened while Malibu and Kassi were away."

All eyes turn toward me and I clear the frog from my throat, feeling uncomfortable with all of their projected stares solely on me. "We had a few days of peace but came upon a rough patch. Deciding that we needed a day out, we hit some antique stores and then went out to dinner." From there, the bad decisions I made come crashing down on me; I'm living a bad dream inside of my mind. Witnessing what Kassi endured over and over again.

## Kassi

Malibu's eyes get a faraway distanced look. He's recalling that night, so I continue for him while he's lost in his memories. "When we made it back, the lights were all off inside and out. We had no way of discerning if the power just went out, or if we accidentally left the porch light off. I had a disconcerting feeling, but Malibu was confident that everything was okay, so I followed his instincts even though my gut was screaming something was dreadfully wrong. We walked into the cottage only to notice that no lights were working and the house was muggy. I started opening the windows in the front while Malibu went to the back to do the same. I heard a scuffling commotion and my skin began to prickle. I instinctively knew something was wrong. I called out for him, but he didn't respond back. I should've run out the door and went to find us help; instead, I made my way down the hallway to find out if he was alright or not." I turn to Malibu and say to him, "I'm sorry, I screwed up by not doing just that."

"No, Kassi. Don't apologize for that. You did nothin' wrong," he adamantly states.

"I would've done the same exact thing you did if it'd been Ryder in that situation," Skylar enlightens me.

"Same," Rylie divulges.

"I think we all would have," Kaci affirms to which Sadie agrees with Kaci's opinion.

"What happened next?" Ryder demands, leaning forward in his seat, causing Skylar to draw up into a ball in his lap. She wraps her arms around his neck in order to not fall from his lap. "Sorry, baby," he says, patting her on her thigh, then leaning back. His eyes stay keenly glued on me the entire time.

Taking in a deep breath, I pick up where I left off. "I crept down the hallway to search him out. Before I had a chance to make it to the room we were staying in, an arm reached out and a hand covered my nose and mouth. I panicked, started clawing and kicking. Eventually, I was dragged back into the living room and tied down to a chair."

"You what!" Ryder jumps up from his chair causing Sky to fall to the ground at his feet. She looks up at him with wide, unsure eyes. When my brother is angry, he becomes unpredictable. You never know how he's going to react, what he'll do, or how to soothe and console his beast.

"Calm your ass down and let her finish speakin'!" Kid hollers. "You alright, Sky?"

"Fuck!" Ryder reaches down and helps his woman to her feet. When he retakes his seat and tries to pull her back into his lap, she gives him a wary look before shaking her head no. He swipes his hands down his face as Jacks 'aka' Jackson, brings her over her own chair to sit down in. She sits beside Ryder, interlaces her fingers with his, but refuses to sit with him. Not that I blame her one iota, I wouldn't either.

"What happened next?" Travler probes, getting us back on track to the topic at hand.

"There was a man, he was asking questions; interrogating me about the night that Fern passed away." For the next two hours I relive my grilling of twenty questions the man asked me; answer the men's and my brother's questions, and remember the way I was ultimately

betrayed by the one woman I entrusted most in my life. By the time I finish sharing, I'm emotionally drained and my body hurts. All I wanna do is crawl into bed and sleep the days and nights away until I no longer feel this pain subsiding in me.

## MALIBU



AFTER THE CONVERSATION ENDED, KID DECIDED THAT THE CLUB NEEDED to go on a light lockdown until we found out or discovered more information about Fern's brother's whereabouts, or if Kassi was in any more danger from the Bloodthirsty pussy Bastards. Kassi and I are in my bed, she's sleeping restlessly and I'm lying here, with her in my arms, staring blankly up at my ceiling. "How could you?" Kassi garbles in her slumber. I close my eyes tightly, wishing I could confront Fern for her wrong doings. I can't help but wonder again if she knew all along what her brother was into. I bet that's why she had distanced herself from us and things were tense on the home front. Those two, Granger and Fern, were tight, thick as thieves in the night, so the odds of her not knowing his troubles is zilch to none.

Granger is on the top of my list of people to find. Once I get a chance to speak with him; I'll be single-handedly going after, and obliterating the club that tortured my women. I will always feel Fern's loss to the depths of my soul, but Kassi is my number one priority. I keep

repeating this to myself so that I don't lose myself in vengeance. I will make sure she has her girls surrounding her while I go hunting. And that's the best word I have to describe what I'll be doing. Granger is my prey, and I'll never stop until I know exactly what he's gotten himself involved in. I need to know how far I have to go to ensure Kassi's safety. I don't want her looking over her shoulder for the rest of her damn life. That's no way to live, and she is going to live the best life she can. I'll make damn sure of that fact.

Forever yours, she once told me. I need to make sure she feels every day that I am hers forever as well.



I finally fell asleep as the sun began peeking over the horizon. Stretching my limbs out, I find the bed cold and empty. "Kassi?" I call out, my eyes not quite functioning. Wiping my eyes to clear the sleep from them, I stand up and scan the room. Not seeing her, I head into the bathroom. The door is always kept closed, but I don't see any lights shining through the cracks. I go in, and as I presumed, she's not in here. I take care of my morning business, then get dressed to go down and find my wayward woman. I search all of the main rooms coming up empty, so I head into the kitchen. My nose immediately recognizes the smell of fresh brewed coffee. Grabbing a mug from the cabinet, I fill it to the brim. After taking a few sips, I head out the back door and notice her sitting on a picnic bench. She's wrapped in a blanket looking out at the property. She's lost in thought; not wanting to startle her by appearing out of nowhere, I clear my throat so she knows I'm within her proximity.

"It's cold out here, baby," I state, understanding dawning on me with the look she shoots my way that she knows this; seeing as she's wrapped tightly in a fuzzy throw blanket, which she lifts her hand inside of the blanket showing me. "Stupid observation, huh?" Her lip lifts in the corner, but no sound leaves her mouth. "Do you want more coffee?" I ask, pointing at her empty mug as I do.

"No, I've already had three cups. I'm a live wire waiting to explode," she meekly states. I can't help but think it's more than the coffee

causing her to feel this way.

“Do you wanna head in and have breakfast with me?” I question, wanting her out of this frigid temperature and inside the warmth of the clubhouse. It’s springtime, but the mornings and nights are chilly before the sun has a chance to warm the air.

“I’m not really hungry right now, Malibu,” she answers. “I’ll get something later, promise.” She knows I won’t normally let this go easily, but right now; I feel as if I need to give her this.

“Just don’t wait until dinner time to remember,” I jest. She’s always lost in some project or another to where she easily forgets to eat. “I’ve got a few things I need to take care of today, will you be okay here with the girls while I’m gone?”

“Club business?” she inquires, looking up at me and meeting my eyes.

“Yeah, babe. Club business,” I reiterate. She hates when I can’t share what I’m up to, but she knows the life and when to push and when to let it go. Which makes her the perfect Ol’ lady. She already knows the ins and outs concerning this lifestyle and doesn’t push me to become someone I’m not.

“Be careful and safe. And Malibu?”

“Yeah, baby?”

“Don’t kill Granger.”

“I won’t kill him, Kassi. But I have some questions that he is goin’ to answer. Even if I have to threaten him to get him talkin’.”

“Okay,” she whispers, turning away from me once again. Leaning over, I kiss the top of her head then squeeze her shoulder before walking away. I don’t want to leave her today of all days, but this can’t wait. It’s been months since Fern died, and the longer we do wait, the worse things could become. It’s already blown up on the club’s family once, my family; we can’t allow that to happen again. They could already have a plan in place and we’d never be the wiser.

## Kassi

I try to smile at the appropriate times, nod my head when there's a break in conversation, but my mind is solely on Malibu. I'm fearful of what he's up to and the lengths he's willing to go to make Granger and the Bloodthirsty Bastards pay. Is he willing to sacrifice himself to get the answers he seeks? I can't lose him too. He's my lifeline, my anchor, my salvation in this life. I'm feeling helpless, hopeless and worried about what it means that I don't want to live without him by my side. Is it love or is it obsession? Is it need or desire? Questions of this caliber keep popping up, leaving me gasping for oxygen to infiltrate my lungs.

"She's having a panic attack," Skylar screeches.

"Bend over, Kassi. Head between your knees," Rylie issues. "Breathe in and out. Count to three when you inhale then exhale. Repeat it over until you have control."

"That's not going to work if her attacks are anything like the ones I've witnessed before. She needs medication, maybe a trip to the emergency room," Kaci inserts.

"Are you googling again?" Skylar questions my twin.

"Hey, Google has all the answers to symptoms and what you should do when they arise. This one says she needs to see a doctor," Kaci insists.

"You really should stop researching medical issues, Kaci. Just last week you thought you had a brain tumor when in actuality you had a sinus pressure headache," Sadie reminisces. My heart still feels as if it's racing, attempting to beat itself straight from my chest cavity. "Here, I have a Xanax in my purse."

"Do I even want to know why you have that prescription?" Rylie questions her sister.

“Right now, that doesn’t matter. We need to get it down Kassi and try and calm her down.” Sadie tries to brush off her sister's question.

“Fine, but we will be discussing this once we have her calmed down, Sadie.” Rylie is amped up, I can feel the worry she has for her sister and it adds to my stress level.

“Y’all are making things worse. Just go get her a damn glass of water, Rylie, while Sadie grabs the damn pill,” Skylar utters, taking control of the sisters and their drama. I feel a hand sliding through my hair, and instinctively know it’s Kaci. Her scent envelops me, helping me feel a bit more secure and at ease. But not enough to help me take control of my body and mind.

“It’s gonna be alright. You’ll see, sissy, the guys will make us all safe. Nobody is going to let anything bad happen to you again.” Kaci means well when she shares these words with me, but the one thing Malibu and I never shared with them was the level of duplicity we suffered from Fern’s actions or lack thereof.

“You don’t understand,” I rasp out. “You don’t get it.” My body begins to shake, as if I’m coming down from an adrenaline high.

“Then help me to understand; together, we’ll figure it out and come up with a solution to make it all better,” she propositions.

“Later, let’s get her calmed down and breathing normally first,” Sky rationalizes with Kaci.

Rylie comes back with a tall glass of ice water, Sadie tosses a pill at me. They’re all looking skeptically at me, unsure of how to force this tablet down my throat. With shaky hands, I reach out for the round ‘miracle’ medication and grab the glass in my other. I manage to get it down and drink the entire glass of liquid. I’m escorted by the women to mine and Malibu’s room, where I’m tucked into bed as if I’m one of their children. They stick around, surrounding me in my bed while my body and mind give over to the drug and I eventually pass out.

When I wake, it's to raised voices. I immediately recognize my sister and Malibu and hear them arguing. "Explain what she meant when she said Fern deceived her, Malibu," Kaci shouts. I don't remember stating anything of the sort. I must've talked about her in my sleep. It's the only thing that makes any sense whatsoever. Jesus, somebody shoot me now, I didn't want my sister to lose her shit over what I've learned when it pertained to one of the two people I've loved and admired most in my life. The two of us are used to the feeling of betrayal. Our first lesson in that had come from our father and his lack of interest in our life.

"Kaci, that conversation is between the two of you. I won't step into this situation unless I know how Kassi wants to handle it and how she wants to share. She may not want you to know all of it. And I have to respect her wishes on that aspect," Malibu says, and even though my eyes aren't on him, I know that his face is reddening in irritation from my twin sister's inquisition.

"Kaci?" I sleepily call out her name. "Enough. Leave Malibu alone, I promise the two of us will sit down and talk, but right now, I just can't relive that." I hold back the chopped sob that wants to escape, Fern doesn't deserve any more of my tears. I can't believe I was still holding her in the highest regards after my memories resurfaced. I acted as if she was someone to be worshipped and missed with every beat of my heart; when the truth was so much different than my warped sense of loyalty.

"Kaci, I think you should give me and my girl some alone time, yeah?" Malibu asks. I can hear my sister huffing and puffing before finally coming over to me and kissing the top of my head.

"Get some rest, but we will be talking later. Okay?"

"Yes, Kaci, we will. I promised didn't I?" I'm sick and tired of her taking on the mothering role when it comes to me. I mean, fuck, we shared the same womb and were born minutes apart from each other. Neither one of us has more life experience than the other. The only thing she has beat me on is becoming a mother. I hear Kaci shuffle out the doorway without uttering a word at Malibu as she brushes past him.

“Well,” Malibu gushes out in a long drawn out breath, “that was... fun.” I slant open one of my eyes and look at the smug look on his face. It’s not very often that he wins a run in with my sister. He’s feeling a bit triumphant right now, but I decide to let him have it. I’m too emotionally drained to give him my sass right now.

“Did you eat, Kassi?” Malibu questions as he comes up and sits next to me on the bed. When the bed dips from his weight, my body slightly bounces which instantaneously causes nausea to take hold.

“Gonna be sick,” I say as I rush out of the bed with my hand cupping my mouth.

## MALIBU



"KASSI," I ASK AS I KNEEL DOWN NEXT TO HER AS SHE DEPOSITS HER empty stomach. "What can I do? Is it because you haven't eaten anythin'?" Worry begins to claw its way through me, I can't think of anything other than making her better. I have to make things right; this is all my damn fault.

"Probably. The thought of food makes my stomach turn, Malibu. Nothing feels right anymore. My feelings and memories have been flipped upside down. I don't know what's right and wrong anymore." Her tears are like knives slicing through my chest. I've seen enough of them the last few days to last me a lifetime.

"What about a bottle of water and some aspirin? That should help, yeah?" I question, trying to think of anything I can do to make her feel slightly better.

"Some water and Tylenol would be great. I don't usually take aspirin unless I'm recovering from a massive hangover. Maybe some soda

crackers if there's any stocked in the pantry?" Kassi inquires through a moan. "Fuck, I hate it when I get sick. I've just started and my stomach is already cramping."

"I'll see if we have some, if not I'll send a prospect out to get you a package. Would you like some ginger ale or something like it to settle some of your queasiness? It always worked for me when I was a kid."

"Ugh, I hate the taste of ginger, how about a Sprite or 7-up instead?" She's looking green around the gills again. I step up and grab a wet washcloth for her. Handing it to her, she wipes her mouth and closes her eyes.

"I can do that, how about we get you back in bed and I'll grab the trashcan and sit it next to you? You need to sleep once we get you rehydrated and get some crackers in your stomach." I hate that she's sick, all I wanna do is take her place so that she has one thing going good for her. I know most of this is my fault, and I feel like a damn asshole, but I'm intent to make it as easy on her as I can. I've already started looking for a therapist for her. She needs to work through this, find her new place in life now that Fern's been knocked down from her perch from the top of her totem pole. But I don't want to talk to Kassi about this now when she's feeling so down.

Once I have her back in the bed and the trash can moved, I make my way down the stairs. The entire common room becomes silent as I waltz in. "Well, don't let me stop you from partying. I'm just gonna grab Kassi some water and crackers." Rolling my eyes as I head into the kitchen, Kaci comes in behind me.

"Is she feeling sick, Malibu? She always gets stomach cramps and gets ill if she's stressed out." Kaci questions me.

"She is," I honestly answer without being a smartass.

"I've got some Sprite hidden in the back of the pantry. Let me get a can for you while you make her a cup of ice." She rushes off as I begin to make the glass.

"Do we have saltines in there?" I call out.

"Yeah, I got her a couple of packages," she answers, strolling out with her hands filled with five cans of soda, and two packages of saltines. "Just wanted to make sure she had plenty. Word of advice?" she poses as a question, even though I know she'll tell me regardless of my answer. After I nod my head she continues, "cherry Jell-O, saltines, Sprite and an eighties movie goes a long way when she's down and out."

"The only movies I own from that time frame are Terminator and Alien." I begin to contemplate how I'll know what movie to get and where to find one. It's not as if they're in high demand and on the shelves at the local twenty-four-hour mart. And neither of the movies I own will help her to relax whatsoever. If anything, they'd probably make her more jumpy.

"I've got the Breakfast Club and Sixteen Candles. I'll bring them to you," Kaci supplies with an amused smirk laced on her face.

"They're chick flicks, aren't they? I bet they even contain a bunch of teenage shenanigans," I answer, already knowing I'm doomed to sit through some damn show about teenage love.

"Secretly, you'll love them. Travler grumbles about having to sit through and watch them with me. But he'll take that over Twilight any day of the week." She begins to chuckle.

"Um... yeah, teenage vampires and wolves aren't exactly my cup of tea," I admit as I answer her.

"Oh my *God!* You've seen it haven't you?" She sends a curious yet accusing look in my direction.

"I will neither confirm nor deny that," I say, taking the load out of her arms and hastily walking out of the room. Her roar of laughter can be heard down the hallway as I escape from her torturous questions.

I have this dreaded feeling that I'll be mercilessly teased over knowing facts when it pertains to that series. There's just something wrong about vampires and wolves becoming allies that doesn't sit well in the pit of my stomach. They are natural born enemies.

And that's all I've got to say about that.

Kassi

Even though I'm exhausted beyond belief from the stress of being sick earlier, I can't seem to fall back to sleep. I lay here and toss and turn as I wait for Malibu to come back with something for me to drink. My throat feels parched, raw and sore. Something cool is anticipated, along with some soda crackers. Whereas I don't feel like I have the energy to eat anything, I know that if I don't want to come down with something vicious, something that I'll need to be hospitalized to overcome, I don't have much of a choice. That's what happens when you deprive your body of liquids and nutrition. I've avoided hospitals at all costs since the last time I was there. The night that... that changed everything.

