



IRON CROWS MC
BOOK 2

Working
Couple

LARAN MITHRAS

WORKING COUPLE

By

Laran Mithras

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**Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is
counted for righteousness.**

~ Romans 4:4-5

Thus, the ungodly man, who doesn't even try, is justified by faith.

CHAPTER 1

What could have prepared me for the verbal beating I was about to get? I was about to feel like my balls had been jammed down into a bear-trap.

Thunder boomed overhead, close, being as we were higher up in the mountains and along the path of the weather fronts. The clouds hung heavy and dark and the pounding rain even darker. Kristy and I raced across the street from our Suburban towards the clubhouse. If we were early enough, we were allowed to eat breakfast with those who stayed in the clubhouse.

A curious sight hit me as I ran across, pulling Kristy by the hand; we saw Leathers getting out of a Jeep. Seeing any of the bikers driving a vehicle was odd, but not unheard of – especially in weather like this. Maybe the Hells Angels rode in this kind of weather to show they could, but who would want to park their ride out in the rain? But that wasn't the oddity of the sight. Under the awning of the entry, Leathers pulled off his colors. The strange thing was, they were inside out, as if he were hiding his patches. Hiding his colors.

Is he ashamed? I watched him reverse it to normal and slide his rags back on, colors properly displayed. I entered after my wife, trying to shield her as much as possible. Leathers was close behind. I saw Gunner crossing the room from the one hallway over to the other where the kitchen was. I called out excitedly, "Hey, brother!"

Gunner looked over then came to an abrupt stop. He ripped the unlit, thin cigar out of his mouth and strode towards me with a vengeance.

Leathers passed us with a disapproving look.

I felt total confusion as I saw the features on the grizzled old chaplain's face. His leathery skin with deep wrinkles was even more wrinkled, but this time in anger. *What did I say to piss you off, chaplain?*

The cigar stabbed towards me. "Who the fuck do you think you are?"

I backed away, but he kept stabbing and was not waiting for an answer. My back hit the wall next to the door. I'm not a huge man, but I'm six foot. Gunner, the chaplain, was only five-nine. But he appeared to loom.

He growled in his gravelly voice, "Don't you ever rise above yourself again." He pounded his chest. "We earned these rags. We call each other

brothers. You ain't earned shit; don't ever call one of us by something you haven't earned. Am I brutally, fucking clear?"

Kristy said in a small voice, "He was just saying hello..."

Gunner's eyes didn't even flinch towards her. He said through gritted teeth, "And keep your woman in check, understand? She has no say here."

I put an arm around my wife, but said, "I'm sorry, Gunner. I didn't know."

He released a growl that sounded like a Harley coughing to life. "Well, now you do. Keep your mouth shut and your ears open. Ask questions." He hammered the cigar back into his mouth and glanced outside. He muttered, "Wouldn't be surprised if Noah didn't go floating by in the fucking ark."

Shaking, and feeling desperate to repair my gaffe, I said, "We saw something odd, if I can ask about it?"

He grunted, turning away. "Sure, Jimmy. But ask me on the way to the kitchen."

We followed. "I saw Leathers get out of his Jeep. His colors were hidden – inside out. Isn't that like, disrespectful?"

Gunner squinted at me as we went into the hall. "Fuck no, it's the most respectful thing a biker can do and I'll tell you why." He didn't – we were in the kitchen and he was too busy taking a plate from Grannie.

She winked at us with a smile.

We took our plates and sat next to Gunner.

He finally continued, taking tiny bites of bacon. "You've felt the freedom of the ride."

I nodded. The sensation was exhilarating.

He waved the bacon. "Get that same feeling in a car?"

"Of course not."

He took another bite, then slid the rest into his mouth and chewed. "You see, once knowing that freedom, we consider cars to be cages. The freedom we felt and that we earned should never be insulted by touching the inside of a cage. If you have to ride in a cage, respect your colors and turn them inside out."

I nodded slowly. "Makes sense."

He glared at me. "Of course it fucking does." His face softened. "Sucks having to drive, don't it? I imagine you considered riding even in the rain."

"I did."

He wheezed.

Viking was late, as usual. His words, though good, were always out of place. "Ride free with the wind in your beard."

I was bald and kept it that way. But I was growing out my beard at Kristy's urging. It didn't look much more than a three-quarter inch bad-boy beard – though the goatee portion was longer now.

Kristy snickered at Viking's advice.

Dealer, the president, buzzed grey and commanding, poured coffee into his mug. His eyes fell on us. Holding his coffee cup for a moment in both hands to warm them, he came over. He looked down at Kristy. "Care for a talk?"

She looked up at him and then over to me.

I knew what he wanted. I nodded slightly to her.

She squeezed my arm and got up.

I watched him leave the kitchen on a mission. My wife followed along after him like a trailing puppy. I knew he was going to have her naked in seconds.

A small woman sat beside me a moment later and scooted close. I had seen much of this type of behavior in the clubhouse; friendly flirty women. It was Angela, the tiny blonde prostitute the club kept. She was free for the club in return for her protection and housing. The arrangement wasn't at all like that of a pimp: the club did not take a cut of anything she earned. Feeling charitable towards her, the Iron Crows offered her shelter rather than find her dead in some alley in such a risky business. Angela was a sweet girl who had turned to prostitution as the only way to get by. Her husband had been killed in Iraq. She made ends meet the only way she knew how.

I didn't move away from her. I wasn't interested, but it's nice to feel a woman be friendly – especially when my entire life had been filled with the unfriendly.

She leaned her head close. "Whatcha doin' until your shift?"

I identified with her in a way most men wouldn't. Instead of being repulsed, I felt a bond to her that resonated with my own past. Never having friends, always the loner, never included, I could understand what Angela felt. She might have sold her body, but she yearned for the kind of inclusion that I had so desperately needed when I met Kristy. And Kristy had been the same, too. I mumbled, "Not much, I guess. Going to Dealer's office in a couple minutes."

Her hand reached under and slid up my thigh. She gently rubbed my dick. "We could always talk."

Her massaging felt good. Very good. Thoughts of my wife doing the same thing to Dealer at the exact same moment made me hard. Angela was a very pretty woman, with curly blonde hair and a tiny frame. She was a rope with not even a hint of fat on her. Even her arms had that hollow-tendon look. I didn't know how she handled rough men, though I knew the members here treated her nicely when they were with her. However, I wasn't interested in just getting my rocks off. Neither did I want to hurt her feelings; she was incredibly nice. "Maybe I can take a rain check?"

"If it suits you." She didn't appear to be hurt. Her voice had that strangled quality of barely breathing while talking – far back in her throat, but not like she was holding in pot smoke. It made her words sound small and frail as if any second she was going to choke up and sob.

I disentangled myself and put my empty plate up for Smoke to grab. Grannie cooked, Smoke efficiently cleaned the plates. I learned a few weeks back that those who didn't work jobs out in the normal world did things around the clubhouse and got a split of income from club businesses – much like a commune might operate. Apparently, not all clubs did that, though many in Europe did. The Iron Crows had some good businesses operating and the entire club took part. Even those with normal jobs got a share, if less than others.

I walked through the hall and across the common room. Through into the next hall until the end. Maybe this had been the madam's suite at one time, but Dealer's office had a small connecting bedroom to it. I saw Sonar on the right in his office, boots up on the desk and talking into the phone. He didn't acknowledge me, but I wasn't there for him anyway. He probably knew that.

I went into Dealer's office. You didn't walk into the president's office without being invited, and Sonar would normally be the filter between Dealer and the rest in the clubhouse. But he had certainly seen Kristy with the president, and that sort of arrangement was known. I had my invitation. I quietly opened the bedroom door and slipped in.

Both looked at me for a brief instant to make sure it was me. Dealer was lying back allowing Kristy to ride him. She moved her hips slowly, taking his cock inside her as if she was riding a slow merry-go-round.

I sat on the stool and leaned forward, elbows on knees. My dick was still hard and became painfully hard as I watched. I tried to shift, but ended up just fidgeting like a little kid with a fire ant loose in his shorts.

Dealer mumbled, "You can take it out if you want." Then his eyes sharpened. "Just don't fucking cum on my floor."

I nodded with relief and pulled out my throbbing dick. I stroked to her movements, watching from a slight angle. I could see his shaft and her cute buttocks. He was in her pussy, but I couldn't see it. It didn't matter; this was more than enough. I liked that he enjoyed my wife. I was glad she made him feel good. Kristy was a sweet lay and he treated her with respect.

I also felt good for my wife. She enjoyed fucking him and was always a passionate lover with me afterwards. I felt proud of her and thought she was the sexiest woman on the planet. She looked so damned good with her pussy wrapped around his thick cock. What she did with him was a mouth-watering demonstration of her feminine sexiness. I loved every minute of it.

I gripped my erection, stroking as I watched her butt move up and down on him. Her sighs and his silent grunts were acclamations of acquisition: his cock had claimed my wife's pussy and my wife's pussy had taken his cock. I shafted myself with my fist feeling happy inside.

I knew Dealer had issues with his past concerning my wife. He had raped her. But she had come to like it, feeling desired in a way that only I had ever given her before. While she loved me, she craved him. That was okay with me. I wanted her to be fulfilled. If I fulfilled her heart and marriage bed, why would I begrudge her some extra from Dealer?

But the president had mistaken us, raped her, and felt bad about it. He knew he couldn't even face me in a fair fight without purposely losing to assuage his guilt. I was beyond all that; Dealer wasn't. His sense of honor ran deep. He also couldn't get Kristy out of his mind. That was fine by me, but he took the matter more seriously. He was looking for ways to get her out of his system and not cause issues in the club.

Maybe a few eyebrows had been raised, and I think the prospect Miguel and hang-around Ralph thought I was trying to bribe my way in. None of that had ever crossed my mind; I was just happy to have a job. Now I owned a Harley and I'd have to say, I was happier than ever, except maybe meeting Kristy. Nah, I was happy with the way things were. His attention boosted her self-esteem and mine as well. The others in the club grinned,

shrugged, and went on about their own business. I heard no whispers, caught no looks, fielded no laughter. I thought the situation was great.

If anything, at least he treated Kristy better than the other hangers.

Kristy came on him, her hips moving frantically and her arms supporting her hanging head as she leaned on his chest. His grip on her hips helped her jerking moves. He was smiling up at her. She groaned out her orgasm in a breathy voice as she ground her hips fully down on his. Her skinny back shook and trembled as she came on his cock. She looked exhausted and slowly moved forward to lay on him.

He accepted her down onto him and shifted his hips. She laid on him, still. He began shoving his hips up, his cock and her pussy now in plain view to me. His shaft slid up into her, over and over, his balls slapping up and down with the speed of his thrusting. His cock was like a smooth piston, working in and out of my wife's pussy in a blur.

I stroked faster, happier now that I could see.

She just laid on him and moaned, letting him do all the work.

He didn't last long, pulling hard on her butt with his hips raised and cock buried far. His balls gave several convulsive heaves as he squirted her deep with cum.

I had to let go of my shaft to keep from cumming. But now I had an ache to finish and couldn't. I dare not. *I wonder if she'll give me a handjob before we go to our shifts? Or maybe Angela would. Would my wife mind?*

CHAPTER 2

All three of us were interrupted by a knock on the bedroom door.

Sonar called out, "Dealer. Sheriff Jefferson to see you."

Dealer cursed. "Fuck." He called out, louder. "All right, hold him there a minute." He rolled out from under Kristy in an almost unceremonious dump. He pulled on his jeans and threw on his colors, leaving his shirt off. He held up his finger to his lips, looking at us. He whispered, "Stay quiet. Don't come out." He scrubbed a hand down his face and slid out the door.

I looked at my wife and shrugged. I was about to ask her for a blowjob when I heard voices.

Dealer said, "Sheriff, good morning."

"Morning." It was a deep baritone. "Got a molester placed by the feds. Here's the copies." The sheriff was definitely black.

There was silence for a moment. Then Dealer's disgusted voice. "Eight-times convicted. And they ship this piece of shit here?"

Sheriff Jefferson said, "Directly across from the elementary school."

"Fuck."

The sheriff went on. "Been a lot of suicides in town, if you know what I mean. Might start attracting the media for a heartstring piece. Might be good to make this scumbag disappear... completely. Miss his compliance check, right?"