As soon as I begin to travel down the path of memories filled with horrors, the door swings open. "Perfect timing," I tell Malibu as he juggles a glass filled with ice, five cans of soda and two sleeves of crackers. "That's a lot, Malibu. It'll take me days to make it through all of that."

"Nah, it'll be gone before mornin'," Malibu confidently states.

My eyes widen at the prospect of eating all of that by myself. "Malibu, I need to start off slowly. If I attempt to eat all of that I'll be sick for days."

"I'll be here with you tonight, who knows, I may need a snack too." He winks at me as he saunters toward me. "Your sister is bringing a movie for us to watch while we rest. I think we need some time to decompress. No better way than holdin' each other and watchin' some teeny bop movie or somethin' like that."

"Teeny bop? Do I even wanna know what kind of movies she's bringing for us?" Knowing Kaci, it could be any assortment of eras.

We have movies we love ranging from the fifties up to present day. Our grandparents used to shower us with musicals and older cowboy movies. We are multicultural lovers of all things film related.

"She said somethin' about a club and some candle something or other." He shrugs his shoulders as he settles back into the bed.

"Candles and a club?" I tease, knowing exactly which movies my sister plans on bringing me. Two of my favorites growing up. She and I used to watch them back to back when we were stuck in the dorms sick at our boarding school. We didn't come home for a lot of holidays; if our grandparents weren't around, we stayed there with the monitors. We'd junk out with popcorn, candy, sodas, chips, cookies... basically any junk food we could get our hands on. We figured if we weren't bringing in the holidays with the traditional food and desserts, we'd eat whatever the fuck we wanted. The dorm monitor on duty didn't care what we did, as long as we weren't out and about causing trouble or catching the place on fire. She mainly stayed in her room, and the girls who didn't go home, stayed together. We'd not just watch movies, but play cards, board games and we even made a few prank calls. It was juvenile, but we were young. That was our way of living on the edge.

Sister comes strolling into the bedroom like she owns the place, my nephew, Cash, securely placed on her hip. "Okay, I brought you two of our favorites, can't stay long, mister teething man here is in a cranky mood. Here ya go," she says as she tosses the movies at Malibu. "Bye." As quickly as she entered she leaves.

"Was that my sister or a tornado that came in?" I ask Malibu who then begins to chuckle at my inquiry. "Shit, she was imitating the Flash. I've never seen her so flustered before. Did she even take a breath between sentences?"

"I don't think so. That was amazin' how quickly she could take care of what she needed to and disappear. Is that a mother thing?" he questions, scratching the back of his neck.

"Must be, I've never seen her do that before. She's always long winded and overstays her welcome. But she's my sister so I tolerate her doing so." I shrug my shoulders, because who in the world is

brazen enough to kick their twin out? You'd have to be a special kind of person to do so. I know that if I were to do that, Kaci would make me pay. My shaving cream would be replaced with Nair, my purple shampoo would be replaced with dish soap. She's vicious like that when she's had her feelings trampled on.

"Which movie first?" Malibu asks. I point my finger at The Breakfast Club, because holy shit that movie's funny... and I could use some laughter in my life.

## KASSI



IT'S BEEN A WEEK SINCE I FELT ILL, BUT NOW THAT I'VE STARTED EATING again I'm feeling a lot better. Malibu found me a therapist who was more than willing to video conference with me. I'm still here at the clubhouse, not ready to make it out into the dangerous world around me. When he first brought up me talking to someone, I was offended. I mean, I've got my sisters around me twenty-four hours seven days a week. All it takes is a phone call or a text from me and my room would be flooded with them all. Even though I put up a fuss about talking to a stranger, it really has been helpful.

She's helped me compartmentalize the *unfortunate* position Fern must've felt she was in. I still don't agree with the way she handled the entire situation, but we've broken it down into different scenarios. She had to have known either way that she was going to die that night. The part that I still struggle with, is that she had to make a choice. To me, she made the wrong one. Did she think she chose the the lesser of two evils? Or was she willing to sacrifice me for her

brother? These are questions that I know will never truly be answered. We can sit around and second guess it all, but at the end of the day... the past can't be changed. If I had a magic time machine, I'd go back and have a serious conversation with the both of us. I'd also warn my past self to be nowhere around the apartment that night, but I can wish for salvation in one hand and shit in the other, and they would all end up weighing the same.

Nothing is a guarantee in life, but I'm a survivor and I will eventually get through this. It may take me a bit, but I'm a stronger person than I give myself credit for. Malibu has been my rock, he's even stayed by my side, holding my hand, while I've conversed with the therapist. He's had to take off a few times throughout the week; I'm assuming he's going hunting for Granger. The devil on my shoulder wants him to find him and make him pay, but my other shoulder holds that pain in the ass angel; who's constantly whispering in my ear that I shouldn't wish his punishment upon him. He is a person as well. But why should I worry myself about putting someone else's well-being at the top of my list? He didn't give a damn about anyone else when he was betraying the Bloodthirsty Bastards. He knew they'd retaliate, it's who they are. People like them won't give you a free pass for screwing them over. These are hardened criminals that we're speaking of. They'd behead your partner while you sit and watch. Then, they'd clean the blade with their tongue... disgusting creatures.

Malibu yanks me from my thoughts as he comes strolling into our room. "Did ya eat today?" He asks the same question every time he's been away from me for a long period of time.

"I did, Skylar brought me a chicken sandwich earlier. And before you ask, yes, I ate every bite of it." I smile in his direction; he's been so worried about me.

"Good. I have a meetin' with the brothers in about an hour. Wanna shower with me?" he asks, and I can see the mischief and lust dancing in his droopy, hungry eyes. He wants to do more than cleanse our bodies, and mine jumps to life and awakens from its slumber. It's been a long time since we've had an intimate moment together. And I'm actually looking forward to his hands caressing me.

"I'd love to," I admit as I leap from the bed in a single bound. My nipples are already pebbling in anticipation of his mouth licking and sucking them into stiff taut peaks.

"Come on, beautiful." He reaches his hand out for mine. Once I place my hand in his, he guides me into our attached bathroom. One thing Malibu and I have always had in common is that we like the temperature to be super-hot. We've always been the two who've showered together; we conserve on water and have fun while bathing each other.

"Are we doing normal hot or supernova hot?" I ask Malibu. There is a difference, hot means the heat grazes your skin, super-hot means that it settles deep into your bones, warming you from the outside in. I personally love the heat when it settles into my bones, keeping me warm for hours on end.

"We'll do normal hot and I'll be your supernova heat source today." He winks at me as he uses his foot to shut the door behind us.

"I'm intrigued," my words come out as a purr. My inner kitty cat is coming out to play, Malibu loves my sharp claws. When my nails dig into his skin, he comes alive and it spurs him into action. Yes, I'm more than ready to share this time with my man. I need him, and he somehow knows that I do. Since making it home from the cottage, he's been more attentive and we've managed to bond with the two of us again, something that was lost and I wasn't sure we'd ever recover.

## Malibu

Finding Granger has turned out to be more of a hassle than I thought it'd be. He's hiding good, but eventually, he'll have to rear his ugly head somewhere. He has a lot to answer for, and I plan on being the man he has to face. It's an unwritten and unverbilized vow with my brothers that whoever spots him, has to hold him for me. Initially, I

wanted to get my hands on him for what happened to his sister, but now, it's all about avenging my angel... my Kassi. She's had a rough life, one where she's always felt alone and abandoned, she won't be feeling that way from here on out. I made a silent promise to her that I'll never betray her trust again. If she ever finds out I had a hand in her forced memories, I'll lose her forever. If I have to kill Creed to ensure his promise of silence is kept, I'll do it no matter how much it ends up costing me in the long run. I may be compromising my freedom for a cinder block wall, but it'll be worth the ultimate price if she's never aware of the part I played.

Lifting Kassi up and sitting her on the bathroom counter, I walk over to the shower and turn it on, making sure the hot water knob is turned more than the cold. Walking back over to her, I instruct, "Lift your arms, baby." She immediately complies as I pull her top up and over her head. Tossing the material on the floor, my eyes move to her upper torso; taking in the luscious globes of her protruding breasts as they plump up, spilling over the top portion of her bra. "Your breasts are a work of art." Her eyes become lustful as I rid her of the confining device. "That's better," I huskily whisper as my dick jumps to life from the visual in front of me. My hands lift of their own accord and massage the handfuls of gloriousness. My fingers pinch and tweak her nipples. She throws her head back and closes her eyes as a moan escapes her throat. I'm mesmerized by her tongue as it comes out and swipes along her bottom lip. Not being able to help myself, I lean down and capture those wet lips with my own. She opens up slightly, allowing my tongue to breach the voluptuous entrance of her soon to be swollen lips. Our tongues begin to furiously duel with one another's. We're both ravenous and hungry for the taste of one another. It's been so long since I've felt the urge to own and dominate her.

As I pull back, both of our chests are heaving, trying to resupply our loss of oxygen that was lost in our lungs as we tried to crawl inside one another's mouths. "Malibu, we still have too many clothes on," she supplies through a whine, as she then grabs voraciously at the bottom of my shirt with her hands. "We should be on an equal playing ground here." I sit back and allow her to lift it up over my head, then see out of the corner of my eye as she tosses it to join her own. Her hands glide down my chest, her fingernails scrape my sensitive

skin causing a hiss to leave my mouth. I clench my teeth, and grind my jaw as her fingers roam over my pecs and abs. "Your body is sinful, Malibu."

"I could say the same thing about yours," I admit, because fuck she's got a rocking body. The room begins to fill with steam from the shower as I reach down and pull her form fitting leggings from her lower half. She lifts up her ass in order to help me out, causing her breasts to come into close contact with my face. Not being able to resist the succulent temptation, I grab a protruding nub in between my lips. I suckle it into a flat disc, trapping it between my tongue and the roof of my mouth. Her hands come up and grab ferociously at my hair, the intensity of her need for me has me ready to take her right here and right now, but I do need to get into the shower before the water chills. Once her pants have been slid completely off of her, she gracefully begins to lower herself down my body—chest to chest, skin to skin, tingles radiate throughout my entire being. Without saying one solitary word, she lowers herself to where her mouth is lined up perfectly with the zipper of my denim jeans. My pants are barely holding captive the hard-on protruding behind the confining, unforgiving material. She slowly and methodically releases my belt from its buckle with steady hands. Closing my eyes at the light touch of her hands on the release of my jeans, I pray that I'm able to attain my sanity. A concept that feels foreign and unreachable as her fingers lightly graze my skin above the waistband of my jeans. I feel a breeze of air as she lowers them down and they fall over the edge of my ass.

"Need to get these boots off, Malibu," she states, as she reaches down and unlaces them. I assist her with their removal, as my socks then jeans shortly follow afterward. I'm standing naked in front of her with my cock barely touching the tip of her swollen lips. Her eyes pop up to meet mine as she snakes her tongue out from her mouth; she swipes her tongue up the slit of my cock's head, taking a taste of the precum pebbling there. My fingers reach down and tangle in her long locks as she grabs the base of my dick and sucks the head into her cavernous heat. Opening her mouth wider, she sucks me down her throat, which amazes me each and every time she has done so. Once I'm embedded and my balls hit her chin, it takes all of my concentration of reciting my favorite ball players' scores in order

to keep from shooting my load. I'm a man, not a teenage boy receiving his first blowjob. I should have a helluva lot better control over my appendage than I'm feeling right now.

"When I come, it's not goin' to be down your throat, Kassi," I demand as I pull my hips back, hearing the pop of my cock leaving the confines of her mouth. Saliva is trickling down her cheek; taking my thumb, I wipe it off. "Shower, Kassi." She gives me a lopsided grin as she stands up and stretches her arms over her head, causing her nipples to garner my complete and utter attention. My eyes can't help but to once again travel to the perfection of her glamorous breasts.

"Follow me," she sasses as she wiggles her finger in a '*come here*' motion and steps inside of the shower stall. Never one to turn down an offer such as the one she's offering; I quickly follow in her stead. As she steps under the spray of water, she arches her hips, pushing her ass out for my viewing enjoyment. Her pussy is on open display, glistening from her womanly wiles and *not* from the water cascading down her body. "We should get *really* dirty before we get all nice and squeaky clean." Her come hither eyes are my ultimate undoing. There's no foreplay needed for either one of us, she wants nothing more than to feel my steel hard cock probing her internal walls. She spreads her legs wider until her feet are touching the sides of the showers stall. When she leans her body further into the wall, I approach closer to her. Taking my dick in hand, I line myself up with her slicked opening. As my cock head is inserted into her heated chamber, she pushes her hips back, nearly swallowing me down to the base of my dick. One of my hands grabs her by the roots of her hair, and the other clutches her hip. Her head comes flying back, causing her back to arch even further than she'd been. I slowly pull my hips back, leaving only a small portion of my length inside of her; as she goes to protest this act, I slam my full length back inside of her. "Fuck yes," she cries out as her pussy clamps down on me, causing black spots and stars to dance behind my retinas. My eyes stay open, watching the two of us where we're joined, they're enamored with the vision of me tunneling in and out of her weeping, greedy pussy. "Harder, Malibu. Show me I'm yours," she challenges me. Not one to disappoint my woman's needs, I once again slam deeply inside of her. One of her hands leaves the tiled wall in front

of us as I feel the tips of her fingers grazing my balls. The movement of her hand from my aching nuts to her engorged clit, causes my heart to beat rapidly and the beast within me to become unleashed. My hips pummel her as I periodically add a swivel, hitting her G-spot just right. She mewls and hollers as her hand that was still braced on the wall begins slapping it in succession with my pounding hips.

"Get yourself there, I'm holding on by a thin thread that's ready to snap, Kassi," I inform her as I find myself closing my eyes to try and gain some control over my overpowering needs and incessant drive for release.

"I'm there, I'm there," she chants as she screams out my name. As her pussy attempts to hold my cock hostage, I amp up my push and pull from her tight, unforgiving pussy. I fight harder to enter her as her body reacts to her release, the feeling of triumph when I push through her clamped walls has my balls drawing up. The tingle that lets me know completion is on the horizon races up my spine, pulling my balls up. As my load begins to shoot out of me, I slam my hands on the wall next to hers as I holler out her name. It takes me a minute of standing still, keeping my dick buried inside of her before my synapses begin firing online once again. "Missed this, you and me," she admits through a small sob, and the guilt of not taking care of her squeezes my chest.

"I'm sorry I've been such a damned fool, Kassi," I respond, laying small kisses along her collarbone. "I was drownin' in self-sorrow so I didn't look up and see the pain you were sufferin'. I was so fuckin' selfish, and I hate that part of me."

"Whatever happened before today, we need to wipe the slate clean and start over. It's just us now, Malibu. We have to learn to go from a triad relationship to a duo one. It's a learning curve for us, but I have faith that we can make it out the other side through anything life throws our way."

"It's you and me forever, Kassi." I've learned my lessons, they were hard and brutal, but they're mistakes I'll never make again. I will trust her no matter who or what tries to come between us and divide us. I should've never doubted my woman and who she is. She's

strong, loyal, loving, and truthful. I, however, am a coward who will work my ass off to be the man worthy of all of her traits. Therapy with her has opened my eyes to my misdoings, I'm not the man I always thought I was.

It's disappointing and discerning to discover this about myself.

I can change.

I will change.

I'll do anything for her.

I'm the fuckup, not her.

Never her.

"I've done some things I'm not proud of, Kassi." My mind begins to go down the path that maybe I should open up and be honest with her. She has the right to decide if I'm who she wants forever... if she has it in her to forgive me for my misdeeds and betrayal of her trust.

"Me too, Malibu. Clean slate, remember? What's in the past needs to stay there and buried."

"But you need to know," I begin.

She turns around and places a solitary finger over my lips, silencing me. "I don't care, bury it, Malibu, because I don't give a fuck what you've done. It's over, done, gone... let's move forward. Promise me whatever it is, you'll let it go. I don't want to know, not today and not tomorrow. Not even on our deathbeds do I want a confession. Understand?" She pops her hip out as she asks this of me.

"Are you sure? You may not be able to forgive me if you ever discover what I've done."

"I'll never pay attention to an ill word spoken about you, Malibu. I love you, and that's all that matters to me. Do you want a future with me?" she hesitantly asks.

"Forever and always," I promise her.

“Then I don’t give a fuck what you’ve done. Now, that that’s outta the way, you owe me a good scrubbing.” She laughs with a twinkle in her eye.

“Then let’s get you shiny like a newly unwrapped toy on Christmas mornin’,” I announce and am happy to hear the giggles that she produces. God forgive me, but I’ll keep my word and not share this with her, and hope it never blows up in my face.

## KASSI



I'M NOT SURE WHAT FLIPPED MALIBU'S SWITCH BUT EVER SINCE WE reconnected in the shower, we've been practically glued to the other's hip. He's got church today, so me and my girls are putting together a picnic for us and the kids. We're still on a soft lockdown, so going anywhere isn't possible, but the property is big enough that we're heading out toward the back of the lot so the kids can run around and blow off some pent-up steam.

"I've got the provisions," Kaci says, holding up a bottle of wine.

Holding back my snicker on what she perceives as important supplies I disclose, "Uh, just saying, we've got the kids, remember?" I leave out the part where I want to point out one of those is her own.

"One bottle with all of us won't even register in our bodies," she snaps with a roll of her eyes. "We're not getting wasted, Kassi, just adding a little grown-up juice to the day and outing. Consider it

grape juice if you must." I start laughing because she's trying so hard to be serious right now and miserably failing.

"Whatever. Do we have everything we need?" I ask, looking around. Sky unearthed a cooler and had a prospect fill it with ice, so now she's adding juices and water for the kids. Sadie and Rylie have the sandwiches made and are packing those into the cooler as well. "Ha! Y'all forgot the chips and the cookies." I walk into the pantry and grab the variety bag so that everyone can get what they want, then spy a package of Oreos so I pick those up as well. Gotta have some fun food to go with the *'go-go juice'* my twin is insisting we take with us.

"Should we take some fruit?" Rylie questions, looking inside of the fridge.

"Why not? It's nature's candy after all," Sky retorts. I roll my eyes; how the fuck does she know shit like that?

"I think we're ready," I state, looking at the controlled chaos.

"I'll get a prospect to load it all onto one of the ATVs," Kaci says. "Oh, gonna have them get the frisbees and shit too." Good idea, we need to tire out these little devils who've been locked up and needing to expend some of that restless energy.

"I've got sunblock." Leave it to Rylie to remember that; guess that's another 'mom' thing. A memory begins to surface of a time when poor Jayna got a sunburn that had blisters forming on her shoulders. It was a cloudy day, so none of us thought that something of that severity could happen.

Lesson fucking learned.

"Then let's blow this popsicle stand!" Kaci cries out. "That way, the men can do their manly biker shit." A picture enters my mind of them all beating their chests and having a burping contest. It's been known to happen... more than once, actually. I look over my shoulder and smile when I see Rylie climbing into the four-wheel drive SUV. Being pregnant, Kid would kill us all if we allowed her to drive or ride on one of the utility vehicles. This is as close as she'll get to driving anything with the top off and wind blowing through her

tresses. She's been put on notice, she can only ride in vehicles deemed safe by Kid. I'm surprised he hasn't gotten her a tank to drive, he's that crazy over her safety and it's quite entertaining the measures he's willing to take to protect her and their unborn child.

The giggles from the twins ring out as the prospects carefully drive down the trail to our picnic spot. I look around, amazed at what the men have done for us. At some point, they put up a huge wooden swing set and playhouse contraption, and there's an area with a huge tent for us to relax under while still keeping an eye on what the kids are doing.

"I wanna play!" Jayna says when she sees the playhouse, she begins kicking her feet as excitement to be outdoors begins to take root.

"Me too!" Jake announces when he sees the sandbox off to the side where there are dump trucks and cars galore.

"Y'all wait until we've stopped," Rylie proclaims, using a stern voice that's only used on her children. They nod but I can see them shaking with wanted anticipation. Once we've finally stopped, she says, "Go play, you two." They grin at her before climbing down and running as fast as their legs can carry them to the objects of their current desire.

"God, I wish I had their energy," I announce as I make my way to a chair under the tent. Watching them makes me feel old, and I'm anything but.

"Right? If we could bottle that shit, we'd be gazillionaires," Sky replies.

"I don't think that's a word," Sadie says as she shakes her head in Skylar's direction.

"We can have Kaci Google it," I tease. I squeal when a piece of ice flies through the air at me. "Oh, it's like that, huh?" I question, mock glaring at her. Taking my water bottle, I point the opened end in her direction whereas she gives me a 'try it' look. If she thinks I won't, she's forgotten about how much I believe in paybacks.

"Google gives me an unlimited supply of information," she informs me with a sneer directed solely at me.

"And it also causes you to panic unnecessarily," Sky states, giving my twin the stink eye.

"Whatthefuckever," Kaci responds, none too happily. I turn my head in order for her not to see the smirk that's formed on my face. She and her Google searches have landed us at the hospital a few times with 'undiagnosed' by a doctor that she took upon herself to self-diagnosis. If that makes any sense... in other words, my sister believes she can diagnose every symptom we seem to have at the clubhouse. We all try to humor her and let her think she's got the right of it, but then we all snicker when she turns her back. She's crazy as fuck sometimes, but I love her regardless.

"This was a good idea," I profusely announce. "It's not too hot, not too cold, we're still protected, and the kids can run off some of that pent-up energy." The guilt that consumes me over the situation that isn't of their making brings tears to my eyes. I can't believe their lives have been put on hold because of some pansy ass motherfuckers. "Y'all, I'm sorry that my mess is making it so we can't go out and about, continuing on with our lives in a normal capacity." I watch Cash crawl out of his mother's lap and toddle over to the sandbox. He plops down in the middle of what Jake has been building. He bursts into laughter and Jake falls over to smash the other 'thing' he had constructed. Great, two sandy boys. Glad I don't have to bathe them.

"Stop that shit right now," Sky advises. "You're our sister and we're all family. If this is what we have to do to stay safe, I'm all for it. They'll find that guy and take care of shit and once they do, we can go back to life as normal." Of course, I can't help but wonder what is considered normal in our life? I don't ask it, but the thought is still there, simmering in the back of my mind.

Leaning back in my chair, I watch as the kids take on the world in their make-believe minds. This is what family is supposed to be about.

## Malibu

We're still no closer to finding Granger. It's like he vanished into thin air or something, but I highly doubt that fact. We just haven't found the particular rock he managed to crawl under is all, but we've put the word out through town that we're interested in finding him, so I'm hoping that Kid calling church today means there was success by that proclamation through word of mouth. Kassi is more like she was before Fern died; open, loving, trusting. My guilt over how I got the information I need eats at me every night; I'm sure if my brothers knew, I'd get a beatdown from every one of them, especially from her brother. I'm trying to do what she asked and just focus on the here and now, but when the late hours of the night come, while she's sleeping, nestled in my arms, it all comes rushing back to the forefront of my mind. It's like a plague that I can't escape and I'm losing sleep and feeling the tiredness of the depravity through the daylight hours.

"You okay, brother?" Kid questions me as he comes up to where I've been sitting in solidarity at the bar, nursing a beer.

"Yeah." My one word answer causes him to raise a singular brow at me. He's not buying my load of bullshittery. Not that I blame him, I'm not doing a good job at hiding my feelings from any of them. Not being able to share my fuck ups with them is starting to eat a hole in my chest.

"How's Kassi doing? She seems a lot more like her old self these days. I know it was hard for her to tell us all of that shit, and I hate that both of y'all were betrayed by Fern the way you were, but she needed to remember what happened that night when all's said and done."

"I hadn't really thought about it like that," I admit. "But I guess you're right. Fern didn't just turn her back on Kassi, she did on me as well. If she had just been honest about what Granger was up to, maybe she'd still be alive. She didn't trust us enough and that kills

me, brother." I'm beginning to recognize there's a lot about Fern that I didn't know, and that pisses me the hell off. She was always the one spouting about how there needed to be no secrets between the three of us, but she was the one holding a detrimental one from all of us.

"She didn't trust any of us enough, Malibu. She could've told y'all, she could've told Rylie or hell, any of the other old ladies or even one of us guys. We would've protected her and gotten Granger out of the picture."

"Her lack of belief in our abilities ultimately cost her her life and we nearly lost Kassi as well," I growl out, frustration tinging my tone.

"But Kassi's okay now, brother. Focus on that fact because we can't change the past no matter how much we wish we fuckin' could." Fuck, he's saying the same thing the therapist has told the two of us; now if I could only get my head and heart to wrap around that and jump on the same fucking page, that'd be spectacular. "Ready for our meetin'?"

"Yeah," I reply, finishing my beer in one swallow. Grabbing another cold one from the cooler, I pop the top as we walk toward the room where we make our plans and converse.

As soon as we've all taken our seats of position at the table, Kid begins talking, asking, "Any new news on Granger or the Bloodthirsty Bastards? Are they all still hidin' like the cowards and pussies that they are?"

"The leads I followed up on in regard to Granger were a bust, Kid. I think his parents have assisted him in dissapearin'," I defeatedly admit. I've searched high and low for that fucktard.

"What makes you think that?" Ryder asks me, a look of fury sent in my direction. "Are the parents really that dense?"

"After losing Fern the way that they did, yeah, brother, I believe they are," I answer him, giving him a scowl of my own in return. Ryder narrows his eyes further at me; I'm not sure why we still have the tension between us that we do. Kassi and I have long since made up and everything is kosher between us. "I've got a source down at

their bank, I'm just waitin' on him to come through and let me know if their finances are off."

"Good plan, brother." At least Kid agrees with what I'm doing. "We need to start makin' some noise, getting those fuckin' weaselly bastards out of their hidey holes. I'm thinkin' it's time to call in Dust, Riptide, Julius and Andre. They love causin' chaos, this is right up their alley."

"I'll give 'em a call as soon as we wrap up here," Ryder states as he nods his head in Kid's direction. He and the crazy ass fuckers bonded when they were here last. They're friends of Justice's from their military days. They managed to fit in well with our brand of life, but they're travelers, nomads, they don't like staying in one place for too long. But before they left the clubhouse, they told us we could always call upon them if the need ever arose.

Well, doomsday has arrived, and we need all the reinforcements we can get. "Should we call in Tic and Wasp?" I inquire, thinking they'd be of invaluable service to us. Plus, if we go initiating a war, it could cause tension between the two clubs if they weren't knowledgeable in what we've been up to.

"Already called them, brother," Kid states with a nod of his head. "We'll be having some guests arriving in the next day or two."

"Who're they sendin'?" Tumbler asks. Out of all of us, he's the one who's been the most homesick. He, Ghost and Justice were thick as thieves. But, he wasn't about to stay behind while his twin and best friends from childhood took off to start their own chapter of the Rage Ryders.

"Wasp needs to keep some men home in order to keep things contained on the home front. With sayin' that, he also wants to make sure we're not in over our heads. We'll be gettin' as house guests Justice, Ghost, Spidey and the VP himself, Tic."

"Well, with this group of men it's as if we'll be preparin' for Armageddon," Travler chuckles. "Templeton won't know what hit them when those four arrive."

"I'm more scared to find out if their Ol' ladies will be accompanyin' them or not." As Tumbler states this with a look of horror on his face, we all begin a round of roaring laughter.

"Honestly, guys, I'm more worried about if 'Lil Bit is making her way with them. That girl thinks she's the head honcho and is taking over the world." As I admit this, I hear a round of agreements.

"She's a spitfire for sure. Takes after her momma on that one." Kid shakes his head as if he's got any room to talk. His troublesome duo make my balls shrivel up and hide deep inside my body. If there was ever such a thing as living, breathing birth control, it's them. We begin ribbing Kid on it and he just smiles and shakes his head.

"Back to business," Kid snaps, still wearing a smile on his face thinking about his kiddos. "We need to get the clubhouse prepared for visitors. I've not received confirmation on if the Ol' ladies and kids are joining the men or not; we'll be ready just in case. Now, let's keep doin' what we are and see if we can get any further leads before the men begin to trickle in. Keep it real, stay safe and nobody rides alone from this point out. I want none of you taken off guard. Got it?"

Affirmation of agreement goes around the table before we all stand up and begin to exit the room. The next few weeks ought to be fun. This town is fixing to be flipped on its axis. They've just gotten used to having us around, and now we're adding a bit of crazy, gun toting lunatics to our band of brothers. I can picture it now; businesses will be locking up and no one will be wanting to leave their homes. Just like back in the day that Bonnie and Clyde were around and would be announced as coming into a particular town.

## MALIBU



MY MAN AT THE BANK CAME THROUGH FOR ME. I'M GONNA OWE HIM A marker for doing this for me. He could get into some serious trouble and lose his job for doing this, but I'll make it worth his while for putting himself out there the way he did. Dust, Riptide, Julius and Andre are due to make it to town today. The earlier three will be staying with us at the club. Andre? Him we'll never lay eyes on while he's in the vicinity. He'll be around, no doubt about that, but more in a protector role ; we'll receive phone calls and text messages, but we'll never know he's been there watching us.

He's *that* fucking good at what he does.

Kinda creeps me the fuck out that I could be being tracked and never know it. But if anyone was to be doing so, I'd really prefer it to be Andre. At least I know he doesn't have any ill-will aimed my way. With him, I won't have to worry about the *sonofabitch* putting a bullet between my eyes or stabbing me in the back.

Today, I'm meeting my bank informant, Steve, and Tumbler's riding with me. No man alone is a pain in the ass, but a necessary evil that we all have to live with. I'm not sure if Steve's gonna be comfortable meeting with me with a brother at my side or not, but I'll have to convince him it's still in his best interest to show me the intel he's dug up.

"Are ya gonna be alright shakin' down the parents if we find out they're in on hidin' their son?" Tumbler asks me as we sit in the parking lot of the twenty-four-hour supermarket. "It's gonna be tough on ya knowin' those are Fern's folks you'll be gettin' down and dirty with."

"I'll deal," I inform him, lighting up a smoke. After taking a deep drag into my lungs, I continue, "He's gotta be found, brother. There's no if's, and's or but's about it. This isn't about Fern and her memory. It's not about what she would or wouldn't approve of. It's about ensuring Kassi's safety. I need her to be able to live her life to the fullest, and not be havin' to look over her shoulder each and every day." He grunts as I finish talking. "Is it gonna be hard? Yeah, it will be. I still love and miss her, but that doesn't diminish the fact that I'm pissed off at her too. She chose that slime ball brother of hers over our woman... and man, that's not okay. I'm angry as fuck, but I'm also grievin' for what we had. Not a day goes by that I don't miss seeing her smile or hearin' her feminine giggles. Then, I hate myself because I feel as if I'm betrayin' Kassi. I'm caught in a crosshair here and don't know how to deal with it all. I can't talk to Kassi about the way I'm feelin', it'd devastate her and make her think I'm choosin' Fern over her. I can't, I *won't*, put her through that. She's always felt second and third best throughout her life, it ain't fair, brother." Noticing that my cigarette burned out, I toss it to the ground and grind it out with my boot.

"Not gonna lie to ya, man. We've all got issues of our own where Fern's concerned. But you're our brother, and we'll always put those feelin's aside and be there for ya. We're your brothers, lean on us when you need to share and shit." Tumbler looks uncomfortable with this conversation so I lead us in another direction.

“Appreciate ya, brother. But I think for now, we’ll hold off on sharin’ Kleenex and shit. Here he comes,” I say, pointing in the direction that Steve’s hybrid clown car is coming.

“Jesus Christ, how the fuck does he drive that? I won’t even let Sadie get nothin’ like that. It’s a death trap waitin’ to happen,” he mutters, shaking his head in disbelief.

“Know what you mean, brother,” I commiserate with him. There’s no way in fuck I’d let Kassi drive one of those death machines. If she would even get clipped while driving it she’d lose control and her survival rates would be zilch to nothing. A shiver dances throughout my body at the thought of losing her. Nope, I’ll do everything I can to ensure her safety, even if it means I have a hand in choosing all things in life for her.

We watch as Steve unfolds his long legs out of the car and basically has to crawl his way out of it. *‘What’s the damn point of owning something like that if you can’t get in and out of it without contorting yourself like a pretzel?’* A snort leaves me at the thought rumbling through my head. Tumbler looks over at me and I can tell he’s thinking the same damned thing.

“Crazy fucker,” he mutters through his disdain.

“You got that right.” I emphatically agree with his assessment.

Steve glances around the parking lot, taking in the surroundings before marching his way toward us. “Here,” he says as he comes close to where we’re straddling our bikes waiting for him. His eyes shift to Tumbler and his hands begin to shake as he holds out the folder for me.

“Steve, this is my club brother, Tumbler. He ain’t gonna hurt ya man, don’t piss your pants or nothin’,” I sarcastically state as his entire being begins to tremble in fear. “Nobody’s gonna rat you out, I promise.”

“I need to get going, you can call me if you have any questions about what’s in there,” he wobbly states as he points at the folder now secure in my hand.

"Will do, Steve. Have a good one," I state, dismissing him. He's the one who chose this spot, I just complied with his wishes; wanting to see in black and white what Fern's folks have been up to. Tucking it into my saddlebags, I rev my engine and Tumbler joins me. Without another look or word spoken to Steve, we head back to the compound. The need to look inside is eating me up.

Kassi

Skylar, Rylie, Sadie, Kaci and I are sitting in the main room watching a movie on the seventy-inch television screen. "Fucking hell, that's one dumb bitch," I announce as we watch the blonde running from her pursuer and tripping over her own damn two feet. Cash, Kaci's son—my nephew, is spending some time bonding with the men of the club out in the shop. With him teething, I can tell my sister needed some female time, minus the leech that's usually attached to her tit. She's been complaining about how he yanks on her nipple and uses it as a teething ring. I make a mental note to myself to check and see if my birth control insert is still good and doesn't need to be updated anytime soon. My luck, I'd be the one who ended up cooking a set of twins. *Hell to the fucking no!* runs through my mind at the thought of that possibility.

"Never fear, the party is here," we hear yelled out. Turning toward the door that's just slammed open with the announcement, we see Tic quickly chasing after his daughter, Lila. It's funny to watch him pursuing her, she's quick and even though his legs are longer, she still manages to beat him to us.

"Lil Bit," Skylar hollers in excitement, opening her arms for the little pixie to run and jump into. "I've missed you so much. How's your baby brother?"