Dealer's response was immediate and certain. "We'll get it done."

"Ride safe."

I heard footsteps receding. I stepped back from the door just before it swung open.

Dealer gave me a grave look. "If you heard anything, you didn't hear anything. Do you get me?"

"Hear what?" I held up my hands.

His scowl deepened drastically. "I'm not making fucking jokes here, Jimmy. You fucking heard nothing or I'll have your ears and tongue ripped from your fucking head."

I swallowed. "I got ya."

He blew out a breath. "I didn't know he'd have work for us or I would've spared you hearing anything. This is club business, not for hang-arounds or

outsiders."

I said nothing; I knew better.

Dealer shook his head. "All right, get out."

We left his office. Behind us, he followed us to the hall and then leaned into the vice president's office. His words were barely audible. "Sonar, we got a grab and grind."

I didn't hear that either, whatever a grab and grind is...

~ ~ ~

I forgot about the morning incident. Not like completely, but I put it out of my mind. It was fairly easy to keep off my attention radar, and just like the president had said, club business was club business. If it didn't pertain to my bouncer position, why should I give a shit?

I stood at the door to the Daily Dollar wondering what the Iron Crows did with child molesters. Not that I dwelled on it, but the thought crossed my mind twice that day. I'd have to say, I stood a little taller when I grabbed an out-of-towner who thought he was a big-city badass and was pestering Celia at the bar. He wanted a tit-flash and she wasn't giving.

I grabbed him by belt and collar and hustled him out, meanwhile feeling stronger for the club apparently taking out the town's trash.

Keystone, and Keystone County, was well-known for maintaining a very quiet and clean place to live. Crime was reported as high, but the citizens among some of the safest in the country. Most of the crime was gang on gang violence, though none seemed to be winning in gaining a foothold. I saw no gangs in Keystone, but the media never bothered to check facts like that. It was high gang violence because the gang members were the ones being killed, not the populace.

I was releasing the big-city badass when I noticed five bikes coming closer. I shooed off the idiot and waited. Expecting Iron Crows, I was greeted with riders I didn't know. They wore leather vests instead of denim.

I had been told exactly what to do. I ducked back inside, grabbing my phone. I sent a voice message: "Gang trouble at the Daily Dollar. Five bikes." I called out, "Wallet, trouble!" The rumble of the bikes outside that died out suddenly told us all in the bar that they had stopped here. Wallet was the only patcher with me inside.

Wallet cursed. "You call?"

"Yeah."

He didn't look very confident. "Sit down and stay out of this."

The first of the bikers were already walking in, swaggering.

Wallet acted like he had just turned and noticed them. He was holding his beer bottle.

I saw their patches: they were three-piecers. Sons of Aggression. A revolver crossed over a knife and a bottom rocker that said Keystone.

I stared. What the fuck? Keystone only has one motorcycle club. What's this? I stayed sitting as the five approached a shifty-eyed looking Wallet. I felt sorry for him.

Wallet growled, "You here for a meet?"

One man, a young one with his hair oiled back and his beard short and black, said, "We're here to move in."

The Iron Crow said, "You won't be moving into nothing. We're sanctioned here by the Outlaws."

"We don't give a fuck."

"What are you, AMA? Some riding club?"

The leader spread out his arms and turned slowly.

When Wallet saw the three piece patch, his face drew down into fire and fury. "You think you can slap a patch on and claim—"

"That's right, we are."

A distant rumble grew louder. I swallowed, hoping our guy could hold out.

Wallet wasn't backing down. He advanced on the leader. "Listen here." His eyes glanced down to the man's vest. "Ace." He said it with derision dripping from his tongue. "You don't fly colors without sanction—"

"Fuck you."

Bikers moved instantly. Fists flew from Wallet, but they grabbed him by both arms and held him up.

Ace said lazily, "Show him our respect, boys."

The other two bikers began heaving fists into Wallet's gut. Pain screwed over his face and his eyes caught mine for the briefest of seconds. The head-shake was plain to me, if not to them.

The rumble grew so loud that the two men punching him stopped. They and Ace turned to the door as the rumble died down. Engines revved high outside from probably fifteen bikes, then died. I swear, the whole bar rattled and glasses clinked on the shelves.

The five began looking around as if not so sure of themselves.

More rumbles sounded in the distance.

I tensed, knowing that the call went out probably for the entire club.

Iron Crows rushed in, lead pipes, crowbars, and even a chain in evidence. Dragon held the chain, moving in to surround the now stunned five bikers. Coming in close after was Dealer.

The two Sons of Aggression members dropped Wallet. He crumpled to his knees, but other than wheezing, made no noise of pain.

Dealer shook his head. "You just caused yourselves a whole world of untold pain."

Wallet gasped out, "They're claiming Keystone. Patches."

Dealer's eyes went glossy and his face stony. He slowly circled the leader and scowled at his vest. "The Outlaws have said nothing of this—"

Ace spat, "We didn't ask."

"Then you're doubly fuck-stupid and on the wrong side of the tracks."

There was silence in the bar. No one looked at me. Gunner was there and I knew he was packing. But he held a crowbar. I guessed Dealer didn't want a gunfight in Keystone.

The five pop-ups said nothing.

Dealer flicked his head. "Twenty, go outside and have those still coming show these dumb assholes how broken lights can get them in trouble in Keystone."

The five tensed, but Ace put out his hand, finger pointing. "This is just beginning, old-timer. We're going to sweep you out."

"You pop-ups think you can do whatever you please." He stepped very close to Ace and his voice went deadly. "Until brutal fucking reality messes up your pretty face." Sounds of breaking glass and plastic sounded outside. Dealer said, "This is indeed just beginning. You fly your colors, expect bloodshed. Now get out."

The five knew they were very outnumbered and outclassed. With fire in their eyes and shame in their stance, they filed out.

Dragon and Gunner were down helping Wallet up.

Dealer saw me and gave a simple nod, nothing else. He walked out.

CHAPTER 3

I was telling Kristy about it at three in the morning. "They busted up the lights on their bikes pretty bad."

Her eyes were big. "Why didn't Wallet want you to help?"

"I'm not a member; it's member business. I think if I had helped they all would've been mad."

"But he was outnumbered."

"I guess if I had jumped in, things would have gotten uglier than they were."

"Smoke was saying Dealer couldn't have any physical violence – that his hands are tied to keep things low-key and peaceful in Keystone."

I grunted. "I guess that sort of makes sense, but how are they going to deal with this pop-up? Chase them out with grins and giggles?"

She shrugged against me. "I don't know. Do you think we'll be safe?"

I was at a loss. "I don't know. This is going to suck if we lose our jobs because the stupid Sons of Anarchy imitators muscle our bosses out."

"Well, you can bounce anywhere and I can bartend anywhere."

I blew out a long, tired breath. But the sense of her words didn't thrill me in the least. While realistic, I was comfortable where I was. I felt as if things were going right for the second time in my life and now things were thrown into question.

~ ~ ~

I witnessed something startling a couple of days later. A new hang-around, Rusty, made a scene that caused me to wonder about violence in the club. It was morning, after breakfast and before our shifts, when Rusty was approached by Angela. She was all friendly and smiles and dropped down onto Rusty's lap.

She didn't mean much by it – it was her friendly way of saying hello, not demanding money for sex. But Rusty was pissed all up the ass and backhanded her, knocking her off his lap and calling her a filthy whore.

I have never seen such immediate movement from so many different people in all my life. I think people popped out of the pool table, up from the floor – suddenly, Rusty was hauled to his feet and endured an amazing

flurry of punches and cusswords the likes of which I had yet to hear from the Iron Crows.

A bloodied and beaten Rusty was physically tossed out of the front door and told not to return.

I had been standing in the hall towards the kitchen and Angela ran at me, covering her face. I grabbed at her and held her as she sobbed. I don't even think she knew it was me. Gunner pried her gently away from me as Grannie looked on. I heard an anguish from her that stabbed so very deep into my soul. What did she have to look forward to? Friendship among bikers? Her husband dead and her future gone? Her life shattered and forced to exist as a cum-dump for cash? Tears formed in my eyes and I wanted so very much to run outside and kick that shit Rusty for his ass-move on someone so beaten down by life.

What right did he have to judge her? Was his life so perfect that money flew out of his ass whenever he needed it? Was he so respectful that he could walk into any job with no qualifications and land a position? I found my hands curled into fists and realized this is what everyone else was feeling, too.

Smiley, the secretary, shook his head. "That asshole won't be coming back."

I stammered, "Wh-why would we allow him in?"

Smiley, not smiling, said, "That's the point; we wouldn't. Fuck him and his kind. No one treats a woman like that."

Relief washed over me as it dawned on me that it was the exact same sentiment I was feeling. I nodded in affirmation and went down the hall to check on Angela. Apparently, most everyone else had, too. The kitchen was crowded with Iron Crows wearing somber looks of sympathy. Angela cried in Grannie's arms and the old woman had tears in her eyes, too.

Smiley was beside me. He muttered low for me, "We might sometimes call them bitches or broads, but they're just terms. They're as much of us even without patches."

I wanted so much to console Angela, but I knew everyone else did, too. We all hurt for her.

~ ~ ~

The Daily Dollar had one patron in it that I knew would cause no trouble. I stood outside with a patcher who came and went and wasn't around every

day. His name was Flats. He was a fifty-year old gut with gray in his beard and long-ass hair tied back in a ponytail. He stood against the wall with his booted foot back against it. He indicated my Harley. "How you like your ride?"

"I love it. Makes me wonder why I didn't get one before."

He chuckled, low and slow. "I know the feeling."

"How long have you been a member?"

"Three years. Hopefully fifty more."

I laughed. "Ride at a hundred?"

He coughed. "Why the fuck not? Might be the only excitement at that age I'd get before I die."

Something in that sounded right, despite the improbability of it.

He added, "Burn bright, burn fast."

I was silent, considering.

He finished, "Before you end up in the grave."

We were both silent for a time, just watching the birds fly in the mostly sunny skies overhead. A car interrupted us.

Flats said, "Sheeit, this is no good."

"Hmm?"

He motioned to the car coming. Keystone streets weren't all too crowded. You could fire a cannon off at rush hour and maybe hit three cars. At this time of day, it was normal to see nothing.

The only car cruising towards us was a white Chevrolet Impala from like 1969. It was slung low, barely clearing the road. Four heads were visible, barely clearing the windows. We watched as the car slowly drove by, all four heads turned towards us. They all wore blue bandanas.

Flats was disgusted. "Fuck." He drew it out like one long belch.

I muttered, "What are they doing here?"

"Scouting, what else? They look for a peaceful community, or hear about it, and come seeing if they can gain a foothold. Push pot, pills, pussy. Anything."

The car slowed and then made a u-turn.

Flats straightened. "Heads up. We're on."

"Should I call for back-up?"

The biker belched. "I might need your help. Depends on what weapons they pull. Gangbangers are always the first to pull guns. We need to handle this without guns, if possible."

I watched the car pull in at an odd angle, like a realtor who parked like he didn't know how to park. The four that got out were all wearing Pendletons – striking me with the thought they were wearing colors. Indeed, all of the Pendletons were blue. Their blue bandanas topped it off; this was a gang, not some goofy Mexicans looking for the local taco joint.

Flats was advancing on them before they could complete their posing outside the car. Despite the driver trying to thrust out his chest and peek out from under his bandana with his head so far back it must have hurt, Flats was in his face before he could inhale. He said, "You best get your ass back into your piece of shit and haul back to where you came from."

Leader wasn't taking a hint. His buddies came around the car. Flats ignored them. Leader pointed at the biker and said, "Fuck you gringo whore."

I expected more wordplay. I really did. I thought leader would pose and mouth off. He did pose, but Flats punched him in the gut faster than I could register.

Suddenly, Mexicans were diving at him, launching fists.

I leapt forward and jumped. I landed on a Mexican's back and took him down. I made sure his face made close and intimate acquaintance with the pavement, three times. Aware I was vulnerable, I sprang up.

Flats was getting hit from two sides while leader was bent over trying to get wind. Leader yelled, "Fuck him up!" The biker had his arms up, moving, and trying to find an opening.