"Why does everyone always wanna know about him?" Lila harrumphs, crossing her arms over her chest with her bottom lip sticking out.

"Kori's got Kingston, she's coming in behind me," Tic states as he bends over giving Sky a hug and rustling his daughter's hair.

"Daddy, stop!" she shouts, smoothing her hair back down while giving her dad a dirty look. "Don't mess up my hair, Momma worked hard to get it pretty."

"Sorry, baby girl." Tic smiles adoringly at her.

"Just don't do it again," Lila berates her daddy.

"Damn, Tic, you just got schooled by a munchkin," Sadie snickers, slapping her hand over her mouth.

"I'm not a munchkin, I'm a big girl now. I go to school and everything." Lila gives Sadie a scowl. It's kind of scary how well she's learned to use that look. *Isn't she a little young?*

"Seems I'm always in trouble by one of the women in my life," Tic mutters, a forlorn look on his face.

"What'd you do this time?" Kori asks as she enters with a struggling to get down Kingston on one hip and a baby bag barely hanging on the opposite shoulder.

"He messed up my pretty hair, Momma. Get 'em please," Lila Rose demands of her mother.

"Tic," Kori groans, "you know she freaks out if anyone messes up her hair after it's been styled. How many times are you gonna annoy that daughter of ours before you learn not to do it?"

"As many as I want. It's my privilege as her dad." Tic's eyes alight with mischief as he says this to his wife. "Now, hand over my son, woman, before you drop him on his head. We already have one who acts as if her brains have been scrambled, we don't need to add another one to that list." As soon as baby Kingston, who is on the cusp of toddlerhood, is in his arms, Kori whacks him on his arm. "Disengage those claws, Angel."

She simply bats her eyes at him as she states, "But you love my claws, my bad boy. Don't lie, just the other night..." she doesn't get to finish that sentence before Tic's hand is covering her mouth.

“Not in front of the children, Angel,” he admonishes her.

“They don’t know what it means, Tic,” she huffs out.

“Maybe not,” he agrees, “but they do.” He points in our general direction.

“We don’t have a kitty cat, silly Daddy.” Lila giggles, holding her hand over her face and laughing as if her dad has no brains whatsoever. “Daddy must’ve hit the sauce,” she laughs causing all of us to widen our eyes in Tic’s direction.

“Fuck me, she’s your daughter, Kori, deal with her,” Tic declares as he hangs his head down facing the ground.

“Why is she always mine in situations like this?” Kori demands of her husband as she tosses the diaper bag onto the ground.

“Are they fixing to fight?” Sadie inquires as she looks around wide-eyed at the rest of the group.

“Nah, this is foreplay for those two,” Skylar answers, and she’s not joking by the look upon her face.

“Seems to be a common trend with our guys,” Kaci dictates as she blows a fly-away hair that’s come out of her ponytail from her face.

As soon as that last statement is made, the clubhouse begins to flood with members from the mother chapter and three men I’ve never met before.

## MALIBU



AS TUMBLER AND I COME PULLING INTO THE LOT AT THE CLUBHOUSE, recognition dawns on me that the mother chapter is here and in full force. There's not just my brother's bikes, but there's SUVs letting me know that the women did accompany their men. Kassi's gonna be thrilled to have the other women here, she's missed them since the move. We get to see them, but not as much as she'd like to. It makes me happy that she'll have more people to talk to about what happened to her, not that I mind being there for her to talk to, but women seem to understand the situation better than I ever could. As I shut off my bike, and begin walking it backwards into my designated parking spot, I see Justice standing back with his arm thrown over Lizzie's shoulder. Looking over next to where he's standing, I see Ghost mimicking what Justice's doing with Bristol.

Damn they look happy.

I'm glad to have a smidgeon of that back for myself as well. The days of doom and gloom are hopefully behind us. Well, they will be as soon as a few people are eliminated and no longer a threat to those we love. As soon as I'm off my bike and both feet are planted on the blacktop, Lizzie comes running up to me and throwing her arms around my neck. "I'm so sorry, Malibu. I heard about what you and Kassi went through. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Just be there for Kassi, she needs her girls now more than ever," I answer, not knowing what else to say.

"Of course. What about you? Do you need anything?" she asks, pushing back away from me.

"As long as you're helpin' take care of my woman, that's all I need." She rapidly blinks up at me before nodding her head in affirmation.

"Always, you don't even have to ask."

"Thanks, Lizzie," I say, affectionately squeezing her shoulder. "Justice," I state as he walks up to us. I stick out my hand and give him a welcoming shake.

"Malibu, my man, it's good to see you. How's Kassi doin'?" he asks me.

"She's holdin' her own, but I know she'll be thrilled to have her girls here for a bit," I inform him and he gives me a look letting me know he gets where I'm coming from. "Tic already inside?" I ask the two of them.

"Yep, he went chasin' after 'Lil Bit and Kori went chasin' after him." Justice and Ghost both laugh as soon as these words leave Justice's mouth.

"Guess we should go make sure the clubhouse is still in one piece," Tumbler supplies with a grunt.

"She's probably already got all of her girly, pink frilly shit out, unpacked, and redecoratin'," Ghost helpfully states.

My hands dramatically clutch my chest as I announce, "Say it ain't so. She's turned all girl like and not the rough and tough tomboy she

once was. Be still my cold dead heart. Does she at least still ride her motorized Harley I got her last year for Christmas?"

"Sure as fuck does." I smile when Ghost tells me this, then it falls again at his next words. "She had her dad spray paint that shit purple and pink."

"We've lost her, this is a sad day for us all." I nod my head in a feeling of abandonment. She's growing up way too fast, I want that little girl back who'd follow all of us men around the shops learning to turn a wrench. Hell, she knew how to do an oil change by her fourth birthday. She's as smart as a whip and has a sassy mouth to boot. I miss the days I'd spend with her as she asked a million and one questions about everything I was doing. It's a sad day for us all to know she's growing up and her interests are beginning to change and reshape into that of a young lady. Goodbye four wheeling in mud and hello to dolls and boys. Poor Tic, I should ask him if we need to weld a chastity belt for when the day comes that boys begin knocking on their front door.

Fucking hell, I'm glad Kassi's not in any hurry to reproduce any time soon. The thought of my young spawns running around scares the ever-loving fuck out of me. Nah, we need some time just the two of us before adding numbers to our family. I'm perfectly happy and content with it being just the two of us.

We all begin to make our way into the clubhouse. My eyes scan until I find my woman, who looks a tad bit uncomfortable with the new visitors. She was around the last time the guys were here, but she wasn't a frequent visitor of the clubhouse, and if she was, she kept pretty much to herself. I know she met them the last time they were here, but she looks at them as if they're perfect strangers. I have to think back and remember that during that time, she was still lost in her physical healing process and most likely tuned out the fact that the three of them were here. Walking over to her, I put my arm around her shoulder and pull her close to me so I can whisper without being overheard by anyone. "Do you not remember the three of them?"

"No, they don't look familiar to me, who are they?" she quietly asks her question.

"Let me point out who's who," I state, first pointing at the big man that can't be ignored, "the big one, that's Riptide. The shorter one, that's Julius, and the bald one standing between them, his name is Tyler but everyone calls him Dust. They were here when Justice and Lizzie came to help us out a while back."

"The names sound familiar, but for some reason their faces don't," she admits begrudgingly. "I'm sorry I don't recall who they are, I wasn't really doing well during that time."

"I know, baby, and there's no reason to apologize. But with me pointin' them out to you, you know you can trust them and know who they are in case they try to initiate a conversation with ya." I wanna kick myself in the ass for not realizing back then that she was as lost as she was. I was so deeply embedded in my own pain and club business that I didn't give her the thought that she needed me to. "Do you wanna go talk with everyone, or would you like to have a seat on the couch with me?"

"I'm a bit overwhelmed at the moment, can we, can we just sit and take a breather for a minute or two?" The tone of her voice causes me to pause before leading her over to where there's a group of chairs and couches. As I sit down, I pull her into my lap and bury her head into the crook of my neck. This is always the go-to position she seeks when she's not feeling confident or wanting a way to escape the things surrounding her. I feel her body begin to loosen up the longer she sits here and just ignores the happenings in the room. It isn't long until her breathing evens out and I hear a slight snore in my ear. I've noticed the past day or two she's been abnormally tired compared to usual. I've chalked it up to her coming to terms with her emotions and feelings... shit like that.



Kassi slept in my arms for two hours; I eventually had to reposition myself since parts of my limbs were falling asleep. "Sorry," she mumbles as she reaches up and stretches out. "Didn't realize I was sleepy until I was using your neck as a pillow."

"No place I'd rather you sleep than in my arms," I state, placing a soft, gentle kiss on the top of her head. The women, noticing that she's awakened, come over and practically pull her out of my arms. I give them a scathing look that doesn't faze them in the least. Kassi looks over her shoulder at me as she's being dragged away and blows me a kiss.

"It's good to see you two gettin' back on track again, brother," Travler says as he takes the vacant spot next to me, passing me a beer as he does.

"Feels good too," I admit as I take a gulp of the ice-cold brew. "Things are startin' to feel normal again."

"It's a sight to see. There's not this tension and attitude stuck to you anymore. I know that the need to find the fuckers who killed Fern and messed with Kassi is front and center, but at least you can pull back and relax some knowin' we've got your back."

"I always knew you guys would," I state before continuing, "but I was lost, brother. Hurtin' so bad I couldn't see what was in front of me."

"That's somethin' we can all understand. In one way or another, we've all been down a rough patch with our women. We understand the ins and outs of the struggles that come along with lovin' the women that we do. They aren't easy, but they're worth it." Travler's eyes travel the room; finding his woman at the bar with the others, a peaceful look overcomes him. Then, his eyes seek out his son, when they land on him, something different, indescribable takes hold. One day, I'll understand that feeling a father has for his child, the difference in the love between mother and child. A part of me is a little jealous of him that he has that, but the other half of me is content with things just as they are. "Some of the best joys in life are the ones we don't think we want," Travler says as he sees that my eyes are stationed directly on his son. He places his hand on my shoulder as he stands up and walks away with that last sentence dancing around in my mind. Fuck, now he has me wondering if it's something that I could want and need and not even realize it.

Nope, not going there. I'm not ready and Kassi is still recovering from the sudden flash of memories she works through on a daily basis.

## Kassi

My nephew is the center of Lila Rose's attention. Why she loves my little nephew to pieces but feels as if her brother's the devil reincarnated is beyond what my mind is capable of processing. I don't remember those issues between Ryder, Kaci and myself, but then again, we didn't really grow up with each other. Ryder was the golden child in my father's eyes and Kaci and I were more of a nuisance. We saw Ryder from time to time, but not enough to where we had that sibling bond that Kaci and I have.

"Kingston." Lila slams her foot on the ground in protest. "That's not your toy, it's Cash's. Give it back to him this instant," she hollers pointing an accusing finger in his direction.

"Lila, what have we said about you lettin' your momma and I deal with Kingston? You're not his keeper, little girl," Tic scolds his daughter and she looks at him with trembling lips and watering eyes. She looks as if her father has ruined her life with his correction of her.

"B-but he stole the toy from the baby!" she cries out hysterically. "You said we shouldn't take what doesn't belong to us." My ovaries go into hiding as my mouth drops open in the argument between the two of them. If this is what having children involves on a daily basis... I'm good with never having one. I'll sit on the sidelines and be the aunt for the rest of my days. I'll spoil them rotten, send them back home and never have to deal with the temper tantrums. Yep, a concept that works A-Okay for me. Yep.

"What are you thinking about so hard over here? Your face just scrunched up and a look of disgust was clear and present for all to

see." Skylar, never one to hold back asks me as she bumps me with her shoulder.

"Why haven't you and Ryder ever had kids?" Out of blue the question comes out of my mouth instead of telling her what was rumbling through my head.

"We just aren't ready. Ryder wants the club to be on its feet and doing well enough financially to ensure ours and our children's future. We've discussed it a time or two, but ultimately we both wanted me to finish school and spend some years with it being just the two of us before our house turns into a madhouse. What about you and Malibu?"

"I'm not sure I'm cut out to be a mother, Sky. I didn't really have one front and center growing up. She was more of a flyby person in my life than viewed and recognized as my mother." My honesty must catch her off guard because her mouth opens and closes a few times before she gets a contemplative look on her face.

"Your sister seems to be doing fine and you both had the same upbringing," she finally decides to go with. Her comeback makes me stop and think, she's right in some regards of her statement, but in others she's wrong. Kaci's always had that motherly, nurturing instinct. Me, I always run and hide when a situation arises where I need to be tender and loving. It's not that I don't care, it's that other's tears scare the ever-loving fuck out of me. I don't ever wanna say the wrong thing that causes others to feel worse than they did before coming to me for advice and comfort.

"She's always had a natural mothering way about her, it's something I've always been lacking," I defeatedly admit. It's hard to speak out about the way I'm missing that genetic gene. Aren't all women born to become mothers one day? It's something that's missing within me.

"You do too, Kassi. You may not recognize that inside of yourself, but everyone whose life you've touched has seen it firsthand one way or another. Personally, I think you'd be a wonderful mother, a child would be lucky to have you. All the kids here adore you, if you weren't a motherly type, they'd steer clear of you. Trust me on that

one," she vehemently declares with steely determination written all over her. She looks ready to argue with me on this. Fighting with Skylar is like punching a brick wall, it's satisfying at the time when you get your frustrations out, but in the end, it ends up hurting you more than her. I nearly snort at comparing her to an inanimate, immovable opponent. And fuck if my knuckles wouldn't split the same way if I was to throw down with her... either verbally or physically. I've seen her and Ryder go to blows, and she has never backed down, always stood her ground and given as good as she gets. I can't even wrap my head around going toe to toe with her right now. Instead, I simply nod my head, pretending as if I'm letting her words sink in.

The rest of the evening flies by as I talk with the members of the mother chapter, primarily Tic and Kori, then I'm reintroduced to the men who I couldn't remember before. They are a hoot, each and every one of them told me some interesting stories of the things they got up to while serving our country. Pranks they'd played on one another, the leaves they'd take and the shit storm that would usually follow them back to the barracks.

It seems my earlier nap reenergized me and helped me relax and enjoy our company. Malibu was never far away, always touching me, kissing me; when he'd walk away, his eyes would stay on me the entire time.

I'm finding my happy place again.

Scanning the room, I smile at the thought that each person in this room has in one way or another played a big part in my recovery process. For the first time since Fern passed, a feeling of settlement encompasses me and the brick that's been weighing me down has crumbled into tiny, miniscule pieces. A real smile alights my face as I realize this fact.

I'm back, bitches!

## MALIBU



AFTER SCANNING THE FOLDER THAT STEVE GAVE ME YESTERDAY, I CAN'T believe what I'm seeing. They've been wire-transferring money to someone in Mexico. Why the fuck didn't I think of this before? Fern had an aunt and uncle who'd moved there many years ago, when she was just a small child. They weren't people we ever talked about on a weekly, or even a monthly basis, it just so happened to come up in conversation once. A *long-assed* time ago; when we'd talked about going to a resort in Mexico for a vacation. She'd asked if we could make the trip to visit them, and it slipped my fucking mind. "Kid," I walk into his office calling out his name.

"Christ almighty, Malibu. Are ya tryin' to give me a heart attack here?" he asks as he clamps his hand over his chest. He and Tic were in a meeting and I hadn't realized it before I came charging in here.

"Sorry, I wasn't thinkin' about knockin', I found somethin' you need to see, now." I place the folder on his desk in front of him and point

to the first transfer I see. "Mexico, I completely forgot that the mom's sister lives there with her old man."

"Motherfucker," he heavily murmurs, swirling his desk chair around and picking up his mobile phone. "Riptide, grab your brothers, we need ya." He disconnects the phone after that declaration, before Rip has a chance to say anything in response. Just as I take my seat next to Tic in front of Kid's desk, Rip and the other two come bolting in.

"You rang," he comically states as he enters the room, mimicking Lurch from the Addams Family television show.

"Yeah, I did, sit your asses down and check this shit out," Kid remarks, holding his laughter inside. I can tell he wants to let out a belch with the way he has his lips clamped tightly together. It's his giveaway that he's trying to keep his shit together and not give in to our entertaining ways. He can't be the man in charge if he's clowning around, allowing us to be goofballs while joining in with the rest of us twenty-four-seven. He's fair-minded however, and gives us a little leeway before biting our heads off. Riptide reaches across Kid's desk and grabs a highlighter when he sees the wires from their account.

"Julius, need you to do your computer guru thing and find out what account this is going into," Riptide superiorly commands. I hadn't realized before now, because Rip is such a jokester that he's the man in charge of these men. It's weirdly odd to see him taking on a leadership role considering he's the fun and outgoing one of the group. As soon as Rip is done marking all of the transfers, he passes the papers over to Julius, who then briskly stands up and departs from the room. "He'll have us answers in no time, in the meantime, I'll get us packed up and ready to hit the road. That is what you had in mind, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, ya read me like an opened book," Kid good naturedly ribs Riptide.

"Don't worry, I'll be your Huckleberry." Rip cleverly chuckles as he mimics yet another film we all know and love. I understand he's a movie buff, but his knowledge of different variations is hysterical. If

this was the time to be huffing and guffawing, I'd be rolling on the floor in howls of laughter.

"Bring Granger back in one piece, brother. Malibu would like to have a few words with him," Kid issues, making sure to look Rip straight in the eyes.

"Can we at least rough 'em up a little?" Dust asks. I can see the disappointment at the thought that he won't get any knuckle time with Granger's face.

"You can play, just leave the heavy hittin' for me, Dust." I leave no room for argument with my declaration. I need this, I've dreamed about it for weeks now.

"I'll only make him bleed a little." Dust promises me with a smirk on his face and his fingers opened wide, showing me just how much he plans on pounding Granger's flesh.

"As long as he's still breathin', and in one piece, I don't give a fuck how much you execute your punishment." My face is solemn and unforgiving. I'm not messing around here; I need him to be able to withstand my interrogation and heavy fist. This is my punishment to dole out, my woman is the one who suffered because of his poor choices in life.

"Keep us updated while you're on the road," Kid interrupts, knowing that I'm in a mood for destruction and violence. Not that Dust has done anything wrong, but I need an outlet, and if he wants to spar, I'm down.

"Don't worry, Malibu. I got you, I'm just gonna make him quake in his boots before delivering him to you. I'd never take this away from you." His words appease me and the tension deflates from my shoulders.

"Appreciate ya," I profess, sticking out my hand for a manly shake, in a showmanship of our friendship and the respect I have for him.



We sit in Kid's office and shoot the shit while we stall, waiting to see Rip and his men off. About an hour later, they come striding into the office, bags securely in their hands as Julius hands us back the paperwork he took when he went to do his research.

"Found 'em, I've positively identified that it is the aunt and uncle's account. Their bank's security system sucks ass, I was able to pull up their home address along with their business one as well. I have their social security numbers, phone numbers and credit card information. There's nowhere they can run and hide that I won't be able to track them down and find them with this information," he proudly advises.

"We'll call as soon as we secure the package," Rip talks in code. Why? I have no fucking clue, it's not as if the clubhouse is bugged or anything.

"Let us walk ya out," Kid states as he stands up from his perch behind his desk. We all stroll out and as we walk through the main room, I smile when I see all of the women on the floor playing with the young ones. Kassi lifts her head up from where she's playing dolls with Jayna and gives me a small smile. I wink at her as I pass by and can't hide the happiness and joy I'm feeling from having her here with me. That woman has become my lifeline.

Kassi

I was never one for playing with dolls, but when Jayna came up to me, begging me to spend some auntie time with her, I couldn't resist. She has these eyes that make you feel guilty if you deny her. I searched for Lila Rose, thinking she would make a better playmate for Jayna, but she was nose deep in a book. Not wanting to disturb her, I gave in and resorted to playing the momma to Jayna's baby.

My body became a live wire and I instantly knew that Malibu was in my general vicinity. We've become so entuned with each other, that

we connect mentally when the other one is in the same proximity. We never had that before, it's a new development, but one I'm enthralled to experience. "Aunt Kassi, Drea just asked her momma for a popsicle. You have to answer," Jayna whines, capturing my solicited attention.

"Sorry, love bug, yes, Drea, you may have a popsicle," I answer, knowing that it's really her that wants the ice cold treat on a stick.

"Yipee!" She stands up, clapping her hands together in jubilant glee. "Did ya hear that, Drea, we get to have a treat." She reaches out to grab my hand and roughly starts yanking me to hurry me along.

"I'm coming," I smile at her as I amusingly inform her. "Let's go see if the others want one as well." After I inform her of this, her face falls.

"Do we have'ta, Aunt Kassi?" She sticks her quivering bottom lip out in protest, not wanting to share with the others.

"Yes, you have to," Rylie superiorly and effectively declares to her daughter. Her crestfallen face doesn't seem to deter Rylie from giving into her daughter's tearful, dejected squint. I'd totally suck at this mothering gig, because that look upon her face is enough to cause me to want to give into her every desire.

"But, Mom, this is mine, Drea and Aunt Kassi's time," she stubbornly protests her mother's final decree.

"If that's the case, then you can have make believe popsicles." Rylie continues to put her foot down. My head volleys back and forth between the two as they continue to argue.

"How am I supposed to do that?" Jayna crosses her arms over her chest, sending her mom a nasty glare.

"Use your imagination, Jayna," Rylie declares, holding her ground against her daughter.

"Fine, if I share, can I get the real thing?" She places her small fists into the divots of her hips. I have to turn my head so she doesn't witness the smirk that's found its way onto my lips.

"Yes, you may." Rylie smiles, knowing that she's made her point loud and clear to Jayna. As she runs off to gather the other kids, Rylie looks at me and says, "there's a lesson in everything. She needs to know there are times when she can't be pig-headed and needs to share and play nice with others."

"You're a good mom, Rylie," I say to her which causes a shy smile to form.

"Thank you. I work hard every day to teach her to be a good person. Some days are easier than others." She turns on her heels and follows the gaggle of children as they run into the kitchen in anticipation of their messy, frozen treat. Standing up, I place the baby doll I'd been playing momma with down, and follow in their wake. She'll need someone to help clean up those messy faces.

## KASSI



“HARDER,” I BELLOW OUT AS MALIBU TAKES ME FROM BEHIND. I WOKE up this morning to his tongue deliciously swiveling circles around my clit. I was soaking wet by the time I became fully alert.

“Take it how I give it to you, Kassi,” he says, a dominating, commanding tone in his voice. “This is my rodeo, you’re just along for the ride.” Fuck, I love it when he gets all growly and demanding in bed. I like the unfiltered, no holds barred way he speaks to me while allowing himself to give into the lustful demands of his body.

“Yes,” I stammer out as he hits that button deep inside of me. It feels so good that my toes curl and my breathing rapidly quickens in my chest.

“Chest to the bed,” demands, and I instantly comply, knowing that if I do so, he’ll make it worth my while. As soon as my upper body lands on the bed, his body comes down over the top of mine. His

hands go over the top of mine as our fingers lace together. “Fuck, you take me so damn good.”

As his pace picks up in speed, my body begins to float away in a pleasure induced haze. I begin continuously chanting, “Yes,” and “Don’t stop,” over and over again. His relentless powering into me has all cognitive thoughts vacating my mind. I begin speaking in tongues, because I don’t recognize a word leaving my mouth.

“Shit, yes, lose control, Kassi. Ride my cock from underneath,” he huskily speaks, as my hips begin bouncing and grinding back and forth on his dick. He stops moving and allows me to take the reins. I can’t get enough of him, his dick does things to me that I never believed were possible. He’s a perfect fit inside of me, I feel him touching every part of my internal walls. There isn’t an empty part of me that he’s not touching. His thumb goes down to the puckered sphincter of my ass as he begins to rub circles and apply pressure, never breaching my forbidden zone. But when he does this, my body ignites with passion. My fingers curl with his as my stomach clenches from the upcoming orgasm trying with determination to break free. “Fuckin’ hell, you just squeezed the fuck out of my dick, Kassi. Do that again,” he fervidly dictates. My body begins to shudder as my walls clamp tighter on his girth. My muscles spasm as my ears begin to roar with blood flow, the only thing I can hear is the rushing and swooshing sound of my heart as it frantically beats. With one of his hands laced with mine, and the other continuously thrumming my ass, I detonate as an inferno ignites deep within my belly and I lose all cognitive thoughts. I come hard, one orgasm after another hitting one on top of the other. I can still feel Malibu seating himself in and out of my opening, I help him find his own release by slamming my hips back into him. It doesn’t take long before he’s roaring out my name.



Malibu is sitting on the edge of the bed, lacing up his boots as he begins speaking, “We had a good lead on Granger, baby. Rip and his men went to check it out. If it all pans out, he’ll be here and we’ll get those answers we’ve been lookin’ for.”

"I know this is unorthodox and not done, but when y'all are finished with him, I have a few questions I'd like him to answer for me personally," I rush out, knowing he's going to be taken aback from my request. But I'm the one who had those nasty ass fuckers' dicks in my mouth and was probed and felt up as if I was nothing more than a sex toy they viewed as their personal blow up doll. Most of my memories are there, but there are a few things I don't understand. He needs to supply me with the why's.

"Baby, after everythin' you've been through, do ya really think it's a good idea?" Malibu asks, but I can see him considering my request. He knows I need some closure and a little bit of my own retribution.

"I won't go to extremes, Malibu. But I need to do it so I feel as if I've taken back some control of my life. Put yourself in my place and think of what you'd need to move forward," I implore.

"I'll talk to Kid and Ryder, but I make no promises, Kassi. It's ultimately up to them to decide on if it's gonna happen."

"But you'll talk to them... right, Malibu?"

"Yes, baby, I'll talk to them. Now, come give your man a kiss before I go face the firin' squad on your behalf."

"So damn dramatic," I jokingly imply before launching myself through the air and into his open, waiting arms. Once we break from the kiss, I tell him, "I love you, Malibu."

"And I love you too, Kassi. More than any words can express. I'm a happy man that you've given a jerk like me a second chance. I'll spend the rest of my days makin' up my foolish ways to you."

"You already have," I inform him, as I lay yet another kiss upon his lips. "Now, go get those stubborn asses to agree to let me talk to Granger."

"Just talk, right?" he asks, raising his brows in suspicion.

"Yep," I say, knowing that I'm not *technically* lying since somewhere on the top of my head some hairs are crossing. He'd see if I did so

with my fingers behind my back, so I go with the old saying that if he can't see it, it's all good.

## Malibu

"Why are we considerin' this again?" Ryder asks none to happily.

"Because, she says she needs this to move on. Somethin' about closure and shit," I respond to his question. "We'll all be in there with her when it takes place, what could go wrong?"

"Have you not met my sister, Malibu?" Ryder asks, looking at me as if I've grown a second head. "She's infamous about promisin' one thing, then doin' the exact opposite. She's got a bad temper as you know, do ya really think she's just gonna ask a few questions and be satisfied?"

"Would that be a bad thing if she lost it a little, Ryder?" Kid asks him, the first thing he's said since I told them about her request. "Think about what all she went through, man. If she needs to smack him around a bit here and there, I'm not gonna stop her. She deserves to have her hand meet his flesh." As I go to disagree with him, he holds up his hands halting me where I sit. "As you pointed out, we'll be there and on top of that, we'll make sure he's bound and can't lay a finger on her. We'll keep her safe and let her search for the answers she seeks. If her hand flies here and there, I'm willin' to turn a blind eye to it."

"I just don't want her doin' nothin' that'll set her back none. She's worked hard to find herself again." She's strong and has tread her way through wave after wave to find solid ground again. I don't want anything to cause her to backpedal and have to find that life-line once again.

"Come to think on it, maybe we should offer her a baseball bat," Ryder mutters as he sulks in the corner of the room. "He needs to feel

just a bit of the pain she went through. If she ain't got the stomach to do it, I'll do it for her."

As I go to argue that she's my woman and it's my right to do it on her behalf, Kid's cell phone begins to ring. "It's Rip," he states before accepting the call and putting it on speaker. "Talk to me," he answers.

"Package is secure and enroute to you. Should be arriving in 0800 hours. See ya shortly, brother," Rip advises before disconnecting the call.

"We need to let the others know that we'll be having a delivery later this evenin'. Send out a text alert to the officers that we need to meet in an hour from now," Kid directs Ryder who then begins furiously tapping on his phone. "We'll let Kassi go in first, I don't want her seeing all the blood that'll be drippin' off this fucker once we get our hands on him. That's a trigger we don't need her to witness." Since I agree with him, I nod my head then walk out of the door. I need a shot, maybe two. My hands are twitching and my body is vibrating as I begin to mentally prepare myself for Granger's impending arrival.

As I make my way to the bar and grab a shot glass, Kassi comes to join me. "Everything okay, Malibu?" She has a nervous twitch under her eye when she's full of nerves. I raise my thumb up and apply pressure there, something I've done since the day we met, it seems to help the nerves settle a bit.

"Everythin' is peachy, Kass. I promise, we have a delivery expected tonight." Leaning over, I whisper for only her ears to hear, "you're up first, baby girl. Only contingency is that we're in there with ya. Understand?"

"Yes. Thank you," she says with a hitch in her voice before tossing her arms around my neck and squeezing me tightly to her. "I'll be good."

"I know you will be." Wanting to add a little lightness to the dark, I inform her, "your brother wants to give you a baseball bat." She tosses her head back on her shoulders as she laughs. It's a beautiful vis-

ual to see, her face is glowing with happiness. "Let's grab a bite to eat, we need to fuel our bodies for our extra-curricular play time later."

"I need sugar," she playfully says, batting her eyelashes at me. "We've got donuts."

"As long as you at least drink some damn juice, Kassi, I won't complain," I promise her. I'm a stickler when it comes to her health and well-being. We eat a lot of protein, good carbohydrates and lots of fruits and vegetables. My ma was always conscious when it came to the food that entered my body, it's something that I've kept with me as I went my own way in life. It's ingrained in me, and now, I share that with her. Don't get me wrong, I have my days where I eat sweets and bad things, knowing that if I deny myself, those sweet treats will dance in my head and I'll eventually give in and gorge them in one sitting. I'd rather give myself something special here and there than crave it on a daily basis.

"I will, and we'll go for a run around the compound later." She's lying, she's not a runner unless there's zombies following her. She'll last all of two minutes before flopping to the ground, screaming about being hot, out of breath and all that jazz. She'll lift weights with me every day, spar with me in the ring, but if you mention the word exercise in any capacity, she freaks the fuck out.

"How about we hit the gym instead." I give her a second option to appease her. She brightly smiles at me and sticks her hand out for a shake. I take her hand in mine, but instead of shaking on it, I pull her into me and lay a scorching kiss on her lips.

"That's how we should seal our deals every time," she breathlessly says as we break apart.

"Couldn't agree more," I say, more than willing to adopt that concept. Anytime I can get her lips on mine, I'll jovially agree to. "Let's go eat."



She's glistening with sweat as she does her fifteenth deadman's squat. Her tank top is soaked through, and her nipples are standing at attention. Her face is red, the concentration plastered on her face as she counts her reps is amusing, but I don't laugh... it'd only serve the purpose of pissing her off. "Ten more, baby girl, you've got this."

She rolls her eyes at me before saying, "Shh... don't talk or I'll lose my count." A chuckle escapes me before I can call it back. "Asshole," she mumbles out quietly as she does another squat.

"Nine more," I announce, trying to help her keep her count.

"Shut it!" she bellows as she begins breathing heavily through exertion. "Whoever said working out is fun, is one stupid fuck."

"But it keeps your mind and body strong, baby." When I finish stating this, she gives me a menacing glare. "You can do this." I try to encourage her each step of the way, if it were up to her, she'd have already called it a day and then walked the fuck away. "You wrap up these reps and I'll bath you then give you a full-body massage as an incentive and reward for finishin'." It's both beneficial to her and myself... I get the chance to have my hands roaming up and down her body and she gets to relax and enjoy her muscles being kneaded into submission.

"How many do I have left?" she huffs the question out.

"Seven, baby." The crestfallen look on her face reminds me of that baby chicken screaming out to all who'd listen about how the sky is falling. I begin counting her down as she rises. She has the barbell laid on her shoulders as her body begins to waver, getting in front of her, I begin yelling out encouraging comments. A steady, yet determined look takes hold of her; her face contorts to full concentration mode as she sets a new record for herself. A smile corrupts my face as she quickly makes it through to the final set.

"Done. You, mister, owe me a bubble bath. Get to finding my ass a tub and let's get this pampering started," she states as she marches over to her bottle of water, basically rips the cap off and instead of swallowing a sip, she douses her body. I watch as it streams down her bared stomach and gnaw on my bottom lip.

“Meet me in the jacuzzi room, woman.” I turn and walk away with a smile on my face. The bubbles I promised her... yeah, they’re from the jacuzzi that’s tucked away behind a locked door here in the gym. I already warned the others to stay away... this was a play I’d already had planned out. Our clothes are already in there waiting for us, along with some strawberries and champagne for her and beer for me. I plan on occupying her mind for hours to come.

## MALIBU



I'M ALREADY STRIPPED DOWN TO MY BIRTHDAY ATTIRE AND HAVE A GLASS poured for her before she makes her way into the spa area. Candles are lit around the room, giving it an iridescent flare. The strawberries are already cut into small chunks and placed on a small platter. I tried to think of everything I could do to make this a perfect romantic setting. Not usually the way I do things, but she deserves a well thought out plan and execution. She deserves rainbows, flowers and all that romantic shit you read about and watch on television. When I said I'd strive each and every damn day to make her feel special and loved, I'd meant it.

"Malibu," she says in awe as she takes in the surroundings. "You did all of this for me?" A tear leaks from her eye as she questions me on this.

"I'd do anything to make you happy and show you how much you mean to me, Kassi," I divulge, showing my emotions through my ac-

tions, words and facial expressions. "This is just the beginnin' of provin' my worth to you, Kassi. Now, why don't you remove those sweaty clothes and hop on into the tub."

"Looks heavenly, don't mind if I do," she contently sighs as she says this. I intently watch as her clothes begin to come off one piece at a time. As soon as the last article of clothing is removed from her body, I lift up my hand to help her step into the jacuzzi. The steam coming from the top encompasses her foot as it enters. This is one of those times I wish I had a camera to capture the image. Just her foot surrounded by the cloud of steam is sexy and sinful. My dick jumps to attention, but I pay him no mind as she gently slides down into the steaming water. I jumped that notch up as high as it could go, knowing my woman likes things *extra* hot. The soothing sound that escapes her as she relaxes into the water sounds inviting; instead of standing there ogling her, I step in and join her.