I grabbed one of the gang member's arms as he was cocked to punch. I twisted savagely, as hard as I could, bending his arm up back behind him. I heard an aggravated growl and satisfying pop as his shoulder dislocated. I launched a boot up into his butt and sent him spinning away, screaming.

Flats used the opportunity to go after leader. He ignored the other guy grabbing and punching him. Leader looked as if he was flabbergasted he couldn't get a break.

The guy on the ground got me. A click and a sharp pain seared into my calf as a blade sank deep. I cried out in shock and then turned, feeling the anger boil over. I used my boot to stomp his face into the pavement. His knife went clattering away from limp fingers. I continued to stomp as his body ceased to resist.

Flats finally grabbed a hold of me. "Enough, Jimmy. Let it go."

I realized sirens were approaching. All three on-duty police vehicles were racing in.

Slipping and falling, the bandanas were trying to get away – all except for knife-cunt I had stomped.

Two black officers and a white woman ran forward, hands on guns. "Cease! Down on the ground!"

However, they didn't seem to be talking to us. I was almost in the midst of dropping down when I noted Flats was standing straight up; they were yelling at the gangbangers.

The woman spoke into her mic, "Injuries at twenty-two North Street." She was eyeballing my leg. "Send an ambulance."

The two black officers were yanking the leader out of the driver's seat by his hair.

I remembered protocol when dealing with law enforcement. I pointed down at the guy I had stomped. "I want him arrested, he tried to kill me. That's his knife over there."

One of the black officers looked at me and gave an appraising look.

I was ambulated to the hospital wondering who was going to care for my Harley.

CHAPTER 4

I was in the common room, trying not to stretch my stitched leg. Twelve stitches, not bad.

Gunner was at me, cigar unlit and stabbing. "You did good. Never back away from a gangbanger. No profit in it."

I shrugged. "I couldn't let Flats fight all by himself." I had ridden to the clubhouse that morning, gingerly using my left leg to shift gears. It felt like every press and pull tugged at the stitches.

Gunner wheezed. "You showed your strength; they won't be back for a while, likely."

"I was more worried about my bike."

The chaplain's head leaned back and he launched a wheezing laugh towards the ceiling.

Gripper joined us. "Sure wish I'd been there."

Sonar melted into the small gathering from the background. "The four of them are being charged with aggravated assault. All were carrying knives."

Gunner grunted. "Likely the only one that will stick is the stabber that got Jimmy, here."

Sonar nodded. "They might be trying for a plea bargain."

Dealer came out and headed to us. "Jimmy."

I felt honored to have the president address me. "Yeah?"

"Good work; the club will pay for your ambulance and hospital fees."

I felt a huge wave of relief roll through me. "Thanks, Dealer."

He was looking at me with a very critical look. "Keep up the good work." Then he was gone.

~ ~ ~

I settled back into my routine, even if my leg was stiff and hurting. Eventually, the damned thing just itched like a motherfucker and was distracting as all hell.

The Triple Shot had an altercation. I worried needlessly, but frantically, as word filtered through the club's members and workers about the attempt

by two cars of gangbangers to make an impression. The response by the club had been overwhelming and swift. Kristy was safe.

The local paper, the Keystone Gazette, reported that the local outlaw bikers had repulsed two attacks on the town by gang members. The club was cheering the unusual positive press, even if the violence was abhorred in print. It was apparently very rare to get good press.

Dealer, however, passed through all our jubilation and celebratory drinks with admonitions: "Don't drop your guard. The Feds might be up to something. Keep an extra watchful eye out."

I asked Gunner later. "Why the animosity with the feds? Aren't they against gangs?"

The chaplain wheezed and stabbed his cigar at my chest. "Jimmy, sometimes I think you are so naïvely innocent that Jesus could take lessons from you."

"Huh? Me?"

"The government has many agencies."

"Yeah?"

He squinted at me. "They each have their own agenda."

"What're you talking about?"

Smoke was listening, so was Wallet and the hang-around Chuck.

It was Smoke who intervened in the convo. "Some feds have an agenda. They'll identify a target and pursue beyond evidence just to justify their expenditure of resources."

I said, "Why would they do that?"

Smoke was a fairly attractive lady who over-used mascara. She said, "Imagine spending a million dollars of your budget and getting nothing, So you tell your bosses, 'Just a little more; we almost got them' and suddenly you have a crusade. A little more money, a little more time. A little more money..."

I sat back, gob-smacked that things could be so simply stupid. I almost said, "Are you serious?" But I bit my tongue; Smoke was Sonar's girlfriend and from what I had gathered, people here were always serious about serious subjects. Being questioned was an insult.

She continued. "When the expenditure of resources becomes so great, the momentum to produce results can consume all else. So more money is spent pursuing it. To find something, anything. No matter how small."

I chuckled, shaking my head. It sounded so perfectly true. Kristy was sitting on the left arm of my chair. Angela wandered in, looking warm in her clothing, and sat on the right arm of my chair. She didn't touch me otherwise and Kristy didn't seem bothered.

Smoke finished, "Get an idea in some director's head and the whole agency falls down the deep pit of desperation to make their idea happen."

I tossed up both hands, feeling happy that a few people were actually paying attention to me. Maybe it was my injury. "How do you fight this?"

Gunner said, "Stay true."

I know what he meant. But I blew out a breath in frustration.

Miguel, the prospect, said, "Maybe we should make an alliance with the Surenos."

Viking immediately shot out his finger, from ten paces away. "Fuck the Mexicans!" His scowl was fierce. "No alliance with gangs! They don't ride."

Gunner agreed. "Alliances with street gangs aren't unheard of, but usually only for the purposes of moving drugs. We don't deal drugs."

I had suspected the Iron Crows didn't, based on things I had gathered from Dealer and Gunner before. Hearing it reaffirmed made me feel good. I said, "It's no wonder you all don't like to be called a gang."

The chaplain grunted. "Do drugs and you're out of the club. End of story. All the hyped shit in the media is what happens when one or two assholes start messing with dope. Then every citizen out there thinks we're all drug dealing mass-murderers."

Wallet chuckled. "Fucking media."

Both Gunner and Wallet jerked just as Sonar came out. They grabbed their cell phones, but Sonar told them anyway. "Church is called, tomorrow at six in the evening. Business about the pop-up."

I checked my watch; it was about time for my shift to start.

Kristy said, "Hey, how about you give me a ride to the Triple?"

"Got your helmet?"

"Yeah, in the truck."

"Well, let's go." I liked giving her a ride. I patted Angela's knee.

Outside, I affixed my helmet while Kristy ran to get hers. Miguel hopped on his XR1200X and rode off. My wife climbed on behind me, strapping on her helmet. "Ready," she said.

I thumbed the starter and felt the familiar cough and staccato burst. We pulled away. I was twice as careful on the Harley as I was in the Suburban; I didn't fancy the idea of being in any wrecks for driving stupid. I looked everywhere, checked my mirrors, watched side streets. I wasn't worried about my own driving and riding, I was watching for the stupid guy. Seen too many t-bones and dead drivers who had the right of way but get crushed by someone drunk, on drugs, or texting and not paying attention. I wasn't going to be a victim.

I dropped her off at the Triple and kissed her lips. "Stay safe in there."

She gave me her pretty smile. "Ride safe yourself and don't get stabbed anymore."

I grunted and pulled away. Keystone was a nice little town, nestled in the low foothills and up in the pines. National forest surrounded us. I breathed in the clean air and looked around at what I felt was becoming home.

The deputy who had stopped Kristy and me on our way out of town after the Iron Crows released us drove by. We waved to each other. I almost lost focus on the road. But it wasn't the cop that had distracted me, it was the flashy Harley at the motel back at the intersection. I made a u-turn and went back, crossing the intersection and making another u-turn about where I had waved to the deputy. I pulled over to the curb and looked at Miguel's hot-rod Harley parked.

What's he doing in a motel? Banging some broad he isn't supposed to? However, something else was disturbing me. I frowned. Then I saw it. He was parked next to a white four-door sedan. A Chevrolet and a very new model. *Who buys a brand new four-door car in white? It looks like a fleet model.*

I needed to get to the Daily, so I rode off.

Leathers and Sonar were there, chatting at the bar. Three other regulars were in, also. I waved to Celia, then went and stood outside. I felt edgy, as if expecting the gangbangers to pull up any minute with four hundred fellow gang members, but they didn't.

However, I did hear them before they arrived; two Harleys. I waited to see if they were Iron Crows. They were not, but they didn't look like those pop-up guys, either.

They pulled up and backed in. I was able to see their patches: Outlaws. I ducked inside. "Two Outlaws outside."

Sonar didn't mind the interruption. He just nodded, but he and Leathers stopped talking and turned to the door and waited.

The two bikers came in, one mean-looking graybeard and a very big and burly one with little gray in his goatee.

Sonar greeted them. "I'm Steve Gillens, vice president of the Iron Crows."

The graybeard Outlaw answered. "Tommy Carson, enforcer, Outlaws."

They shook hands.

Sonar said, "What brings you out here?"

"You called about a pop-up."

Sonar nodded. "Leathered up, three patches claiming Keystone. Goes by Sons of Aggression."

The enforcer snorted. "Another wannabe Sons of Anarchy group, no doubt."

"Their leader, Ace, said they didn't give a fuck what the Outlaws thought."

The enforcer was quiet a moment, just nodding slightly. Then he said, "Our sanction of your club carries with it certain understandings..."

Sonar waited.

"We feed you certain information, you perform certain contracts."

The vice president nodded in acknowledgment, still saying nothing.

The enforcer tilted his head, peering at him. "The president of our chapter has decided to let you handle your own backyard. And that's that."

I saw Sonar stiffen in surprise. But he was smooth. "I expected we would be and it's nothing we can't handle."

The enforcer was quiet for a moment, eyeing Sonar and getting eyed in return. He was nodding very slightly. "Well then, beer time."

I walked back outside as their business was concluded and they began to chat amiably about upcoming rides and events. I backed up against the outside wall and chewed over what I had seen. Other than the big guy escorting the enforcer Tommy, no one had looked at me.

After the two had their beer and left, I went back inside. Sonar was on his phone.

"...letting us deal with it... No, nothing... That's what I'm thinking, they knew about them all along... Yep... Very secretive, he was holding something back... Uh huh... Yep, yep... Exactly, if we can't deal with them,

they must be worthy of sanction. Except it still stinks... I don't either... Right, tomorrow." He clicked off.

Leathers finished off his beer. "Somethin' ain't right."

"We'll be adding that into tomorrow's church." He turned away from the bar. "Keep tight."

"You, too."

Sonar glanced at me on the way out, but said nothing; his lips were in a firm line.

CHAPTER 5

Leathers left a little later. It was nine when I heard two motorcycles rumble up and stop. I was talking to a local about the differences between Keystone and the city.

In came Ace and one of his men. Their leather jackets and pants all shiny and patches crisply new, they looked around and approached the bar. They ordered beers.

I took out my phone and texted their arrival to the club and added they seemed peaceful.

"You there." Ace was addressing me.

I put my phone away and said, "Yeah?"

"I saw you here last time."

"I'm the bouncer."

His face lightened and he almost smiled. "Yeah? Come on over here." He took a swig and set his beer down.

I walked over and leaned against the bar.

He said, "What do you know of the Iron Crows? They come in here a lot."

Thoughts ran through my head. *Maybe this guy doesn't know they own the bar.* I shrugged. "They seem all right... Never cause any trouble inside."

Eyes bright, he nodded as if considering.

Personally, I thought it was all a show and he didn't care. I said, "They keep to themselves."

"You ride?"

I nodded. "2003 Sportster."

"You should come by our clubhouse."

No fucking way, ass-shine. "Sure, why not?"

He was grinning, nodding, but the smile wasn't reaching his eyes. "We just started up. You'll find us in the green metal building at the airport."

Keystone had a small strip with two commercial hopper flights out of it. We weren't big-time. I said, "Will do. My next day off is tomorrow - Wednesdays and Thursdays."

He lifted his beer. "We'll see you there."

~ ~ ~

I related what I knew to Sonar the next morning over eggs.

He scowled at me, but listened. "Come to me, next time. Immediately."

I ducked my head. "Understood."

Dealer came in and grabbed his coffee. He touched my wife's shoulder. She looked up at him and to me. I gave a quick dip of my chin as a nod.

I wanted to go with them, but the last time I did, I had suffered all day from serious dick-ache that no Tylenol could cure.

Celia's husband, Ralph the attorney, came into the kitchen. He looked around at his first breakfast in the club.

Grannie said over the counter, "You want your eggs scrambled or fried?"

Ralph frowned judiciously. "Eggs Benedict with a side of—"

Grannie cackled. "Eggs. Fried or scrambled."

He looked seriously butt-hurt. "Scrambled. Could you put some chopped cilantro on it?"

The gray woman gave him a look. "You want bacon? Or no?"

Smoke was behind her, covering her mouth and smile.

Ralph swallowed. He wriggled his fingers as if having touched maggots. "Bacon? Er, no."

Grannie left no doubt as to what would be on his plate. "Scrambled eggs it is."

The entirety of the cafeteria laughed in muted tones.

Ralph gave up and sat down.

Angela picked up her plate and moved over to my side where Kristy had been. I welcomed the move. I said, "So, how are ya?"

In her small, strangled voice, she said, "Okay, I guess. I sure miss having a warm body to wake up to." She chewed on a single piece of bacon.

I remembered my single days and compared them to now. "Yeah, it's nice."

"Sometimes I fantasize about the men who pay me actually staying the entire night."

"You'll find someone, I'm sure." It was a shitty thing to say, but the only thing I could think of at the very moment.

She snorted. "Yeah, any day now a new Prince Charming will sweep in and pick me out of the crowd. The whore."

"I bet you miss your husband."

"Like you can't imagine. I used to have a four bedroom home and drove a Range Rover. I had it all. But the possessions meant nothing. When he died, all the shine went to shit. All of it gone within months. The world doesn't care when you lose your loved one, only you."

"I'm sorry you had to suffer that."

She leaned away from me to focus on my face. "Ain't life grand?"

I pursed my lips and squeezed her knee under the table.

Her smell was clean and very lightly perfumed. She said, "Sometimes I wish life could be different."

~ ~ ~

I followed Angela to her room. She shut the door behind us. For just a moment, her eyes had an unfocused look, as if remembering doing much the same with her dead husband. She didn't look me in the eyes. "What can I do?"

I didn't want to wilt the flower of her that I had seen over the past weeks. Something in her spoke of dignity that couldn't be marred by prostitution. Something yearned there to be recognized and I felt a bond between us that reminded me of Kristy. Loners with nowhere to turn. "Just touch me." I said it while I stroked her hair.

She went to work with her hands, pulling at my manhood to coax from it the relief I sought. Her hands moved over my skin deftly.

She ruined the moment by asking, "Do you want it on my face or boobs?"

Were her clients so crass? I shook my head. "Neither."

Something passed over her features I couldn't read. She grabbed up a washcloth and went back to tugging on me. Her hand felt good sliding on my skin and I got back into it pretty quickly. Whatever she had learned in her days of prostitution was good – her movements felt fantastic and insistent. She had learned the fastest most efficient way to make men cum. Her fingers worked around the head at its most sensitive spots. She stopped the head-play and stroked when I tensed, knowing just when to stop. She squeezed when I tensed from the stroking.

She played my dick like an expert playing a quick fiddle piece. Something in her movements reminded me of Charlie Daniels playing fiddle in *The Devil Went Down to Georgia*.

In a flash, she took my hard dick into her mouth. I tensed, almost standing on tiptoes, as she sucked hard on my shaft. Her warm tongue and wetness coated my need and massaged it with coaxing movements.

I sighed loudly, groaning out as my shaft was given an extreme amount of needed pleasure. I floated high, wondering if I was going to be able to keep my balance. The balls of my feet began to develop a tickle. I breathed harshly, arching my back.

Her mouth came off and she began jacking me with beckoning moves. My cock swelled and I gasped as tendrils of thrill and tension shot up my legs. My balls squeezed and my cum erupted into the washcloth she held at the tip.

She smiled up at me as she milked my need from me.

~ ~ ~

I was out in the common room and it was nearing two in the afternoon. I was shooting the breeze with Donna, one of the other hang-arounds like me. "Fixing computers is satisfying, but only for myself."

"I was a veterinarian assistant. I just couldn't handle being told to put animals down. I thought I could do it, but I just couldn't."

I chuckled. "I think if I had recommended some of my clients put down their computers, they might have cheered."

She looked hurt. "Animals aren't machines."

I shook my head. "I'm sorry; I didn't mean it that way."

Kristy came over and sat on my left. "Are you hurting people's feelings again?"

I coughed, "Do I do that?"

Before she could answer, Sonar came up to us. "Walk with me, Jimmy."

I got up immediately. You did not blow off the president or vice president or any officer of the club. The others forgotten, I followed him out to the gated yard.

The yard Rottweiler, Jonesy, came up and growled at me.

Sonar said to the big, threatening dog, "He's okay, Jonesy."

The dog lowered its head slightly, sniffing.

Sonar spoke to me as if nothing had passed between him and the dog.

"You have an invite to their clubhouse."

I knew he meant the Sons of Aggression. "Yes."

His two words conveyed a whole shitload of secrecy that I couldn't fathom. "Take it."

The problem was, I didn't want to take it. I wanted to hang around the Iron Crows. *What's this bullshit?* "Am... Am I being kicked from—"

Sonar scowled. "No. But you might provide a very valuable service. Names, times, schedules. Any of the like."

I felt like I was being used like a condom; one squirt and then discarded. "Sure..."

Sonar grabbed me and swung me towards him. "Do this for us." His black beard, his long black ponytail, and his watchful eyes drilled into me. I felt the weight - all of the expectations falling on me. When I wanted to be sitting and shooting the shit with Iron Crows, I was being shoved out and told I needed to be somewhere else.

Fuck. I wasn't a member of the Iron Crows; I was just some expendable piece of shit-citizen to further the aims of the club. Gunner? The chaplain who had brought me to my knees and saved me? Dealer? The man who had raped my bride and continued to fuck her? Sonar? The quiet vice president who had accepted me just like he had accepted Ralph the attorney? All of them part of something that I wasn't. But they would use me.

A part of me wanted to punch Sonar's face into the dirt, no matter what Jonesy might try to bite off. I gritted my teeth. "No problem."

CHAPTER 6

Kristy tried to extract from me my mission. The most I told her was that Angela had sucked my dick. I didn't do it to hurt her, but instead to divert her attention away from the mission. I didn't want to admit to her that the club was using me. The shame of being used was greater than allowing a prostitute to suck me for free.

Kristy frowned, holding onto me for support in bed. "She...?"

"I didn't want to go into his room and watch again."

"I missed you."

"Oh, come on."

She was insistent. "No, really, I did."

"Well, I didn't want to sit and watch and get no satisfaction."

She gripped my arm. "I'm sorry."

"No, don't worry. I'm happy. Just... I guess I needed something at the moment while you were doing it."

She whispered to me, "Are we the same people? Are we still what we were before?"

I hugged her tightly. "We are always us and I consider that a blessing."

"Are you sure?"

I could feel her squeeze on me as if checking the validity of my words. I said, "I love you, Kristy, and you know it."

~ ~ ~

I glided along on my Harley, adoring the feeling of freedom. I knew who I was. I knew my place. I felt my ownership of my bike and my command of it. I eased to a stop outside the green metal building at the outskirts of the municipal airport.

Here I am - trying to understand. Lord, help me. When I pass by the shit on the street I resist and try to be like the man crucified for me. I thumbed the ignition and killed the motor. I heaved off the bike, removing my helmet. If anyone was looking, they couldn't see me hesitating.

I entered the door to the building and into the club of the Sons of Aggression.

~ ~ ~

Massacre, the club's sergeant at arms, laughed at my bar story. "When we get that bar under our belt, we'll make sure we keep you."

I shrugged, hands in air. *Right, Ricky. You'll just swoop in and take it.* I shook my head. Not all of them seemed bad. Would they ever doubt Ace, their leader? I expected not. But who knew?

Their clubhouse was small. There was no typical bar – even if the Iron Crows used an old hotel desk. Everything was new. Everything spoke of a sudden burst of money. Who had provided that money? Even if the members seemed earnest, had Ace set all this up and accepted willing dupes? Or had Ace been a dupe himself?

I didn't know. I wasn't going to find out in one sitting. The thing was, apart from Ace, these guys seemed like Flats, Leathers, Gripper, or any of the other Iron Crows I knew. The only woman there, a red-head named Gina, even seemed as typical as Grannie. I felt conflicted.

These guys want to wreck the Iron Crows? I waited a long time. I sat for hours, talking. Finally, when I thought enough time had passed, I asked of Massacre, "What's your beef with the Iron Crows?"

The sergeant at arms leaned forward. "Ace says this town is ripe for the plucking. Drugs, prostitution - it could all be ours."

"Don't the Outlaws sanction the Iron Crows?" I played dumb. I also noticed some of the others not being very comfortable with what Massacre was saying.

"Yeah, but new drug outlets are always welcome. The Outlaws don't care if we challenge them; the new market would erase all that history."

I had what I needed, I thought. I checked my watch. "I need to get back to Kristy; she might think I'm cheating on her if I don't."

Massacre and the others around me laughed. "No problems, Jimmy. Bring her along next time."

The problem was, these guys were just as cordial as the Iron Crows. Still, there was something going on and I needed to report in.

I thumbed my ignition and felt the familiar rumble in my bones of my Harley's engine. The building on the outside was quiet. Outside was lonely, littered with a few bikes. I rode slowly away from a collection of Harleys and humans not that much different than the Iron Crows.

~ ~ ~

I was sitting in Sonar's office. "Ace wasn't there. His sergeant at arms didn't seem to think that was unusual."

Sonar was making notes. "How many patches were in the clubhouse?"

"Six."

He muttered, "Probably all of them, but not Ace. Hmm."

"Massacre said the Outlaws would forgive them if they opened up a new flow of drugs here."

The vice president made a face. "Likely, he's right. They wouldn't get the respect, but their unsanctioned pop-up might be ignored. We keep drugs out, but we do... certain contracts for the Outlaws. If Sons of Aggression move in, start running drugs supplied by the Outlaws and also assume the contracts, the Outlaws win. We hung in the balance with them for a long time." He leaned back and tapped his pencil on the edge of the desk. "They weren't real happy that we were dedicated to keeping the drugs out, but our work for them was a payoff, of sorts. I'm sure they'd prefer we were replaced."

"What kind of work?"

"Don't ask."

I sighed. "Sorry, I know, club business is club business."

"That's right. Keep your eyes open when you go tomorrow. And your ears."

"There was something else, too."

"Hmm?"

I said, "When Massacre told me about opening drugs and prostitution here, the others in the club didn't seem happy about it."

Sonar froze, his pencil horizontal between fingers of both hands.

"Interesting. All right, out with you."

I got up and made my way out.

In the common room, I saw Kristy talking to Viking. He had her up against the wall near the bar.

Donna came up to me, waving a beer. She kept her voice very low.

"He's been doing that for a while now."

I grunted. Viking had been one of the bikers who had raped my bride a few months back. "It's no big deal."

She studied me. "Are you aware that she..."

I smiled; she didn't know. "It's a long story. But yes, I know she has certain arrangements with Dealer."

Her eyes went large. "You know?"

"Sit, I'll try to be brief."

She sat.

I sat next to her, close. I didn't mean anything by it, I just wanted to keep my voice low. She didn't flinch. I turned my head to look her in the face. "We were taken captive by the club."

She looked shocked. "You what?"

"They mistook us for feds who were wanting to establish a drug ring here."

"Oh..."

"During the captivity, Kristy was raped – to get her to talk."

Donna's mouth was open.

I continued. "When they discovered their mistake, they let us go. Dealer felt really bad about it all—"

"I can imagine. I've never seen a more honorable man..."

"Anyway, Kristy had...come to like it. And so did I."

She started to make a surprised smile, but pursed her lips shut. "Oh..."

"Viking was one of them."

Donna looked over at my wife, tilting her head in consideration. She said nothing for a few seconds. "She seems so happy."

"She is."

"I never imagined something like that could happen to a married woman that wouldn't destroy a marriage. You just let her...?"

"We love each other. If she wants to feel something with one of them, why not? She laughed when I told her I had Angela jerk me off. Thought that was funny."

Donna blushed at me. "You..." She covered her mouth.