"Come here." I wiggle my finger indicating that I want her as close to me as she can get. A smile graces her face as she scoots her way over toward me. I pull her into the embrace of my legs and wrap my arms fully around her. I'm surrounding her in me, there's no escaping my tight hold on her. Her head flops back on my shoulder and we just sit there, enjoying the silence and feeling. "This is where you belong, Kassi. Right here, next to me."

"It's the only place I long to be." Her admitting that has my heart clutching in my chest. When it slams into me that I could've lost her, lost this, I want to cry like a little bitch.

"It's where you'll forever stay and be. This is what life's all about. Lovin' and acceptin' each other, faults and all." As these words penetrate from my mouth, I remove my arms from around her waist and begin massaging her shoulders. Her muscles are tense, tight and unforgiving as I work furiously through each and every knot. I can literally feel her body give as I knead her muscles and whisper words of love into her ear. I'm not sure what all is leaving my mouth, but my words seem to make her happy and that's all that matters to me in the grand scheme of things. I'm not sure how long my fingers work their magic, but she's a limp noodle as I make my way down and rub her feet. She's now laid out before me, her head resting on

the edge and she's got a look of dreams coming true resting on her face. "Feel good, baby?"

"Um-hmm," she murmurs and it sounds as if she's just received the best orgasm of her life. I did this to her; my chest puffs out like a proud peacock. My dreams have changed from loving two women to enjoying one and knowing this is the way things were always meant to be. I had to go through all of the loss I did in order to not take for granted the woman before me. I solemnly believed I needed a partner to share what I wasn't able to give to the other. In the long run, I've learned that it's not true. I'm going to enjoy her for the gift that she is. Sharing her with another is no longer an option. Not another woman and most certainly not another man. I've become a possessive fuck where it pertains to her.

"Open wide," I command as I grab a cut up piece of strawberry and with a light touch, I run it along the crease of her lips. As soon as she parts her mouth, I place the chunk into her mouth. The juices flow down the sides of her chin. Not able to help myself, I lean over and clean the mess up with my tongue. "Hmm... tasty," I whisper as I intake the deliciousness of her and strawberry.

"Share with me," she sultrily says as she leans over and takes my mouth with her own. "You, me and sweet nectar, so good." Her foot that was in my hand, leaves and she uses it to travel down my torso. She lands on my dick and caresses it with the bottom of her foot and toes. He jumps to life under her ministrations; it almost feels as good as her mouth and hand. "Someone's very happy," she teases me.

"He's always happy when you're in his proximity, baby," I admit to her, although I'm pretty damn sure she is already aware of this fact.

Kassi

Releasing my foot from his endowment, I lean up and crawl my way into his lap. I make sure that it's a slow progression, his eyes dilate

as my tits sway, beckoning him to touch them. I feel sexy, wanton, a siren calling her mate to her. The hunger and lust in his eyes draws that diva part of me out. My hands run from the bottom of his abs and up his chest. The hitch in his breath lets me know he's affected by me the way I want—no, the way I need him to be. I always give myself over to him when it comes to our sexual encounters; but this time, I long to be the one in charge. My hands wrap around the nape of his neck as I lower my head to where our lips line up perfectly. Sticking out my tongue, I start at his dimples and make my way over to his puckered, waiting mouth. "Touch me, Malibu." He doesn't utter one single syllable before lifting his hands up and cupping my breasts in his large, calloused hands. My eyes swing down and watch as his hands work their magic on my body. Once he reaches my nipples and pinches them, it's like a string straight to my clit. A loud moan leaves my throat as my hips begin relentlessly grinding on his leg. I can feel my womanly wiles flowing and exiting my body, demanding I take his length inside of me. Spreading my legs wide, I straddle his hips, lifting my body up and line myself up with him. He continues to play with my nipples as I take his dick in hand and slowly lower myself down onto him. The stretch and burn of his girth spurs me on, I drop as far down as I can on the massive intrusion. I've never measured him, but I'm sure he's bigger than the average man... at least those I've been with in the past. I have to lift myself up and lower myself a couple of times before he's buried to the hilt.

"Fuck!" he hisses as his balls rest on the cheeks of my ass.

"So damn full," I declare as I lift and lower myself on him—over and over again. The need and drive to own him, mate him, cause him to lose his mind seeps into me. One of his hands leaves my breasts and lands on my distended clit. He begins to rub tiny circles over it, causing me to completely lose control. The passion between us is overwhelming, blazing with so much intensity that I see and feel nothing but him. No one outside of the two of us exists in this world. It's all ours, no one else can intrude and come between the bond we have formed. The room is filled with our moans and skin slapping against one another's; it's erotic. "More," slips from my mouth. He grabs my hips with his hands and pounds into me from beneath. A few more strokes of his dick rubbing that special spot inside of me causes me

to ignite; I see fireworks displayed behind my closed eyes. As my release takes hold, I feel him slam into me a few more times before he too growls out my name.

I fall into his chest as he begins stroking my hair. In this moment, I've never felt more loved and cherished. He does this to me. We sit here for a few more moments before he lifts me up and pulls me out. Taking a towel off the heat rack, he begins drying me off and dressing me. I then sit in the corner of the room, admiring him as he then takes care of himself.

"Come on, baby. I'll make us an after workout protein shake and we'll relax in our room until our guests arrive." To be honest with you, I'd all but forgotten what tonight holds. I don't want Granger to die, but I do want him to pay for the part he played in my torture and the murder of his sister. I may not feel love for Fern any longer, but even her life being taken from the land of the living the way she was deserves some payback. While he makes our shakes, I head up to our room and hop into the shower.



I'm sprawled out on the bed in my comfy clothes when Malibu makes his way up. It always manages to catch me off guard the love that I have for this man. I don't even see other men anymore, no one else compares to him. "I know these shakes fill you up, but I wanted you to have something to accompany them with. I made some crackers, cheese, meat and added a few of those red grapes you love."

"That's perfect, Malibu." I reach out my hand and grab the plate from him.

"I'm gonna grab a quick shower, why don't you find one of those female shows you love and we'll watch it while we rest and eat."

"You may regret that decision, Malibu." I smirk. I love crime shows, watch them religiously and enjoy trying to solve the case as it plays out.

"We're solving cases... aren't we?" he asks with a dramatic sigh.

“Absofuckinglutely,” I respond with laughter dancing through my words.

“Okay then.” He nods his head in acceptance and heads into the bathroom. I watch his ass as it sways back and forth as he leaves.

Absolutely, mouthwateringly delicious.

## MALIBU



"I DON'T CARE WHAT THOSE DETECTIVES THINK. THERE'S NO WAY IN fuck, *one* person could have managed to do all of that shit on their own. They had help, I guaranfuckingdamntee you that." There's no way in hell that a single man carried out that plan and executed it all by his lonesome self. It's a fucking conspiracy... they needed someone to take the fall and chose that poor motherfucker.

"Are you saying that you think and believe he's innocent?" she questions me in an argumentative tone. She's ready to fight me on my conclusion, and I love this, the way we debate these cases.

"I'm saying that poor schmuck was set the fuck up by law enforcement. He had a fucking alibi, for Christ's sake." And he did, a good one at that.

"His mother could've lied for him, Malibu."

“Not really. Let me take you back to a time when I was ten years old. I wanted one damn piece of bubblegum and my mother refused to get it for me. Back then, they had those individual bins you could grab pieces and mix and match what you wanted. While my mom was purchasing our items, I went and grabbed one, just one damn piece and tucked it into my pocket. It was worth five cents... in my young mind, five damn cents wouldn't make or break the store. We made it all the way home and I was feeling damn proud of myself that I hadn't been caught. I helped put groceries away and ran off to my room. Thinkin' I was a sly motherfucker, I popped that piece of gum into my mouth with a smile on my face. Mom had some sort of motherly intuition and snuck her ass into my room and saw the wrapper sitting next to me on the floor. She snatched that damn piece of paper up and dragged me by the nape of my neck and forced my ass back into the car. She went back into the house, grabbed my piggy bank, loose change I'd been collectin' for over a year, and drove my ass back up to that store. When we made it inside, she asked the cashier for a manager and made my ass explain that I'd stolen that one piece of deliciousness. She made me break open my piggy bank and pay that fucker five cents plus interest. We hadn't even been gone thirty minutes, you explain to me how in that timeframe, it garnered five bucks worth of interest? Anyways, then she drove me to the local church and made me donate the rest of my money to them. Embarrassed my ass good that day, I never stole a damn thing again, it wasn't worth losin' all of my hard earned funds. So, you see, I don't believe that mothers are capable of lying in that capacity for their children.”

Looking over at my woman, I see her clutching her stomach from the pain of the laughter that's leaving her. “Th-that's epic!” She howls out, the fuck is wrong with her? That shit ain't funny, it still haunts me to this day when I walk into that particular store. I feel as if eyes are glued to me and I'm still labeled a fucking thief. Believe it or not, the store still to this day has the same manager it did in my youth.

“You would find my misery funny, woman,” I groan, having a feeling deep inside my bones that everyone in the club will know my story soon. The men will give me shit and the women will snicker out in laughter every time I enter the same room as them. “Glad to see my fuckin' life lessons are funny to ya.”

"I'd do the same thing as your mom if we have kids and they do the same thing. Tell me you wouldn't?" She all but demands an answer from me.

"I'd come up with another way than embarrassin' the fuck out of our kid, Kassi. There's different ways to teachin' a lesson without makin' them feel as if they're lower than shit. There's things I can do at home that'll make them question their choices and decisions."

"I don't even wanna know what's running through your mind right now, Malibu. As parents, it'd be our job to teach them right from wrong and make them realize there's consequences to their actions. Your mom had the right idea of things if you were to ask my opinion." She drones on and I realize right here and right now, that I'm gonna have to take charge of disciplining our future children.

"Why the fuck are we arguin' about this? We haven't even discussed havin' a family." Just a few days ago, this topic of conversation would have me running for the hills or admitting myself into a mental house. Kids scare the ever-loving fuck out of me.

"Do you want kids someday, Malibu?" She lowers her head and begins playing with the bottom of her shirt. The uncertainty of my answer has her nervously wringing her hands together through the material.

"Used to think there was no way in hell I wanted that. But recently, my feelin's and thoughts on the subject have changed. With you, Kassi, I want it all."

"The white picket fence?" She lifts her head up as she asks this.

"If that's what you want, then yeah," I honestly answer, not at all running scared from this knowledge that I'm no longer petrified to plan our future.

Kassi

Is that what I want? On one hand, I want it all with him, but on the other hand, I'm scared senseless. A subject that's recently... as recently as yesterday, has come up in my therapy session. She's made me think that I could actually do this, be a mother, and a good one at that. "I think I'd like that, one day. We're not ready, I'm not ready, yet, but I'm getting there."

"Then we'll take one thing at a time. When the day comes we'll know it."

Before I can respond to Malibu's words, there's a knock on the bedroom door. "Incomin'," Tumbler shouts through the wooden slab.

"You ready for this?" Malibu asks me as he holds his hand out to assist me up from the bed.

"As ready as I'll ever be," I admit, sticking my hand out so that it touches his. He clasps our hands together and hauls me up in one swoop.

"Put on some old jeans and shirt, Kassi girl. Somethin' you don't mind tossin' out. No chances." He gives me a stern look while saying this. What exactly does he think I'm gonna do here? I just wanna slap him around a little, not cut off his fingers and toes. "No argument, just do as I ask please."

Well, he did say please, so I'll give him what he wishes. "Okay, Malibu."



As soon as we breach the clubhouse, I'm stopped by my big brother. "Sis, need a minute," he says more to Malibu than myself. I give my Ol' man a look letting him know I'm okay. He nods his head, gives Ryder a stern look then ambles away to join the other men where they're huddled together, eyes stuck on me. "Don't pay them no mind, look at me, Kassi."

My head shifts in his direction and I look him dead in the eyes, letting him know I really am okay. I knew out of everyone; he'd be the

one to worry the most about my mental state of mind. "Have faith in me, Ryder. I can do this."

"I know you think you can, but, Kassi, after all you've been through, I can't help but worry. You're my baby sister, it's my job to protect you from all things that could possibly come back to haunt you. Think about what you're doing. Give yourself a second to come to terms with this, and make sure this is really what you wanna do."

"I'm doing this, Ryder. Either support me, or step aside. Your choice." I plant my fists on my hips and give him my best glare. One I've perfected over my lifetime. "Well?" I ask, tapping my foot on the ground.

"You know I've got your back, sis. Stop being dramatic, would ya?" He rolls his eyes at me as he states this.

"Then stop stalling, Ryder," I huff. I go to turn around and march my way over to Malibu.

"Stop," Ryder commands, grabbing me by my shoulder to halt my progression and turning me around to face him. "I love ya, sis. Please don't be angry with me." He pulls me into his chest and holds me tightly to him. "I didn't have the opportunity to be there for ya when you were younger, all I wanna do is protect you while you're here with me now. If you need to do this, I'll be here afterward if you need someone to talk to. Okay?"

"Okay, big brother," I say, patting his back.

"Y'all two ready?" Kid hollers out.

I pull back and look up at Ryder, inquiring, "Are we ready, big brother?" He seems to need more time than I do, so I need to make sure he's A-okay to go on.

"Yeah," he calls back, "we're ready, brother." He keeps his arm over my shoulder as he walks me to Malibu. He hesitantly releases me to my Ol' man, who wraps me up in his arms before escorting me toward the back of the property.

I've never travelled this far back before, so when we come upon a small shack I'm speechless. Color me surprised that this even exists and none of us women were the wiser. Kid stops his journey and turns around to face me. "I don't want you blabbin' to the other women that this is out here. I don't need them explorin' and puttin' their noses into business that has nothin' to do with them. We clear?"

The seriousness in his tone has me nodding my head 'yes'. "Yes, it's clear," I clear my throat and agree.

"Good. If I find them out here snoopin', I'm gonna hold you accountable. You ready for this, Kassi?"

"Yeah, Kid, I am," I say as Malibu soothingly runs his hand up and down the spine of my back. His touch settles me and helps me compose myself. "Let's get some answers." Not realizing that my voice comes out firm and demanding, the men all begin laughing.

Kid looks down at the ground and shakes his head. "That's my line," he teases. As he looks back up at me, I see the amusement dancing in his eyes. "As she said." He points at the shack and the men all surround me as we walk inside. It's sweet, the statement they're making by surrounding me as we go in and come face to face with Granger.

"Kass..." Granger begins, but Malibu walks up to him and bitch slaps him across his face.

"You do not address her; you do not utter one word until she asks you the questions she needs answered. Nod your head if you understand," Malibu forcefully issues. Seeing this side of him turns me the fuck on. Knowing this is a bad time for me to cream my panties, I turn my attention to Granger. He's strung up like a Thanksgiving turkey. His arms are attached to chains from the ceiling and his feet are barely touching the ground. Looks painful... good. No less than what he deserves. Granger finally nods his head but keeps his stare solely on me. I can see the apology in his features, but I can't accept it. Not yet anyways. Maybe one day, but today is not that day.

## KASSI



SOMEONE BRINGS IN A CHAIR AND SETS IT IN FRONT OF GRANGER FOR ME to sit on. I happily take it since my legs are shaking and I'm not sure how long they'll hold me up. Crossing one leg over the other, I put pressure on the top leg to keep them from bouncing up and down. "I don't know that I can ever forgive you for what you've done. Your actions had consequences that damaged my life." I want him to feel pain, to know what his sister and I suffered that night. So, I tell him everything. I don't hold back on his sister's screams, begging them not to hurt her. I tell him every last gritty detail. By the time I get to the murder of his older sibling, tears are steadily streaming down his face. I should feel bad for making him live through this, but I don't... not in the slightest. It should've been him that died that night, he should've reaped the *benefits* of his disastrous life and decisions. Hate consumes me when I repeat this story. My emotions come out full-force, I can't pull it back or put out the fire in my gut. My body instantly reacts, I jump up and rush over to him and slap him across his face. The sound echoes around the room, the men have all stood

up from their slumped positions against the wall. Ready to protect me from myself if the need arises. "I hate you, Granger. Your sister died protecting you, does that make you feel like a big man? Does it do your heart good to know that she was willing to sacrifice herself and me for you? *Answer me!*"

"N-no, I'm so sorry. So fucking sorry," Granger sobs.

"*Sorry* doesn't bring her back. *Sorry* doesn't help with the nightmares and memories that plague me. *Sorry* doesn't protect me! It doesn't declare my future safety, now does it? You ran, Granger. You ran like a coward! If you needed help, you could've come to us, we would've helped you. At least then, we'd have known what we were facing. Did Fern know? Did she know that we were in danger, Granger?"

"Yes." He hangs his head down in embarrassment. "She knew everything, she's the one who helped me go into hiding. She said she'd take care of everything and that all I needed to do was stay alive. I begged her to stay out of it, but you know how she is... was."

"So, you just left her here to take the fall for you? What did you think was going to happen, Granger? You stole from an outlaw club. Did you think they were gonna deliver some roses and forget the whole thing?"

"N-no. But I honestly believed she was gonna go to Malibu for help. She promised me she would and wouldn't do anything stupid. I didn't want you two hurt because of me, but she convinced me it was the right thing to do for our family." The shame on Granger's face has me looking away. I'm so damn mad that I'm having a hard time containing it inside.