"I like to watch, to be involved, but I get so excited it hurts the rest of the day."

She said nothing.

Viking was coming over, Kristy trailing uncertainly behind. He weaved a little, clearly feeling good from drinking. He said, "Hey, uh..." His eyes darted to Donna and back.

I waited, thinking I knew what he wanted to ask.

He lowered his voice. "Do you... mind if, um..." He motioned to Kristy and himself.

I smiled. "Donna and I were just talking about that."

Viking straightened abruptly. "Oh."

I leaned around him to Kristy. "You want to?"

She was holding her hands together and shrugged, looking up at the biker. Then she nodded.

I shrugged. "Sure, Viking. Let's go."

His face broke into a big grin. He sure looked like his nickname – long blonde beard and hair.

I said to Donna. "Come along, if you want. Take a look for yourself."

She looked aghast. "Me?"

"Yeah, why not?"

She moved slowly, getting up with me. "Um, okay..." Curiosity lit her face.

We followed Viking to his room. It was simple – a bed, a dresser and a weight bench. The big man started kissing Kristy.

I nudged Donna. "Hey, let's grab a loveseat." We went back out and picked up a small loveseat. We carried it into Viking's room and set it down. I said, "Perfect."

Donna looked nervous, watching Viking's hands roaming all over Kristy. She whispered to me as we sat, "You're really okay seeing this?"

"I guess so. My dick sure likes it."

She giggled.

Viking began undressing. Kristy's hands were down at his crotch, moving. His dick came into view and she was stroking it.

Donna looked amazed.

Viking called over, "Hey, uh, shut the door."

I shot up. "Oh, duh." I did so.

He tossed my wife on the bed and she laughed. He tore at her jeans as she took off her sweatshirt.

Donna was staring, open-mouthed, her hand clutched at her denim shirt. "This seems so dirty..."

I grinned. "But you can't take your eyes away."

"I want to, like I should be hiding my face, but..."

I chuckled. "It was that way for me, too. I wanted to kill everyone who had touched her, but when I saw it with my own eyes, I got excited."

She leaned over, murmuring, "I never considered myself a voyeur."

Feeling brave, I asked, "What's your kink?"

She blushed. "Toys."

I laughed.

She looked horrified.

I shook my head. "Tame."

She burst out laughing.

Viking flipped Kristy over on the bed and spread her legs. He moved her around like a ragdoll, pulling her where he wanted her. His cock stood out straight and thick.

I whispered, "Fuck, he's big."

Donna whispered back, "Isn't he going to hurt her?"

"They've done it before."

Viking brought his pole near Kristy's pussy and rubbed it at her opening, then he moved harshly forward, driving his cock into her and stuffing her pussy full.

Kristy moaned loudly, mouth open with her face on the bed.

Donna moaned quietly beside me. "Wow."

Viking ignored us, having his own fun. One foot on the floor and his other knee on the bed, he hammered her pussy with strong strokes. My wife's body flopped and jerked as he roughly took her. Her mouth opened and closed like a fish, gasping quietly as he pulled out and moaning loudly when he pushed in.

I couldn't help it; I shifted my jeans down and began stroking.

Donna's eyes went even wider. "Oh fuck."

"Sorry."

"No, no, it's all right..." With a move of decision, she undid her jeans and shoved her hand down her panties. She gasped, going back to watching Viking fuck my wife. "You really like this?"

"It's fun to watch, isn't it?"

She gasped. "Yes."

I reached over, "You want me to do that for you?"

She looked at me, surprised. "You would?"

"Yeah, why not?"

She laughed nervously. "Okay, and I'll stroke you."

"Go for it." We traded hand positions. I slipped my hand down her panties and into her warmth as her fingers gripped around my erection. I curled my fingers and found her hole. She bit back a moan and lifted her hips.

She jacked my cock with a jerky hand, trembling all over next to me. She whispered, "Oh my god, this is so hot."

I dipped my fingers into her hole. She was wet and warm. I finger-fucked her while she jacked me as we both watched Viking pound his cock into my wife's pussy from behind.

I could feel Donna's pussy clamping on my fingers. Her breathing was ragged.

Kristy's eyes were closed, her mouth slack. She was gone, just moaning over and over with growing urgency.

Donna groaned and I moved my fingers up to toy at her clit. She jerked violently, and then clamped down on my arm with her hands. She convulsed, gritting her teeth through a sudden orgasm. She was clutching my forearm and leaning against me, her mouth panting against my shoulder. She squealed and shook, then yanked my hand away. "Enough, enough."

I chuckled. "Good, huh?"

"Yeah, let me help you."

"I'm okay; I don't need any help."

"But I want to; let me. This is exciting."

"All right." I scooted down a little and let her stroke my rigid cock. I focused on my wife's pussy being rammed and felt the excitement in me build. Donna was doing a good job on my dick and I felt a welcome bond between all four of us. Maybe Donna and I were just hang-arounds, but I felt it.

She didn't jack as good as Angela, but her hand felt good and I was straining, lifting my hips and shooting my cum up onto my shirt. I groaned with relief and slowly settled back down.

Donna giggled. "Nice."

"What?"

"You didn't dribble. I hate when men dribble."

"Oh, yeah, I shoot out a bit."

She wiped her hand on her jeans and zipped up. "That was fun."

"Well, you can watch with me if she does him again, though I think Dealer wouldn't appreciate an audience."

She looked horrified. "Oh, no, I bet not. How often does Viking and your wife...?"

I shook my head. "This is the first time since our captivity."

She slowly nodded. "I see..."

"But I'll grab you if they do it again and you're here."
She smiled happily. "Cool."

CHAPTER 7

I rode to the Sons of Aggression clubhouse. I took my time, tooling along slowly and just enjoying the wind in my beard.

On a whim, I turned along A Street and pulled into the parking lot at the corner. It was a realtor's office with hedges. Diagonally across was the Keystone Motel. I scanned the cars and immediately picked out the white four-door sedan. *Desperate broad? New prostitute in town?* Neither fit. A flashy truck, all black and chrome roll bars pulled in. It was so clean it hurt to look at it. It obscured my view of the sedan for a second, making me scowl at it.

However, I did a double-take, gripping the handles of my bike so hard my knuckles hurt. The man that got out of the truck was oily looking, and walked like a king. It was Ace. He didn't look at the car, but went straight to a door and knocked. The door opened and he went in, but from this distance and angle, I couldn't see who had opened it. Was the car connected to the room? Or was it parked for another room? Was it a coincidence the car was here?

I waited, feeling no rush to get to the clubhouse. If Ace was here, then some action might be here. I used my phone and took a couple pictures. Then I texted Sonar and attached the picture. I typed: Jim Butcher: Ace seen at the motel.

Jim Butcher: Fleet car outside? Maybe.

I kept waiting and watching. Eventually I got a return text.

Steve Gillens: Can you get a pic of the plate?

Jim Butcher: Will do.

Ace came out several minutes later and got into his truck. After he drove away, I got off my bike and hoofed it across the street. I might have been under surveillance the whole time, I didn't know. I walked past the car and saw the rental agency sticker and plate frame. *Uh, not a fleet car.* I thumbed a pic of the plate and kept going. At the end of the parking lot, I turned back. I stuffed my hands in my pockets and walked back the same way. I looked nowhere, just down at my feet like I didn't care for nothing.

Back at my bike, I saw some woman staring out the realtor's window at me. I waved.

Climbing on my bike, I texted Sonar and attached the pic.

Jim Butcher: Rental car, guess I was wrong I put the phone away and thumbed the ignition.

~ ~ ~

I drank beer from a refrigerator at the SOA clubhouse. I didn't see Ace. I wondered what kind of president didn't hang around his own club? The bikers deferred to Slaughter, the vice president.

I found all their names to be in that same goofy line: Slaughter; Massacre; Slicer; Pulverizer; Meatgrinder; and the like. But, except for Massacre, the others seemed like really good guys. None of them seemed like the kind that would have wanted to push drugs or prostitutes.

I shook my head. "I don't know about clubs. I'm just a bouncer who has a ride. I don't think I'd like dealing drugs."

Meatgrinder nodded, shifting his eyes towards Massacre and back. He grunted. "No worries. No worries at all." He leaned back in his chair.

I said, "Why did you join?"

"Ace pulled us all together. We moved up here from Parker County."

"All of you?"

He grinned and shrugged. "Ace paid for our relocation costs."

"Mighty generous of him."

"He said it was nothing. Not compared to starting up our club in a fresh town. We had some Hells Angels moving in on Parker, butting up against the Outlaws. Wasn't going to be a good scene."

I laughed, "I think I'd get the fuck out of town, too."

We shared the laugh and drank in silence for a moment.

I asked, "Does Ace ever come to the clubhouse?"

He shook his head. "Well, for meetings, yeah."

I didn't want to say anything against their president, so I didn't respond.

Meatgrinder volunteered, "He stays at home, strategizing our moves."

"He has a place here, too?"

"Yeah, nice two-story brick job on Valley View."

"Ohh...the nice part of town."

He gave a single dip of his chin and raised his beer bottle. "So the Iron Crows never give you trouble at the bar?"

I lied. "Oh, you know. If one gets too drunk and loud, I ask them to leave." I shrugged. "But otherwise, they're really good guys. Keep to

themselves and almost never get in fights."

Meatgrinder gave me a dry look. "I was at the Daily Dollar. Cost me three hundred to fix my lights."

"The Outlaws might have busted your head instead of your bike."

He grunted sourly. "I paid another hundred and twenty-nine for the tickets we all got."

I laughed and slapped the table. "Sorry, that just makes me wonder what's worse? Maybe I would've taken a broken face."

He snickered. "We think alike. Messing with my Harley, now, that's gotta be a sin."

~ ~ ~

I rode along the streets and passed the motel. The white car wasn't there; I guess I had given a false lead. I hoped they weren't upset over it. I wasn't a fucking detective.

I checked my mirrors to make sure I wasn't being followed. But who would follow some pudgy guy in a windbreaker? It's not like I was a member of one of the clubs. I pulled up to the Iron Crows and backed my bike in next to that gnarly-looking hot-rod ridden by Miguel.

I walked inside and tossed my helmet onto the table to the right that held all the helmets. I turned and approached the bar on the left. "Hiya, Smoke."

She was always a little heavy on the mascara. Reminded me of old pictures of Elizabeth Taylor. "Hi yourself."

"I'm feeling a little Scotchy, today. And could you let Sonar know I'm here?"

She poured me a drink. "He told me to just send you back. Knock first, though. He might be jacking off." Her eye-twinkle told me she was kidding.

But I was caught off-guard and laughed. "Sure thing." I sipped at the Scotch and waved to people in passing.

Gunner stopped me. "You doing all right, Jimmy?"

Sometimes Gunner came across as if he cared. Then there were times he acted like I had shit in his bed. I said, "With the other club? I guess so."

"No, I mean your faith."

"I pray every morning, though I don't know if I'm doing it right."

"Easiest thing. Pray for guidance and wisdom and always pray using the name of Jesus."

"That's necessary?"

He shrugged. "God hears those prayers as if Jesus were praying them."

"All right." I shrugged. "I need to see Sonar."

"Of course you do. Why are you standing here jacking your jaws at me for?"

I laughed and shook my head.

Gunner wheezed like an old Chrysler and let me go.

I passed Dealer in the hall. He stopped, pivoted, and followed me to Sonar's door. I knocked.

Dealer snorted. "Just go in."

Sonar's voice drifted through the door. "Come in!"

I went in and sat. Dealer leaned against the wall and folded his arms. I was a little surprised he was interested.

Sonar had his forearms on the desk, poised forward like a gargoyle. "Good work on the picture. We had Davies run the plate." His eyes shifted up towards Dealer, but the president hadn't moved or even blinked.

What's the big deal? It was a rental.

Sonar said, "White, four-door rental. Can't be more obvious than that." *Huh?*

Dealer said, "The feds are here. But why? Ace being there..." He trailed off as if he had choked off his words.

Sonar cleared his throat in warning.

Dealer waved his hand.

The vice president said, "Did you learn anything new today?"

"Yep. Ace lives in a two-story brick house on Valley View."

Dealer straightened off the wall as if jolted.

"Fuckin' A. Saves us the trouble of finding him and following him."

Sonar bobbed his head, swallowing. "Awesome, Jimmy. Anything else?"

"He almost never shows up at the club. Stays home to strategize. He also paid for everyone's relocation costs from Parker County."

Sonar whistled.

Dealer checked his watch. "Excellent. Forty minutes to spare until the meeting."

Sonar grunted at me. "Get out, Jimmy." He indicated the door.

I stood, feeling like a used condom.

"And Jimmy."

I looked back at the vice president.
He was scowling. "Outstanding work."
I walked out feeling as if I were on top of the world.

CHAPTER 8

I stayed in the clubhouse with the other hang-arounds and the old ladies, including the prospect Miguel. The patched members filed out to the gated yard and further on into one of the garages where they repaired bikes.

I asked Grannie, "They hold church in that greasy shop back there?"

"Club meeting. They don't really sing hymns." She laughed with a slight wheeze, but nowhere as severe as her husband Gunner's.

Donna and Kristy were talking about something, probably girl stuff. But Donna was more like Dragon than Kristy. While I could picture Dragon and Donna riding together as members, I could never see Kristy being the patched type. Too vulnerable. Too frail. Like Angela. Not as bad as Angela, but more like her than a biker.

Miguel came out from the kitchen. "This prospect stuff is bullshit."

Smoke laughed at him. "Stick it out, if you wanna be a patched member."

He blew out a breath. "I'm done with that back there, anyway."

She muttered, "That was fast."

~ ~ ~

The club meeting was two hours long.

Grannie and Smoke seemed to think that was fast.

The bikers filed in, somber looks on their faces. A bunch of them surrounded Miguel. Sonar said, "Well done, Demon Rider."

Miguel chuckled. "The kitchen?"

Dealer patted him on the back and shoved a vest into his hands. "No, for making the cut."

Miguel's eyes lit up. He unfolded the colors Dealer had handed him. The nickname Demon Rider was over the left breast. "No more cleaning kitchens?"

The bikers laughed.

They shared drinks after that and then left Demon Rider to revel on his own as a fully patched member. I was near the bar with him as he was talking to Smoke.

"I'll see you tomorrow." He grabbed his helmet and stalked out.

I set my empty glass on the counter. I was staring after Miguel. "I'll be back in a bit."

"Sure thing, Jimmy."

I really, really hated that name. Made me want to go by Butch or Brutus. Anything but Jimmy. What was I? Some little kid in rags wearing his hat backwards? I got on my bike.

Miguel was already down the street and turning.

I started up and pulled out, slowly accelerating. My bike was relatively quiet compared to the others – unless I revved to demonstrate. Some in the club believed loud bikes saved lives – the people in cages could hear them coming, or riding along in their blind spot. It made sense, but the noise level to achieve that bordered on abusive.

I turned on C Street and saw Miguel turning left ahead. My heart started to beat faster. He was ahead of me but if I was fast, I could close the distance. I assumed he was going for the motel. On that assumption, I flew past C Street, going forty-five in a twenty-five. I ran the next light in a full on run against a red light. I hoped none of the three police on duty were parked nearby.

I flew up to A Street, my windbreaker whipping around me. It did nothing to stop the wind and left me chilled. But I was hyped from wondering if Miguel was going to that same motel. Why didn't I mention that to Sonar? Duh. But I couldn't text him now – not with Demon Rider being patched. Not unless I was totally sure of something.

I roared up A and coasted into the parking lot at the realtor's office. I killed the light and engine. A cop was parked, giving a ticket to some knob in an SUV. Miguel - Demon Rider - was passing him. He turned on A and entered the motel parking lot.

I pulled out my phone and captured a vid of him getting off his bike. There was no white four-door sedan there, but there was a white full-sized van. He knocked on the back door of it and it opened. He climbed in.

That's weird. Who knocks on a van door? Why not the motel room? Who sits in a van? The van had no windows except at the front. I waited. And waited some more. I began to wonder if Miguel had exited a side door on the other side when the back door opened.

He hopped out, patting his vest on the left side.

Why would he pat his vest? Envelope of money? Something else? He rode off.

I started my bike, then saw three men leaving the van and heading to the room Ace had knocked at earlier. *This is rotten, for sure.*

~ ~ ~

I worked my shift the next day after a particularly frantic fuck with my wife. The image of her senseless and getting bone-hammered by Viking was one I'd never forget.

I was standing outside the Daily Dollar with Twenty when two Harley's roared up. I recognized Slicer and Meatgrinder, right away. I tensed, not knowing what Twenty would do. I glanced at him, but he ignored me. He watched the two SOA members dismount.

Slicer nodded at me.

Meatgrinder mock-slugged my arm. "Hey there, Jim." At least he called me by my name. They walked into the bar.

Twenty pushed off the wall and followed them in. He was right on their asses.

I followed, wondering what was going to blow up. Twenty was the Iron Crow's Sergeant at Arms. He was the mean motherfucker who had manhandled me when I was chained and captive. Nice as all shit now, he had been all business when he had thought me a federal agent.

Twenty wedged himself in between the two SOA bikers at the bar. He had to pry his way between and he did it as if he owned both them and the bar. He said, "When things go down, where is honor?"

They didn't understand that. Neither did I.

Twenty said, "Some guys like the club. The camaraderie. The freedom. Others like fucking things up. I wonder what column you two fit in?"

Meatgrinder stiffened. "Are you saying we have no honor?"

Twenty muttered, "I'm asking."

"We're the new force in town and we aren't backing down."

Twenty straightened. "Going to beat people and push drugs?"

Slicer said, "We didn't sign on for that."

"And what did you sign on for?"

"Being in a motorcycle club. Being part of something with the brotherhood."

Twenty smirked. "How long did it take you to earn that patch?"

Slicer looked confused. "I earned it when we formed the club."

"Did you, now?"

Slicer nodded.

Twenty said, "Are you sure of all your... brothers?"

"What do you mean?"

I moved to the side and leaned against the bar.

Twenty said, "Are you certain that each of your brothers would be at your side even if you're outnumbered ten to one?"

Neither answered.

The Iron Crows sergeant at arms straightened and backed away. "Our club fights drug dealers, gang members... and government agencies trying to establish drug rings. Remember that when things go down. Enjoy your drinks."

I watched him walk out. So did Celia and the two SOA bikers.

Meatgrinder leaned over towards me, fast. "We were told the Iron Crows were dealers for the Outlaws."

I shook my head. "Nope." I told him the truth. "I took a knife helping one of the Iron Crows stop some Surenos from scouting around."

"Surenos?"

"Mexican gang trying to expand territory up here. They wear blue. Lots of blue."

Slicer nodded. "We saw a few of them some days back."

I pulled up the leg of my jeans. "There's my scar. Was twelve stitches."

Meatgrinder goggled. "How many were there?"

"Four."

"And just you and one Iron Crow?" He sounded disbelieving.

Something in me went hard and I stopped leaning, standing to my full height. But my chin was down and so were my eyebrows. "I wouldn't fucking lie about such a thing. It happened right out front."

He held up a hand. "No disrespect."

It struck me then how different the SOA bikers were to the Iron Crows. The IC members didn't give a shit if they offended someone who wasn't a member. Who wasn't patched. These SOA bikers did. There was a boatload of difference between the two.

Slicer said, "What did he mean saying when things go down?"

I honestly didn't know. Was it something to do with the meeting they had? "I don't know."

~ ~ ~

I mumbled to Kristy at three in the morning. "I feel like something's going down but I'm clueless."

She snuggled her face into my chest. Her arm rested across my belly, lower than it had a few months ago; I was losing weight. "You felt left out of the meeting?"

"Church? Yeah, I guess. I wonder what they do in there? Is it some massive bloodletting and sacrificing goats or something?"

She giggled. "Grannie said they talk club business. Read minutes, go over business."

"Sounds dull."

She nodded. "Yep, that's what she said Gunner has said about it."

"Twenty seemed to imply things were going to happen."

She shrugged again. "They meet, they make a decision. Something happens."

I chuckled at her simplicity, wondering why I didn't have the same view.

"Are you laughing at me?"

"No, just wondering why I'm obsessing over it all."

I had a feeling things were happening. The problem was, I didn't know how fast they were going to happen.

CHAPTER 9

I wandered into the clubhouse the next morning with Kristy and headed to the kitchen. The smell of bacon permeated the building with welcome. Smiley was crossing in front of us.

He stopped and smiled, typical for him. "Morning."

I waved at the club secretary. "How goes?"

"Very well, I think." He winked at me – uncharacteristically.

What the fuck was that? I followed him into the kitchen and told Grannie I'd take scrambled eggs. Just like my head – all scrambled to shit. There was a bite of chill in the air out and in the clubhouse. I resolved to ride to town and buy some denim shirts and jacket after breakfast. Couple hours to get there, couple hours back and I'd still have plenty of time to make my shift.

I sat with my eggs. Gunner was on my left and Ghost across from us. Ghost was the club's treasurer. He was always scowling, so I didn't take it personally when he scowled at me this morning; I just ignored him and ate my eggs.

Gunner nudged me. "So you're turning into a Sons of Aggression member?"

I coughed. "Um, no."

"You've been hanging with them."

I didn't know what Dealer had said to him or any of the others. Or if Sonar had. I didn't want to step on club business, so I said, "I was invited and Dealer said I should accept. Most of them seem like decent guys. Not like Ace."

Gunner grunted. "The blind leading the blind?"

I wasn't sure what to make of that, so I chewed some bacon instead. *Why is the old silverback getting up on my ass? I'm doing what I was told to do.* "I tell the club everything I know."

Gunner didn't answer. Ghost scowled.

Fuck, I am who I am. I do what I'm told. I got up, yanking my plate off the table.

Kristy looked up at me, but I ignored her.

My plate hit the counter with a small clatter and I stalked out, much like Miguel – Demon Rider – had the night before. I saw him, coming in. He pressed his vest on the left side when he saw me.

You still carrying that cash around?

Dealer came out of his hallway and called to Demon Rider. "Hey, Demon. We're throwing a little bash for you at the Triple Shot tonight at seven. You come, too, Jimmy."

I waved at him.

Miguel ducked his head and pressed against his vest again.

I went outside and got on my bike.

~ ~ ~

The ride back to the town I had left was somber. I felt no connection to where I was going, but rather to what I was leaving. I felt better than I had months prior when I married Kristy. It seemed like marrying her was the turning point in my life. And not just because we loved each other and fit so well together. But also the events of the marriage that had led us to this place.

I had gone from a life of exclusion to including Kristy – and in her, much the same in reverse. She had included me. Then, taken captive, we had found a strange sort of justice and honor with a motorcycle club that we had first thought a gang.

But the Iron Crows were not a gang. They didn't extort or threaten. They went about their lives as human beings with a bond. Their family was the club. Instead of raping old women and pushing drugs, they fought to keep child molesters off the streets and gangs from pushing in and soiling society.

I wondered, as I rode, what had become of the child molester that Sheriff Jefferson had given information on to Dealer. I heard nothing else of it at the club. But the club held a stack of newspapers that were often read by the members. *Maybe I'll go back some weeks and look.*

I pulled into the Fairview Mall and parked in a motorcycle spot up front. Three of the four motorcycle spots were taken up by some dick in a new Camaro who had parked across all three spaces. I got off my bike and quickly keyed his car all down the opposite side. *Fucker.*

I went into the mall feeling better.

I shopped at a Levi's outlet. I passed on the pre-greased, pre-stressed jeans. They all looked disgusting to me. I chose several pairs of boot-cut Levi's in black and piled them on the counter. I picked up a few Levi's blue denim shirts and added them.

The girl at the counter looked at me as if I might be trying to scam her. I ignored the little bitch. I next fingered through several jackets until I found a Levi's trucker jacket that was lined. I took one and added it to the pile. "Ready."

Gail looked at me suspiciously.

I said, "I assume you accept cash?" I stressed her name. "Gail?"

She blinked and said, "Of course." Her suspicion was dismissed.

Carrying the bag out, five hundred dollars lighter, I went to a sporting goods store and bought a backpack and leather boots. Out in the courtyard, I removed all the tags and put on the jacket and boots. Then I stuffed all the rest into the new backpack.

Out in the parking lot, I approached my Harley. Asshole in the red Camaro was still parked there. I took my key and keyed up and down the near side. Then I got on my bike and rode away. Maybe the stupid fucker wouldn't think his shit didn't stink and take up car spots instead of motorcycle spots next time.