"Feel bad all you want, Granger. But you should've been the one to come to the club for help. We all know good and well that she wouldn't have wanted the club involved in family issues. She thought she could take on the world and solve everyone's problems on her own. Make all the excuses you want, but ultimately, her death is on you."

"You think I don't know that!" he yells at me; my brother walks over and clocks him in the jaw. Doesn't say one word, just gives him one of those looks that lets him know he's crossed a line. A very fine line.

"You didn't respect or think of this family, Granger. For that, you're gonna pay. Can I leave now?" I look over at Malibu and he nods his head yes.

"I'll walk you back, baby." He walks over and places his hand on my mid-back before informing the men he'll come back and join them once he has me securely placed with the other Ol' ladies. I only wish I could predict the future, if I could've, we'd have never left the safety of the brothers in that broken down shed.

## Malibu

My head is fucking pounding... the fuck? I hear whimpering around me, and even with my eyes closed, I know it's Kassi. "Kass," I manage to get out, still unable to understand what the hell happened to put me in this state of pain.

"Oh look, your Ol' man is waking up." I feel a kick in the ribs, the pain radiates through me. Someone did some damage to my body while I was passed out. It feels as if I've become someone's personal punching bag. Only a pussy would beat the fuck out of a downed man.

"Stop! Malibu?" My woman cries out as the fucker's foot continues to make contact with different parts of my body. Ready to fight, I come up swinging, only to find a Glock pointed right at my damn head.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," my captor says in a mockingly sing-song voice. I know that damn voice, where have I heard it before?

"What do you want?" I intend for it to come out as a demanding growl, but it comes out more of a pain-filled moan. "Who the fuck are you?" The motherfucker is wearing a riding mask, not even his eyes can be seen through the material.

"That's not of any importance here, Malibu. It's time for all secrets to be laid out, don't ya think?" And just like that, it clicks into place of who this fucker is.

"Creed? The fuck are you doing?" Now, I'm pissed off. Did someone hire him to do this? If so, who? Who would be so damn stupid as to do this? I'll figure it out, and when I do, there's no place the fucker can hide that I won't find him. Creed will also die for his betrayal. Something I don't take lightly. I know he's a known man for hire, but he should've never had the gumption to cross me. He's already fucked my woman's head up before... my bad, but as far as I'm concerned, there's no excuses for what he's doing now. None whatsoever.

"Couldn't live with myself, Malibu. Told you that your actions were gonna come back to haunt you, should've listened to me."

"W-what's going on?" Kassi cries out the question. I know that my life, and hers, is about to irrevocably change. After today, I have no reason to continue living... not even the brotherhood is worth losing her over.

"Yeah, Malibu, what's going on?" Creed, the fucker, taunts me. He knows that my life is fixing to be worth nothing and he's enjoying the fuck out of it. "Do you wanna tell her, or should I?"

"Fuck off, Creed. I'm gonna end you," I gleefully inform him, already planning out his death in my mind.

"Good luck with that, brother," he snidely replies.

"Not *your* brother, fucker," I combatively say, leering in his direction. He throws his head back and laughs in a maniacal way that causes bumps to form up and down my arms. Suddenly, I realize, he may not mean for me to make it out of this place alive. Speaking of, I scan the room and recognize where we are. The cottage, the place of Kassi's interrogation, this place has some bad mojo and needs to be

burned to the fucking ground. This is some fucking bullshit. How dare he bring us back here!

“Ah, recognize where we are? Your Ol’ lady strung up in the same chair as last time. Only this time, she’ll be the one making all of the final decisions. Can’t wait to see if she spares your life or not.”

Once again... the fuck?

“What game are you playin’, Creed? This is a pussy move if I’ve ever seen one.” I instigate him, trying to make him spew his bullshit at me. I want him to leave her be and focus his attention solely on me.

“No games, Malibu. It’s fucking truth time is all.” I look over at Kassi and mouth the words ‘I’m sorry’ at her. It’s hard to realize that in a short span of time, she’s going to hate me as much as she does those responsible for fucking her life up. Ultimately, at the end of the day, my actions are the ones that issued the last straw. A decision I’ll live to regret... for however long I’m allowed to live.

Today is my day of reckoning. I’ll answer for my sins, and am willing to give up my life in order for her to keep living. I will answer for my crimes against her, and pray that she’ll eventually forgive me and move on. I need to die knowing that she’s willing and able to move forward. Live and love again... find a man worthy of her.

“I’ll happily die for what I did. As long as you don’t touch one hair on her head, I’ll face my demons. You have to let her go.” I look over at him and notice his head nod. He had no intentions of hurting her outside of emotionally. I take in a heavy lungful of oxygen and begin telling Kassi everything. I hold absolutely nothing back. Her face stays blank as she hears about my role in her forced memories, that I am the reason she has to live each and every day seeing those fuckers and what they did to her and Fern. When I finish, Creed has me kneel on my knees in front of her, the gun placed against the back of my head.

“Today is judgment day, Kassi. You are Malibu’s judge, jury and possible executioner. You have a decision to make right here and right now. Are you willing to forgive Malibu for his sins, move on and stay together forever, or do we end him? And let me warn you, Kas-

si... I will be watching—closely. If I see you in any form of distress or unhappiness, I will end him. But I'm willing to give you the opportunity to decide. Can you forgive him and grow old with him, or do we just end him now and allow you to find love elsewhere? The clock is ticking." He begins humming the themed tune from Jeopardy. "Da, da, da, da, da-da-da, da-dadadadada. Time's up."

"I love him," Kassi finally says. "And as much as I want to be angry with him, I forgive him. I can understand why he did what he did. I'd have probably done the same thing if our roles had been reversed. I forgive you, Malibu. I meant my promise from before, whatever is in the past stays there... we move forward with a new beginning. I'm forever yours, Malibu. Now, tomorrow, for the rest of our lives."

"Is that your final decision?" Creed asks, cocking the gun in my ear. I hear the bullet enter the chamber and close my eyes, not sure if he's gonna end me, or honor Kassi's decision.

"That's my final decision," Kassi adamantly states, looking me in the eye. 'I forgive you' she mouths at me. My body relaxes, I can die happy knowing that in the end, she forgave me for being an ass. I feel a blow to the back of my head, the last thing I hear is my Ol' lady screaming out my name as the world around me becomes a dark void of nothing.

## KASSI



"MALIBU, WAKE UP," I CRY OUT. THAT CREED FUCKER LEFT A LITTLE while ago, but not before issuing out orders to me. One, I can never share what happened here, either time. Malibu is to pay for his sins against me to me, no one else. Two, he meant what he stated, if I lied to him about my forgiveness of Malibu, he will end him. No if's, and's or but's about it. It's like Vegas, what happens here stays here. When I assured him that I meant what I said, he huffed and rubbed the back of his head... I have a feeling he thought I was lying, but I wasn't. I'd already secretly had my suspicions that Malibu was behind it one way or another, I'd already dealt with that and decided that the night in question changed him in more ways than one. I needed to remember so that we could deal with it, it made us closer... stronger. I've already forgiven him, I wasn't going to in the beginning, but over time, I found myself giving in. The day in the shower, when he was going to confess to me, was the day I decided there and then, that even though it hurt, he had to know. He was holding on to the past, and in a way, so was I. It may have initially

hurt that he'd put me through that, but those memories have helped me heal. I don't want the club to find out what he did, they wouldn't be able to forgive and forget. He'd be out, and I couldn't live like that. I'd have to make a decision between the man who owns my heart, and my siblings. Who can make a choice like that and live with heartbreak?

They are as vital to him as they are to me. So yes, I can live without everyone knowing. As a matter of fact, I'd prefer it that way. This needs to stay buried... only Malibu and I knowing the truth. This Creed fucker, however, I think Malibu and I need to come up with a plan where it concerns him. He's a loose string we can't afford to have dangling over our heads. My Ol' man's gonna need someone to work this out with, and I plan on being part of it every step of the way. Only the two of us in the end can know what we're gonna do where it pertains to him.

"Malibu, wake the fuck up! I'm tired of finding myself tied to motherfucking chairs. Malibu!" I scream, because seriously, if I'm not cut loose soon, I'm worried I'll lose my damn mind.

"Woman, stop your bellowin'," he says as he begins to come around. "What's the damn rush, I just need a few more minutes of shut eye."

"Swear to God, Malibu. If you don't get your ass up and untie me I'm gonna whoop yours once I'm free." He opens up his eyes as I state this and begins scanning the room.

"The fuck?" he dumbfoundedly asks.

"Up, Malibu, untie me now." By my tone, he knows I'm not messing around. He stands up and begins swaying on his feet. "Easy." He grabs a hold of the couch and steadies himself.

He has a look of confusion as he lifts his head and looks around. "Shit," he hisses out but rushes the best he can my way. "Fuck, baby, how long was I out for?"

"Long enough for my limbs to go numb." When I answer him, he looks up at me and I see his horrified look staring back at me. "I'm alright, promise."

"I'm gonna kill that fucker," he issues the threat through a hiss.

"And I'll be right there at your side, but first things first." I lift my eyebrows and he starts loosening my bindings. He's still staggering a bit on his feet which causes me to worry that he's gonna topple over on top of me. "Um... Malibu, all good?"

"Yeah, just a little dizzy, I'll have you loose here shortly." His words, even promising, come out with a slight slur. Makes me wonder just how much damage happened to his noggin when that fucker pistol whipped him.

"How many of me are you seeing?" I question.

"Just the one of ya, babe. My head's throbbin' and my equilibrium's a little off. Be a little patient would ya, and stop yellin' while you're at it."

My eyes widen at his declaration, because I'm speaking in a normal octave. "I'm not yelling," I state in a normal tone. Okay, maybe a little quieter because I'm worried about him.

"Fuckin' feels as if you're screamin' down the house." He manages to get one of my arms loose, and I immediately reach up to feel the back of his head. He has a huge goose egg and moans in pain as my fingers lightly graze the area.

"We gotta get some ice on that as soon as I'm free," I whisper this time, not wanting to make anything worse for him. I know that when one of my migraines hit, I'd prefer for everything to be nice and quiet.

Malibu

My world is spinning and I'm having a hard time keeping my feet planted in one place. I can feel myself stumbling and haven't been this unsteady nor tripped over my own two feet since that one time

my mom tried to teach me how to dance. Wasn't one of my more finer moments, I managed to break my mom's big toe by stepping on it. I don't want any mishaps to happen to any of Kassi's limbs while I'm trying to free her from these bindings. "Almost there," I tell her as I feel her other arm come loose. I want to howl out the word 'success' since I'm not feeling much on my A game at the moment. That one small feat feels as if I've won a gold medal at the damn Olympics.

Looking down at her feet, I regret knowing that I'm gonna have to get down on the floor. When I go to lean over, I lose my balance and end up flat on my ass next to the chair. "Well, that didn't happen the way I envisioned it happenin'," I stammer out as my head once again spins. Rolling over to my side, I lay there and reach my arms out to untie one of her ankles. "Just a moment, baby, and you'll be out of these ropes." Even though my vision is swimming and my head is pounding, I concentrate all of my effort in undoing these knots. They aren't terribly tight, and on any other given day I'd have no issue undoing them. It seems as if time is slowly passing by as I continue to struggle. What feels like hours later, she's finally able to get up. Me however, the sense of puking overwhelms me if I attempt to move from the position I'm lying in. "Just leave me here, Kassi. I'll get up later."

"No, Malibu. We need to get ice on your head and get you moving. I'm worried that you may have a slight concussion. Come on, help me out here," she says as she tries to lift me up. Her hands are under my armpits and she struggles to heave me up. "Roll over to your bottom, Malibu and get your feet underneath you. You have to assist me in getting you standing."

"Just need to sleep for a little bit," I tell her, closing my eyes.

"No!" Is the last thing I hear before I succumb to darkness.

Kassi

"Fucking hell," I mutter underneath my breath. "I need to start lifting weights more. I'm so out of shape." I leave him lying on the floor and go make a baggie filled with ice. "Think, Kassi. We cannot be stranded here, what if he needs medical attention?" I've got no medical background and Kaci isn't here to google things for me. Shit, neither one of us have our cell phones on us. We left them in our room at the clubhouse when we went to visit Granger. Visit? Ha, that's a joke. I've never quite had one like I did that night... wait, was that just tonight? It seems like days, if not weeks ago since I smacked Granger around. I start scanning the room, when I find nothing useful, I go into each individual room. There's no landline that I can find... wait, the loft! It's the only place neither of us went the last time we were here. Could I get so lucky? Climbing the ladder, it's pitch dark up, so it takes me a minute to talk myself into venturing up here. "There's no boogeyman, there's no creatures gonna crawl out of any closets and come out and get me. Your man needs you; you can do this." My knees wobble as I make my final ascent on the top landing.

Not being able to see my surroundings, I open up the rest of my senses. My arms come out in front of me and I begin to maneuver my way around. There're only three walls in this room, the side I just came up is nothing more than posts and it's not a tall one, so I know that I need to head away from that direction. I can just envision my ass tumbling over it and breaking my damn neck. I can only imagine the vision I make as I hold my arms out in front of me in case I fall. Making my way to the right, I finally find a wall and move my hands up and down the wall, hoping that there's a light switch there somewhere. My foot catches on something and I fall to the side but manage to hold myself upright and my hands land on what feels to be a switch on the wall. To the left of that switch, a glow can be seen from a sliver of missing wall. Once my eyes adjust, I can tell it's a closed door. "No one's gonna jump out and get you," I remind myself before finding the knob and swinging it open. The room is shadowed with the light emanating from that small closet, but it's enough for me to see around me. Doing a quick scan, I see a chain hanging from the ceiling, figuring what could it hurt, I walk over and pull it. This is the first time I can say I've yanked a chain and something good came from it. The entire room is now glowing and I

can see everything. I let my body relax and walk over to the small desk sitting in the corner of the room.

Sitting down on the chair, I begin rummaging through drawers. I see a black box with a sticky note that says, '*for emergencies only*', well, the way I see it, this is a damn emergency if I've ever seen one. Slowly unzipping it, my mind temporarily goes to what could jump out at me as I continue with the process of checking out the contents. Inhaling a deep breath into my lungs, "Please don't be a bomb," I beg this inanimate object. When it's fully displayed to me, I let out a breath that I hadn't realized I'd been holding up until now. Satellite phone to the rescue! As my fingers shakily begin to punch in numbers, I get angry at the homeowners. How could they hide this? People should be aware that there's some aid around. Fucking ridiculous.

As soon as the numbers are punched in, I hit the button that will send my call through. "Ryder, talk to me," he answers. I sob out a relieved breath as soon as I hear his voice.

"Ryder..." I finally manage to choke out.

"Kassi. The fuck are you? Malibu with you?" The relief coming from the other end can be felt through my entire being. There are only a certain few people who have that effect on me, and my big brother just happens to be one of them.

Everything comes out in one sentence as I tell him how we've been kidnapped and that Malibu is hurt. I tell him where we are, not knowing the address, I start to freak the fuck out. He soothes me and tells me that they're tracing my call and I just need to keep the line open until they get a location. "We know where you are, Kassi. Sit tight, we're on our way."

"Just hurry, Ryder. Malibu, he's hurt pretty bad," I cry. Knowing that he's gonna make everything okay doesn't settle my emotions.

"Soon, Kassi. We'll be there soon, just take care of our boy... yeah? You got this, little sister."

"I've got this," I reassure him as I square my shoulders and dry the tears from my face. We hang up and I head back down the ladder to

go sit with my Ol' man.

## KASSI



I CAN HEAR THE ROAR OF MANY MOTORCYCLES PULLING UP INTO THE drive. Panic momentarily seizes me, what if it's not my family coming? What if it's the Bloodthirsty Bastards coming to torture me some more? Malibu is down, he won't be of any help to me. Think, Kassi, what would he do if he was awake and alert? Slipping out from my criss-crossed position where Malibu's head's been resting, I run into the kitchen and grab the biggest, sharpest knife I can find. Instead of sitting back down on my perched position on the floor, I take a stance over my man's sleeping body. I crouch down, ready to spring forward and take the first fucker out who enters that door. No one is going to hurt him, hurt me, ever the fuck again.

The door flies open and I rush the person coming inside without any further thought. A war cry escapes me as I lunge, the knife comes down in a downward arc. Arms fly up and grab my wrist, stopping my forward motion. "Kassi! Dammit, it's me." My wild eyes land on my brother's frame and I sag into his arms.

"You came," I say as I break down into his chest.

"I'll always come when you call for me." I don't remove my head from his chest as I hear the room fill with the others. It's as if an echo is playing out in my ears, before my body gives out and I pass out in my brother's arms. I'm not scared as this happens because I know he'll protect me and Malibu with his life if it's needed.



When my eyes wake up and my mind becomes alert, I jump up from the soft mattress. "Malibu?"

"I'm here, baby," he says from the corner of the room where he's sitting in his recliner. I take him in and notice the bandage around his head and the bag of ice that he's released from his hand. Without further thought, I rush over and plop down into his lap. He tucks my head into the crease of his neck as his fingers begin to comb through my tangled locks.

"You're okay." I heavily breathe out. "Let's not ever do that again."

"You got it, Kassi," he promises me. "How are you? I was worried, you were out for a long assed time."