I rode back to Keystone, enjoying the cool breeze that touched my face and not my body. *I'm going to throw that stupid, useless windbreaker away.*

I dropped the backpack at home and set out the new jeans for Kristy to handle. I tossed the fucking windbreaker in the trash. No use hanging onto shit I'd never use again. Out with it; just like the plastic.

I rode to the Daily Dollar, even though I was early.

Six bikes were parked out front.

I frowned, wondering if they were trashing my bar. *Why so many? What the fuck?* I strode in with a scowl, ready to face-punch anyone harassing Celia. Or yank my Beretta Nano and start laying waste.

The bar was peaceful. Five Iron Crows were in there and one SOA member: Slaughter, their VP.

I waved to Slaughter to put him at ease. He was at the other end of the bar, facing off against the five Iron Crows.

He looked relieved to see me. "What's up, Jim?"

I grunted, "Bah, nothing."

He got up. "Come outside with me."

The five IC members looked at us with searching eyes, but said nothing. Among them was Gripper.

I followed Slaughter out. "They treat you okay?"

Slaughter jerked as if in realization. "Yeah... actually. But there's something else." He looked very disturbed.

"What is it?"

"Ace went missing."

I stopped outside, facing my bike. "What do you mean?"

"I went to his house. In his garage, things were knocked over as if there had been a fight. The garage door was open. Outside the garage was a blue bandana." He gripped my jacket and tugged, forcing me to face him. His voice was low and dangerous. "Do any of the Iron Crows wear bandanas?"

"No, except for Gunner, and he wears red. But blue..." My mind was racing.

"What is it?"

"The Surenos we fought wore blue bandanas."

"The Mexican gang?"

I nodded.

"Why would the Mexicans want Ace?"

"Maybe they knew he wanted to open up drugs in Keystone. Maybe they didn't want the competition."

He released my jacket and rubbed a hand back through his shoulder-length hair. "Will they ask for a ransom or something?"

I didn't answer, just shook my head.

He sighed loudly in exasperation. "Everything's ruined. We just wanted to ride."

I was quiet for a moment, letting the realization that Ace might be dead sink in. "Maybe you still can."

"What do you mean?"

"Approach the Iron Crows. They've fought against the Surenos. They fight to keep Keystone free of drug dealers."

He glared at me, but his gaze softened. "I don't know. Would they really even consider us?"

I nodded very slowly. "They might scrutinize you a little closer than normal, but if you love to ride and want to keep drugs out of Keystone, they're your club."

He laughed incredulously. "Ace seemed so sure they were all a bunch of posers."

I laughed. "I think that's how they've been referring to you guys."

He firmed his lips and looked down. "I wondered if we had gone about forming the wrong way."

"You did."

"You seem to know a lot about these guys."

I held up my hands. "I'm an outsider, swear to Jesus."

He looked me in the eyes for a long time. He slowly began to nod. "I trust you, Jim."

"You should."

He blew out a loud breath. "I need to gather the club. Have a meeting."

I leaned towards him, placing my hand on his shoulder. From what Gunner had told me, it was a direct sin against the colors. But Slaughter didn't even react. I said, "Do the right thing, Slaughter." I squeezed his shoulder and shook it in affirmation. I knew by his reaction that he wasn't even aware of the violation of his colors. Because he hadn't earned them by learning.

The night was about to get a lot more interesting.

CHAPTER 10

I checked my watch as Slaughter rode off. I still had a few hours before having to head to the Triple Shot.

Gripper was coming out as I was coming in. He backed up and let me in, but stayed close. "How did that go?"

"He didn't cause any trouble, did he?"

The enforcer shook his head. "No, he was respectful. Almost felt like a real biker."

"Give them a chance. Give him a chance. He told me Ace went missing. The club is in his hands now."

Gripper flexed his muscles. "We gave him a chance, and he acted well."

I laughed. "Well, there were five of you."

The bouncer shook his head. "Numbers don't matter when it's about honor."

I felt the truth of it stir deep within me. I had helped Flats against the Surenos. Outnumbered, we had fought without fear or hesitation. I said, "You're right."

He winked at me. I thought that was odd, but what did I know of the Iron Crows? I was just a hang-around. He said, "You'll be at the Triple Shot at seven?"

I sighed. "Yeah, I'll be there." Stupid bash for Miguel – a diversion when so much more was occurring around us.

How wrong I was.

~ ~ ~

I finished up my shortened shift at the Daily Dollar. Celia told me the bar was closing for what was happening at the Triple Shot. She had called last call at six. A few of the patrons grumbled, but she told them they could head over to Dean's bar on C Street.

I didn't care much, it was just a function to celebrate Miguel's patching. I didn't care much for Miguel as a person; he seemed as if everything was a bother – not like the other bikers in the club. But I had been asked to go, so I intended to do just that. Maybe I could just sit and shoot the breeze with Gunner or Donna.

Wallet strolled in around six-thirty. He lifted his arms. "I'm early."

Celia rolled her eyes. "It's the Triple Shot, you goof. We're closing here in a half."

His smile didn't falter. "Gah, well..." He came over to me. "Nice duds there."

I was wearing one of my new jeans and the new jacket and boots. "Eh. Started getting cold on the bike. Windbreaker wasn't cutting it."

He laughed. "Windbreaker on a Harley? Might as well wear toilet paper. In fact, that might even be warmer."

"No doubt." I sipped at my water. I always drank water when on shift.

"I hear Ace went missing."

"Supposedly. Blue bandana – Surenos, likely."

He grinned at me. "That's what Jefferson thinks."

The sheriff seemed like a no-nonsense man. "Doesn't take a genius..."

He laughed like it was a good joke. He clapped my shoulder. "See you at the Triple."

I watched him go. Free, easy, without a care in the world. I wished I could be like that.

Celia called a little later, "Closing in five."

Grumbles from the three locals did not contradict her; they just complained.

I helped one old regular out – Johnny was his name – and wondered if I would end up like him: Jimmy the drunk, drinking his life away and amounting to nothing but a temporarily warm barstool. *Will I die alone? Will my Kristy even be there?*

I fingered my keys as Celia closed out the register.

Would I amount to nothing? Was bouncing my career? Would Kristy be there when I got sick? I felt a wave of love for my wife. Despite her occasional fucks with Dealer, she slept in my bed, close, every night. It was me she clung to. Suddenly, I wanted to be at the Triple. I said, "You about done?"

Celia was a nice-looking woman, but lined with the beginning of age. Wife to Ralph the attorney, she worked while he played at being a hang-around. They both did, but she earned money for it. She looked pretty, despite her lines, and I wondered what she had done before this.

I didn't ask immediately.

She locked the door's two locks and I escorted her to her car, as usual. No one was a threat this night in Keystone.

She said, "Thanks." I could tell her heart wasn't in it.

I said, "What did you do before bartending?"

She paused, leaning on the door of her Dodge. "I was a realtor."

"I thought they made good money?"

She looked at me as if I was crazy. "In this economy? I sold three properties my final year."

I didn't know if that was good or not. "Not enough to live on?"

She laughed. "I think I make more in tips than I did as a realtor." She got into her car and slammed the door.

I stood for only a second, looking at her through the glass. I had protected her for months now, believing I knew her. I turned away, viewing her in a new light. Much like me, she had turned away from a career that sounded good but provided nothing. Computers? Nothing. Realty? Nothing, apparently. Was it all really so bad that the only jobs were Walmart and McDonalds? Places that catered to the welfare class?

Those thoughts slipped from my mind as I drank in the cool night air of Keystone. I sat on my Harley and gazed up at the stars in the clear skies overhead. No matter how I viewed the jobs, where I was now was far better than where I was before.

Life was about to throw me a very huge wrench.

CHAPTER 11

I rode to the Triple, my Harley thrumming beneath me in a comforting rumble. I had taken my time, letting Celia drive to the bar and outpace me. I didn't care.

What I really looked forward to was a night with Kristy. If I could slip out of the Triple early, then maybe she could, too. *Who knows?*

Bikes were everywhere. I think the entire club was here. I parked and backed in at the end of a very long line of Harleys. Some were even across the street.

One of the police SUVs drove by and I waved. I didn't notice if they waved back or not.

Inside, Gripper was handing out three wooden nickels to each non-club patron and asking them to come back the next day. Bikers were everywhere and so were the hang-arounds. The Triple Shot was a classier dive than the Daily, with more neon booze signs, some tin, and a more impressive bottle wall. It even held three slot machines near the restrooms. Two pool tables and a bunch of well-kept wooden chairs and varnished tables made a very comfortable feeling bar.

I approached Kristy. Her smile was pure pleasure. I felt better, if still bothered by other things and greeted her. "Hi."

"Well, how nice to see you in here, finally. Thought you'd never come try to pick me up."

"You get hit on in here much?"

She rolled her eyes. "Every single day. I just bat my eyes and get better tips."

I laughed. "It's probably not that easy."

"Basically, it is." She giggled. "So many pathetic attempts."

"Any good ones?"

"Only Dealer." She stuck out her tongue at me.

"Where is he, anyway?"

She shrugged. "Oh, there he is."

He was coming in, looking around with a tight grin. "Our birthday boy here yet?"

Twenty growled, "Not yet."

Dealer gave a curt nod. "It's early yet, anyway." He came over to the bar and went behind it. He said to Kristy, "Get out; I'm tending."

My wife twisted her lips at him. "Fine. Do you know where everything is?"

Dealer looked over at Twenty and wagged his thumb back towards Kristy. "Are you getting this? I think she needs a spanking."

I snorted. Kristy and I walked over to a table and sat.

She said, "You mind if I have a little woo-hoo with Dealer later?"

"Nah, go ahead. You mind if I have a little play with Donna later?"

"Not Angela?" She appeared a little disappointed.

"Fuck yeah, but she's never... around at night. If you catch my drift."

"Oh... right." She laughed. "I really like her."

"Yeah, me too."

"Never thought I'd say that about a hooker."

"Yeah, me neither. But she isn't like other hookers."

Kristy shrugged. "Maybe. I mean, the only view we get is what the TV tells us. Maybe there are more like her—"

"Bah, more like girls who will do anything to turn a trick because their johns keep them hooked on drugs."

Gripper was at the door and blocked someone from coming in. "Private event."

Someone said, "Oh..."

"Come back tomorrow. Here, have a drink on us." He handed a wooden nickel.

The voice cheered perceptibly. "Sure, thanks!"

"Have a nice night."

The voice called back, "You too."

Kristy and I grinned at each other. Gripper was a big man and all muscle. Arms like logs. To see him be cordial was amusing.

She said, "So what's been eating you?"

"This whole thing with the Sons of Aggression, I guess. I liked hanging out with the Iron Crows. And then I get pushed over there. For what? A bit earlier, one of them tells me Ace had disappeared. A blue bandana left outside his garage."

"Blue bandana?"

"Remember the Surenos we fought?"

She nodded.

"Well, they wore blue Pendletons and bandanas."

"Oh, like colors?" Kristy was not slow.

"Yep."

"Ace wanted to do drugs and also the Surenos. Sounds like someone got jealous."

I lowered my voice. "Thing is, I haven't seen hide nor hair of any Surenos since we sent them running."

"Maybe you missed them."

"Yeah, maybe." I tapped the table with a finger. "And maybe it's just as easy to go buy a blue bandana and accidentally on purpose drop it, if you catch my drift."

"You think someone else did it? Took Ace?"

"Yeah, I do. Wallet told me Sheriff Jefferson is going with the Surenos line."

"So maybe it was them."

"Maybe. Maybe Jefferson is just looking the other way because problems are disappearing."

She looked around. "You think someone in the Iron Crows did it?"

"Shh, not so loud." I looked around. Demon Rider was coming in, looking shifty-eyed. I whispered to Kristy, "Like maybe him."

Demon Rider touched his vest, his eyes blinking rapidly. He went over to the jukebox and leaned over it, the light from below painting his face in lurid hues.

My oh-fuck radar was going off.

He inserted coins and selected a song. Starting up was some rap song about killing bitches.

My hair stood on end.

Kristy said, "What's wrong?"

I was tense, sitting on the edge of my seat.

Gripper appeared bored. Twenty was talking to Dealer at the bar. Both glanced over at Demon Rider. Dealer was smiling happily. Gunner was staring me down from the next table.

I looked back to Demon Rider. He was a patched member, above suspicion by the brothers. A hang-around couldn't start griping about having cramps of suspicion. I would be laughed at, cussed at, and maybe even punched around.

Demon Rider's arms tensed on the juke box. His head made little jerks, as if he was talking to himself.

I knew what it was. He was tweaking. High on something, he was fighting for control.

He pushed off the machine and turned, his eyes glassy. He took a faltering step. His eyes locked onto Dealer.

Dealer wasn't even looking.

My oh-fuck radar turned into a full air raid scream of shit-fucks.

Demon Rider put his right hand into his left vest.

Fuck, it's a gun! I rose.

The tweaker began walking with a purpose, his arm coming out – straight for Dealer.

I reached and pulled my Beretta Nano. I moved quickly behind the biker and aimed my gun. I had to be close and at the right angle to avoid hitting anyone else.

Several things happened at once.

Demon Rider was bringing up his gun.

Dealer leaned onto one forearm on the bar and turned his gaze to Demon Rider. The fucker smiled.

My gun was knocked upward, my shot going into the ceiling.

Bikers that had seemed relaxed were suddenly all over Demon Rider. He never got off his shot. Fists rained down at the druggie on the floor, and boots added many thuds and thunks.

Gunner grabbed my gun hand. "It's under control, Jimmy. Calm down. We didn't want any shooting."

Dealer growled. "Wrap that piece of shit up and get him out back. Play dumb if the cops come in about the gunshot. Hurry up!"

Bikers moved. A rolled rug from the hall leading to the back door was brought in and unrolled. A baseball bat flopped out of it. Twenty scooped it up and lifted it high in two hands. The bat came down hard and there was a sickening crack as it impacted Miguel's head.

I swallowed hard. No human could survive that kind of head hit.

Twenty spat on him and the bikers rolled up the body. They lifted the burden and ran out the back. The entire rug operation had taken only seconds. Just like that, I was staring at the empty spot where Demon Rider had stood only thirty seconds before.

Gunner released my arm.

I whispered, "Fucking brutal." I holstered my gun. "You guys knew?"

Gunner grunted. "All along. We had to bring him in as a show of trust to get him to act. He was a stooge for the CIA."

I sat heavily, open-mouthed.

Dealer laughed at something Twenty said. The president raised his voice. "Order up your drinks, brothers. And someone turn that rap-shit off."

CHAPTER 12

I followed the members into the clubhouse. Not all of the hang-arounds had been invited to the Triple. But with the clubhouse locked up, they had chosen to do other things. The first to show up was Chuck.

I grabbed a Scotch from Grannie and sat down at the newspaper basket. Thinking back to the sheriff coming in, I peeled back some newspapers and pulled up a handful from underneath. I began flipping, looking for anything about child molesters.

Big Pizza came and plopped down next to me, waving a beer and a huge piece of pizza. It had to be fourteen inches long.

I blinked. "Fuck, that thing's huge."

He laughed deep. "I have them special made from Antonio's. It's how I got my nickname. There's four boxes over there if you want a piece." He indicated the table next to the helmet table at the front.

"Oh, thanks. I think I will." I put the Scotch and newspapers down and fetched a slice. Heavy with cheese and sausage, I took the thinnest piece I could find and bit off a good three inches to keep it from flopping onto the floor. I returned and sat. I went back to flipping through papers.

He grumbled, "You were fast on the gun. I didn't think Gunner was going to reach you."

"I could have taken him out."

"And made a mess of blood and bone that woulda been harder to clean up."

I looked at him. "Did everyone know about Miguel?"

He nodded somberly. "We had it under control."

I grunted and scanned the pages. I eventually found a police blotter and began reading those in each issue. It was the third issue where I found mention.

"Joel Silver failed to complete a mandatory compliance check in the two hundred block of Daily Drive Tuesday morning with Deputy Davies. His violation was reported to the US Dept of Justice."

Daily Drive was the street with the elementary school. I wondered what grab and grind meant. Was he killed? Told to leave? Threatened? Not that any of it mattered to me as long as the result was the asshole was no longer

directly watching young kids and planning his next abduction/rape/murder. Seeing it in the paper made me feel better. I chomped on the pizza; I hadn't eaten anything since the two scrambled eggs in the morning. I was dropping weight fast.

Big Pizza used the crust of his eaten pizza to tap my paper. "What're you looking for?"

There was no point I saw in lying. "I had heard about a child molester being placed across from the elementary school. I wondered if he was still around. Says he failed his compliance check.

The man guffawed. "Yep, he vanished." In a guttural low breath, he said, "Never to be seen again."

I put the papers away and picked up my Scotch. "Good. It angers me the feds think it's a good idea to put molesters directly across from a school filled with little kids."

Big Pizza grunted. "Yeah, can't be hurting their feelings. I'm sure it's racist or something to put them in an area without vulnerable kids."

"Well, I'm glad the asshole is gone."

His voice was certain. "He's gone."

"Miguel had been visiting the same motel Ace had—"

Big Pizza's grin turned so devious and his eyes so brittle-hard that I stopped. He said, "And they're gone, too. Maybe this is a subject best forgotten. I hope you take that hint."

I chewed a bite of pizza and hefted it. "Great pizza."

Big Pizza guffawed so loud I think the room shook. He slapped me on the leg and winked. He got up and wandered away.

Donna came in and saw me. She veered to the bar and got herself a Scotch, too. She came over and took Big Pizza's place. "How are you doing, tonight?"

Being that she hadn't been invited to the Triple, I just shrugged. "Well enough. I think the night has been pretty outstanding."

"Where's Kristy?"

I raised my glass. "Having her own outstanding night with Dealer. They headed back there almost immediately. I think Dealer felt very energized."

She laughed and shook her head. "I don't think I could tell my husband about all of this; he wouldn't understand."

"Why doesn't he come around?"

She blew out a breath from pursed lips. "He thinks motorcycles are dumb. Thinks I'm crazy with penis-envy."

I chuckled. "He'd never understand, then."

"Nope." She sipped at her Scotch. "So I guess we can't watch Dealer and your wife..."

"Well, I could, but that's no fun. Too stressful on my dick."

She laughed.

I looked at her. She was a pretty woman in a rough way. Men would not drool over Donna Pressman. I frowned, tilting my head. "You want to... play a little?"

She shifted and looked around. She looked back to me, her voice low and urgent. "You want to? It was so much fun..."

"Shh. Let's go find a room." The former brothel had plenty of rooms, several unused. I led her down the left hall, away from the faint moans coming from Dealer's door. His hall had the most claimed rooms. The left hall, towards the kitchen had the least used rooms, including the one I had been held captive in. I opened that door and pointed. "I laid on that, captive for three days."

Her eyes were wide as she scanned the room.

I shut the door and moved down a few, testing one I was sure was unused. The light was on inside and I saw Tequila, Big Pizza's wife, sucking the cock of Gripper. She looked at us, licking her lips.

Gripper waved. "Room's taken." He chuckled.

I shut the door. I gave Donna a surprised look and shrugged. I moved to the next and opened it. It was dark. I flipped on the light and moved to the simple bed. The wool blanket looked like military surplus and was dusty. I gave Donna an eyebrow and began removing my pants.

She blushed and removed hers.

It is always so special to see a woman undress. She was undressing for me. I pushed her back down onto the bed and eyeballed her pussy. She had a big, beautiful pussy with puffy, hanging lips. She was trimmed, her hair down there that same light brown as her hair up top.

I pushed her back and stuck my face in between her legs.

She gasped in surprise and tensed, but when I pressed my tongue against her clit, she flopped back limp. I ran my tongue up and down her hardening nub, her taste much like as if I had licked the back of her hand. I jabbed two fingers inter her hole and began sawing.

She was almost breathless. "I didn't know you were going to do that... Ungh..."

"I wasn't planning on it. But I kinda wanted to once I saw you strip out of your jeans."

She sighed with tension. "Oh you dirty, dirty man. Don't stop." Her head was thrown back; she wasn't even looking down at me. I licked more, moving her folds on her puffy pussy. She had a big one. Kristy's was tiny compared to Donna's. I ran my tongue up and down until she was moaning and writhing on the bed. My dick was hard and I considered getting up and just jamming it into her hole; it looked like she needed a good, hard cock.

But I hadn't asked her and I didn't think that would be such a good move.

When she bucked against my face and cried out, I was surprised that she had finished so fast. I had only licked her for maybe ten minutes.

She twisted away from me, shuddering and panting heavily. With her jeans off, she looked better. She had wide hips and thick thighs made for riding a Harley. Or a cock. She said, "Lay down. I'll do the same for you. You don't have anything contagious, do you?"

"Nope."

"Me, neither." She leaned over and took my hardness into her mouth. The envelopment of warm, wet sensation slid down my shaft and massaged it. Her tongue and mouth and lips were so soft they felt like hot pudding. I groaned heavily and then sighed with relief. I closed my eyes as her mouth became the focus of everything. Her tongue moved around the helmet of my cock sending me twirling with her tongue.

Or the Scotch. Whatever, I enjoyed it.

She jacked my shaft, sucking on the head and then pulled her mouth off. "Whew, I forgot how hard this was."

"Hard?"

"Keeping my jaws open so I don't drag my teeth. I stopped sucking my husband long ago." She went back to it and I sighed again. She sucked more insistently, stroking faster.

It felt great, and I relaxed to allow that tickle in my feet to develop into something greater. I panted faster, my hips unable to keep still.

She hummed a laugh around my cock and kept going.

Out of respect for her, I gasped out, "I'm going to cum."

She sucked harder.

That blew my mind and my dick. I groaned out as my shaft began jerking and shooting cum into her mouth. She kept her head still and just sucked. *Wow, you go, Donna. Do it.*

She pulled off, licking her lips and smiling. She moved up and planted her lips down onto mine.

Oh you naughty woman. I kissed her and tasted myself. Fortunately, I didn't taste much, so I guess my stuff wasn't gross.

She giggled and got up. "My husband could never do it."

"Do it?"

"Kiss me after." She picked up her jeans. "Thank you, that was fun."

I chuckled. "Yeah, kind of a surprise."

"All around."

I nodded. "Let's go have some more Scotch."

"Where's the new patch, anyway? Demon Rider?"

I pointed a finger at her and whispered, "Never to be seen again."

"Something happened?"

"Just between you and me? He was working for the government. Paid snitch or whatever. He won't be back but I wouldn't ask around about it."

She frowned. "Okay. I didn't like him anyway."

I laughed. "Me neither."

EPILOGUE

I sat drinking my third Scotch after playing around with Donna.

Kristy had come out a half hour before and was sitting on the arm of my chair. Donna gave her a few uncertain looks and me some secretive smiles.

Dealer had been in and out, grabbing a slice of that ridiculous monstrosity of a pizza. After he finished, he went back to his office.

He wasn't in there more than a few minutes. He came back out, drink in hand and something rolled up under his arm. "Jimmy!" His shout silenced the clubhouse.

I blinked, wondering what I had done.

He said, "What the fuck are you doing running around in denim? You trying to look like a biker?"

I was at a loss. "My windbreaker wasn't cutting it."

"Windbreaker?" He laughed derisively. "So now you're trying to look all bad-ass? Growing out your beard and wearing a black denim jacket?"

What the fuck? I spread my hands, my left fingers curled around my glass. "Should I be wearing a bikini?"

The clubhouse erupted in laughter.

But Dealer wasn't smiling. He advanced on me, staggering a bit. "You come in here, drink our booze and eat our food. And now you're wearing denim?"

"I didn't know it was a—"

He tossed what he had under his arm down onto my lap.

I froze and the club went silent.

For the life of me, I can't say I would ever want to be a man and cry. Not in front of so many tough men and tough women. No, not ever. *Please, God, don't let these tears slide down my cheeks.*

But it was too fucking late. Cheeks wet and my outspread arms trembling, I looked down at what he had thrown.

In my lap was a vest. A single bottom rocker was affixed that said, "PROSPECT."

Thank you for reading Book 2 of the Iron Crows MC. The adventures of Jim and Kristy Butcher will continue in Book 3. All reviews are greatly appreciated. You can find Laran Mithras on GoodReads.