"I'm not hurt, my mind just needed a little rest is all. What about you? He clocked you over the head pretty good." I look up and tears begin to water my eyes at the thought that I could've lost him.

"I've got a headache and a lump from hell, but I'll survive. It'll take a lot more than that for you to get rid of me," he jokes, and soon we're both chuckling, I'm not sure if it's out of relief, or if we've both lost our marbles. Either way, it doesn't matter to me, as long as we're both here, healthy and alive. "Things are fixin' to get dicey for me, Kassi. I need to tell the brothers why we ended up in the position we were in."

"No," I quickly say as I sit up in his lap. He has to hear me, and not fight me or Creed on his demands. "They can never know, Malibu. That's one of the things Creed made crystal clear before he left."

"I can't continue livin' with the lies, Kass. I've got to fess up and tell them everythin' I did."

"No, Malibu, listen to me. Pay attention," I state, grabbing his chin and forcing his eyes to meet mine. "I don't like not telling them everything either, but it's something we have to do. As far as everyone is concerned, this was all the doing of the Bloodthirsty Bastards." As he goes to argue with me, I hold my hand up, stopping him before he begins. "Stop, Malibu, just stop. This small white lie keeps everyone happy, no questions asked, and things hidden that need to be kept between us, our secret. We're not only protecting us with this tale, but we're protecting those we love along the way. The focus will be on retaliation and taking down those fuckers who hurt me, and we keep our family. If it came down to it and I was forced to pick sides... I'd pick yours every single time. Don't force me to do that. Please."

## Malibu

As I'd sat here and watched her sleep, I'd decided to come clean with my brothers and accept my punishment. It doesn't sit easy in me, the decisions I've made and I need to pay for those crimes against my woman and the brotherhood. I can't live with all of these secrets and lies. I've always prided myself in being a good man, a loyal man, one that no one would ever question whose side I'm on. I respect the fuck out of my brothers and would like to earn that back from them. I know that if they choose to not strip me of my patch, I'll spend each and every day proving myself to them. To her. To my damn self.

Can I really follow through with what she's asking me to do? I don't want to ever have to say no to her, but this is one time I may have to. I understand where she's coming from, I really do. But what kind of man, what kind of brother, does that make me at the end of the day? Can I look them in the eyes every day and live with this deception?

Fuck, she's asking a lot of me, but I can see the fear in her eyes and am not sure that I can hurt her any more than what I've already done.

"Kassi." I blow out a rush of air, not sure what to say.

"We have to do this, Malibu. For me, do it for me if you can't do it for yourself. You owe me this, Malibu." Her words are like a slap to my damned face. I do owe her everything and nothing less than.

Coming to a decision I'm not thrilled to make, I finally nod my head, "Okay, Kassi. For you, I'll do it. But let the record show I'm not happy about it."

"I know you aren't, baby, but it's necessary." I made a promise to myself as that Glock was pointed at the back of my skull, that if we made it out of there, and she gave me another chance, she'd never feel scared again. And right now, she's petrified that I'll go against her wishes and wants.

"Come here," I say as I pull her head down. "For you, I'll do this. I'm not happy about it, but I understand where you're coming from. We do need to talk about what I did though."

"Not here, Malibu. When we go home, we'll hash it all out and then put it behind us. We'll never bring it up again, deal?"

"As long as you promise to talk to me about it, I'll promise you anything, Kass."



We're in a meeting, and the lies spewing from my mouth leave my tongue heavy and my stomach turning. This is the last time I'll lie to my brothers I vow. And I'm not doing it to save my hide, I'm doing it for her and to ensure our future with the club and each other.

"Did the man that took y'all say that he was workin' for the Bastards?" Kid asks me, drilling me as if I'm on trial... which in a way, I am.

"Yes," I answer, unable to look my president in the eyes.

"Malibu, this isn't your fault. You shouldn't feel shame for what happened to you and Kassi," Travler states, having my back as always.

"I know, man. It's hard to explain," I comment. It's on the tip of my tongue to blurt out all of my misdeeds, but Kassi's words come slamming back into me as quickly as those thoughts enter. Fuck, what a damn position to be in... choosing between your woman and the brothers.

It's all a circle of lies and deception.

A circle that I started, and unfortunately won't be ending any time soon. Do I feel sorry that the Bloodthirsty fuckers are gonna pay for my bad decisions... no, because at the end of the day, they were the ones who started this entire scenario. It should give me a sense of peace, but all I think about is my role in this thing. I was the one who made her relive her nightmare, they're the ones who gave her those demons that come visit her at night. My thoughts are scattered all over the place, that's the problem with lying, it starts with one, then you have to tell another one to cover that first one. Eventually, one will trip you up and you'll give yourself away. That's why I'm keeping things as simple as I possibly can.

I keep to the basics of the truth when it comes to Creed, other than giving out his name. Basically, my lie to them consists of him covering his own ass, letting them know that he felt guilty... since he did state that, and he had no idea that he was a pawn in someone else's game. He took us this second time to reassure us that he won't be bothering us again... another damn lie, but I believe that we'll never see him again as long as we keep to his specified parameters.

The meeting wraps up after another hour of going through everything. I inform them that I'm taking Kassi home, Ryder protests, but I argue back that she needs the comfort of her things. Once we're all done arguing about that shit, I walk out the door and go find my woman.

It's time to go home and face the music. I plan on showing her every one of the notes I received and tell her verbatim what was said to me on the phone.

I know she says she forgives me, but this will be the test that settles that in my mind.

## MALIBU



WE DRUDGINGLY WALK INTO OUR HOME. I MAKE HER STAY IN THE entrance of our front doorway as I go into each room and clear it. I don't trust that fucker Creed or those Bastards one iota. They are not men of honor; they'd have no such gumption about attacking us in our home. When I make it into our bedroom, I walk over to my dresser, move my clothes aside and grab the stack of letters.

This is going to be one of the hardest conversations of my life.

In my heart, it feels as if this is make it, or break it, time.

Not wanting to leave her alone for too long, I pick my nuts up off the ground and head back into the living room. "Everythin's clear, Kassi. Come in here and join me," I state, pointing at the couch next to where I sit. As soon as she shuts and locks the front door, she comes over and lands next to me. Without saying anything, I hand her the pack of letters.

She hesitantly reaches out and grabs the stack from my outstretched hand. "I love you, Malibu. Nothing I read here is going to change that fact. I might get angry, demand answers, but we'll get through this... together."

I sit back into the couch and watch as she opens the first letter.

Fuck my life.

Kassi

I find my hands shaking once again; seems to be a pattern that I've been having more often than not lately. Pulling the first letter out, I open it up and begin reading.

*Malibu,*

*Don't you find it odd that your woman remembers certain things, yet not others. She knows it all, she continues to keep the secrets of why. Ask yourself how come she'd do that?*

*-Inquiring Mind.*

*Malibu,*

*I know everything. She's lying to you. Wake up, stop letting her call the shots. Force her to tell you what part she played.*

*-Inquiring Mind.*

*Malibu,*

*Here's a question for you. Did she help set the entire thing up? Kind of convenient that she proclaims to have memory loss... don't ya think?*

*-Inquiring Mind.*

After the third letter, I'm not sure if I want to continue. I was being set up... the question is why? Will we ever know the answer to that? Somehow, I'm thinking it's something we'll never acquire the answers to. "I don't wanna read anymore, Malibu. I would've started questioning me too."

"They get worse from there, Kassi," he says to me. "I was already so lost in grief and uncontained anger, that I didn't stop to ask, why would you have? If I had, I'd have known that there's no way in fuck you'd be involved in anything so malicious. You loved her as much as I did."

"I did," I admit, even though I question even that. She was my best friend, but I wonder if I agreed to that triad relationship so I could be with Malibu. Fern and I, we'd started drifting apart there at the end. I knew she was hiding something from me, but I never pushed—looking back, I should have. I should have made her talk and confide in me. I would have gone immediately to Malibu or my brother. Either one of them would have fixed it before it got out of hand.

"Can we really put this behind us and move on? Kassi, I gotta tell ya, if I was in your shoes, I don't know if I could forgive me."

"You would, Malibu. Because you love me as much as I do you. Do I think you handled this the way you should have? No, I don't, but then; I think about your emotional state during the time these letters started coming, and I probably would've acted without thinking as well. We're not the same people today as we were then. We've learned a lot of lessons, ones I wouldn't put on my worst enemy, but we came out on top. Didn't we, baby?"

"Yeah, babe. We did. I love you," he says.

"Love ya back, why don't you show me just how much?" I know there's a twinkle in my eye because a smile forms on his face, his

dimples are protruding showing his happiness. He scoops me up from the couch and takes me into the bedroom. We only leave our room for the next two days when we need to fuel our bodies and relieve our bladders.

He shows me oh so good how much he loves me.

People may not agree with me forgiving him for his transgressions, but when you love someone with every beat of your heart, you're willing to walk through fire and save them.

## EPILOGUE



Ryder

THERE'S SOMETHING OFF ABOUT MY BROTHER AND BABY SISTER. THEY'RE holding something back. I'm not sure if I want to dig into it, or leave it be and let them work it out. The big brother in me wants to fix everything for them, but the man in me understands that Malibu needs to do this on his own.

"What's got you up thinking so hard this late at night?" Sky asks me on a yawn.

"Worried about Kassi and Malibu," I tell her, since I tell her everything I can. I've loved and trusted this woman since I was fifteen years old. I've known her all of my life, but we were both afraid to take things to another level... if things didn't work out, we'd ruin a

lifetime of friendship. We were both with other people, and I regret not saving myself for her. But you can't go back and change the past, you can only move on and not look back.

"You're a good big brother, Ryder. But you have to let go some and let them live their lives." My woman is wise, but she and Kid have a completely different relationship than what I have with my sisters. They grew up with one another, I grew up knowing I had sisters, but never having an important part in their lives. A guilt that I felt each and every day. I always wanted them around, but our dad felt it was for their safety to stay away at school.

"Something's off about the two of 'em, I just can't place my finger on what that is," I admit. She shifts in the bed and places her hand on my chest. "After everythin' the two of them have been through, I can't help but worry."

"Ryder, baby. You have to trust that if it's something they can't handle, they'll come to you for help. You guys have enough on your plates, those Bloodthirsty fuckers need to be taken care of, I don't think their threat to our family is over. And y'all need to do it safely."

"We're always safe," I say to her, because we know what we have at home and ain't one of us willing to sacrifice our women and children.

Skylar

I too have felt that something's off with my sister and her Ol' man, but I just let her know that I'm here if she ever needs me for anything. That's all I can do; I refuse to interfere with their relationship.

If she ever finds herself needing someone to fight for her... I'm her girl. Our posse of Ol' ladies is strong, we're no shrinking violets. We're fighters, strong-willed women. No one will ever get the better

of us. We have to be strong with the men we've chosen to be our partners in life. Being the Ol' lady in a club like the Rage Ryders, we have to have our poker faces out and about at all times. We hold our heads high in public and never waiver where it comes to our commitment to our family.

I'll never regret the decision I made to give myself to Ryder, he's the best thing that's happened to me. If I hadn't had him by my side when my father was murdered by my aunt, I would have lost myself in turmoil.

He is my lifeline, and I will always return that favor to him. No matter what we face in the future. Fuck those judgmental assholes who think we're nothing more than thugs... they wish they had the love we have.

They assume they have people at their back, we know we do.

Long live the Rage Ryders, Rage Ryders forever more.

The End

## BONUS SCENE

### Malibu

Ten years later...

"Spawn of Satan one and two front and center, now!" I bellow as I enter our house. I had a phone call from their mom earlier stating that they've raided my damn garage. She said my tools were spread out everywhere, as they attempted to take my fucking spare bike apart. Inquisitive little fuckers. The twin gene skipped Kaci and landed right on our doorstep. I'm the fortunate one who has two boys that fucking make me wanna pull my hair out by the roots.

"Dad, you're home, we need your help." Mason, my oldest son by two minutes comes running into the room to meet me.

"Yeah, and what would that be?" I ask, giving him my 'you're in deep shit' look I've mastered since the two of them began walking and talking.

"We watched a video about mechanics and wanted to see how your bike works," Major declares. I named him this because he was a major fucking surprise on delivery day. Somehow, he managed to hide his existence in every one of Kassi's scans. It seems it's an appropriate name, because he's been a major pain in the ass from day one. He was the one who suffered from colic, earaches, asthma, bronchitis... you name it, he had it.

"So, you two decided to take it on yourself and not wait for me to get home and ask me about it?" These two made Kassi get on birth control and despite that, she still makes me glove the fuck up every time I wanna love on her. Not that I can blame her none, I've contemplated getting the boys snipped to ensure we never go through this again. These boys just had their seventh birthday, and it's like the flood gates to hell opened. They wanna take everything apart in the house. While Kassi's distracted, they find the most damage they can cause and put their all into it. Once, a couple of weeks ago, Kassi was in the laundry room switching clothes around; in that small span of time, they managed to take out the disposal and tear it apart. Kassi came into the kitchen to see water spraying from pipes and the kitchen was nearly flooded. The disposal was trashed, there was no putting it back together. I had to turn the water off to the house and go purchase another one. You'd have thought their punishment, which consisted of no video games and going to bed early, was me beating the life right out of them. They screamed for hours, cried and demanded that we were the worst parents on the planet.

We got the fuck over it.

Next, they took their shower apart. And I don't mean just the faucet and knobs, no, not these inquisitive fuckers... they beat the tiles from the wall to see the inner workings of the pipes. And they did that shit as quiet as a mouse. I was outside grilling and Kassi was next to me. We had no clue that they'd be able to do something so drastic while we were making dinner and catching up with each other's day.

"You boys are gonna clean each one of my tools, put them back where they belong... and while I put my bike back together, you two will be my little gophers. Dad wants a beer, you'll go and get it without whinin', want you to sweep the garage, you do it without all of your bickerin' and tryin' to get the other one to do it."

"Is that all?" Mason asks me, thinking he's gotten off with these small things.

"Shut up," Major hisses at his twin. Because yeah, out of the two of them, he's the most like me. He knows there's no way in hell they're getting off so easily.

“No, but I’ll play it by ear and figure it out as we go.”

“Fine,” they both simultaneously say.

See, this fathering shit ain’t so hard after all. Once the spawns figure out who wears the pants in this family, it’s smooth sailing from here.

*Wanna know what happened to Granger? Stay tuned, all will be answered in Ryder and Skylar’s book... Next up in the Rage Ryders.*

## STALK LIBERTY HERE:

### Liberty Parker Follow Links

- Website: <http://authorlibertyparker.com>
- Amazon Page: <https://www.amazon.com/Liberty-Parker/e/B00YHYEPBK/>
- Goodreads: [https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/14035441.Liberty\\_Parker](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/14035441.Liberty_Parker)
- BookBub: <https://www.bookbub.com/authors/liberty-parker>
- Newsletter sign up form: <https://landing.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/s1v0k0>
- Facebook Author Page: <https://www.facebook.com/authorlibertyparker/>
- Liberty's Luscious Ladies: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1153797384736487/>
- Rebel Guardians Insiders: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/280929722515781/>
- Twisted Iron Groupies: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2088172217913867/>
- Dark Leopards MC: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/499498294046833/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/authorlparker>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/libertyauthor/>

## OTHER BOOKS BY LIBERTY

Rage Ryders MC

1. [Taken By Lies](#)
2. [Taken By Rage](#)
- 2.5. [Taken By Vegas](#)
3. [Taken By Sadistic](#)
4. [Taken By Chaos](#)
5. [Taken By Temptation](#)

Rage Ryders Templeton

[Faithfully Devoted](#)

Diva's Ink

1. [Blank Canvas](#)  
[Audible US](#)  
[Audible UK](#)
2. [Clean Slate](#)
3. [Beautiful Template](#)

Dreamcatchers MC

1. [Charlee's Choices](#)
2. [Capturing Dreams](#)

Surrogacy

1. [What Should've Been](#)

Crossroad Soldiers MC

1. [Walking The Crossroad](#)
2. [Our Cross To Bear](#)

Rogue Enforcers

[Maverick](#)

Rebel Guardians MC (with Darlene Tallman)

[Braxton](#)

[Hatchet](#)

[Chief](#)

[Smokey & Bandit](#)

[Law](#)

[Capone](#)

[A Twisted Kind Of Love](#)

Rebel Guardians Next Generation (with Darlene Tallman)

1. [Talon & Claree](#)

2. [Jaxson & Ralynn](#)

3. [Maxum & Lily](#)

New Beginnings (with Darlene Tallman)

1. [Reclaiming Maysen](#)

2. [Reviving Luca](#)

3. [Restoring Tig](#)

Nelson Brothers (with Darlene Tallman)

1. [Seeking Our Revenge](#)

2. [Seeking Our Forever](#)

3. [Seeking Our Destiny](#)

Twisted Iron MC (with Kayce Kyle)

1. [Mercenary And His Outlaw](#)

2. [Fueling The Edge](#)

3. [Sandman's Awakening](#)

4. [Fox's Lair](#)

Old Ladies Club (with Kayce Kyle, Erin Osborne and Darlene Tallman)

1. [Old Ladies Club - Wild Kings MC](#)
2. [The Old Ladies Club - Soul Shifterz MC](#)
3. [Old Ladies Club - Rebel Guardians MC](#)
4. [Old Ladies Club - Rage Ryders MC](#)