

CHAPTER TWO



THREE WEEKS LATER
SPOKANE, WASHINGTON
EM

I fluffed up my boobs, studying my cleavage carefully in the bar's bathroom mirror. I'd worn a black halter corset, which I was now second-guessing.

"I look like a slut," I moaned.

"Walking the line between hot and slutty is tricky," Kimber said, leaning forward to put on more lipstick. She smacked her lips carefully, then ran her tongue over her teeth. "But you're firmly on the hot side tonight. I still think you should be wearing more makeup, though."

I glanced at her, wondering if she was right. I'd only met Kimber a week ago, but she seemed to have her shit together. Sophie called her a sexual bloodhound. Of course, I'd only known *her* a week, too, but she was the mother of Ruger's nephew, so she came with references.

"You look fantastic," Soph said, from the stall behind us. "I wouldn't have let you out of the hotel room if you didn't. How much time before the mysterious and magnificent Liam arrives?"

I glanced down at my phone.

“Looks like I’ve got maybe half an hour?” I said. “If he’s on time.”

“I cannot *wait* to check him out,” Kimber declared. “If he’s hot, can I grab his ass? I need to know if those pictures were real. If they are, you’re just lucky I’m married.”

“Behave,” Sophie said, opening the stall door. She joined us to wash her hands. “I think we need a picture together.”

She pulled out her phone and held it up.

“Okay, strike a pose,” she said. “I want to see sexy, I want to see passion! This is not a game, ladies.”

I started giggling as Kimber crouched, pointing her fingers like a gun at the mirror. Sophie clicked the pic and we all looked at it.

Wow, I did look sort of hot.

“Text that to me?” I asked.

“Me, too,” Kimber chimed in. Sophie fiddled with her phone, then mine buzzed in my pocket.

“Serious talk now,” I said, looking at them in the mirror. “I know I said I wanted to have sex with Liam, but only if it feels right. Don’t be disappointed in me if it doesn’t happen.”

Sophie wrapped her arm around me.

“Hon, you shouldn’t do anything that doesn’t feel right.”

“Exactly,” Kimber said. “Just because he’s hot doesn’t mean he brushes his teeth. There’s all kind of potential deal breakers here. Just remember, if he isn’t what you want, there’s always another guy. You just need to stay away from the club and you’ll start meeting them.”

“I still feel weird being here without my dad knowing,” I said. “There’s been lots of trouble this past year . . . For a long time we were all on lockdown. They almost got Marie, you know. The Devil’s Jacks?”

Kimber’s eyebrows rose.

“Really? Is that a story I want to hear?”

I frowned.

"I don't know all the details—what I *do* know is that I didn't get to go anywhere without protection for a long time," I answered. "The Jacks and the Reapers have always fought with each other."

"But you're not on lockdown now," Sophie said firmly. "And you haven't been for a while, right? Ruger is crazy controlling about safety for me and Noah, and he didn't say anything about needing protection. We're fine. It's just a night out—no drama, unless getting well and truly fucked counts as drama. Fingers crossed for you on that one, babe."

I thought about Liam's picture and felt a delicious shiver run through me. Fingers crossed for sure . . . I wanted to lick him all over. There were six condoms in my purse, just ready and waiting. Not that I thought we'd need six, but a girl could hope, right?

"I want to dance," Kimber said. "You up for it, ladies?"

"Yeah," Sophie said, but I shook my head.

"I want to grab another drink first," I told them. "It's silly, but I feel really nervous about this."

"Drink up," Kimber said. "But not too much. Don't want to make an ass of yourself and turn him off."

"Oh, shit," I muttered. "Do you think I will? This is so weird and scary . . . I don't want to blow it."

"You have a black corset, tight jeans, fuck-me heels, and a purse full of condoms," Sophie said gravely. "It would take a *lot* to turn him off. This isn't about whether he likes you. It's about whether *you* like *him*—otherwise you'll just keep shopping around."

I hugged her impulsively.

"Thanks," I whispered.

"Any time," she whispered back, squeezing me tight. "Now go out there and get a drink, then come dance for a while. Life is too short to waste time on a guy who isn't right for you, no matter how hot he is. Always remember that."

I considered her words, wondering if she was talking about me or herself. Sophie's situation with Ruger was complicated . . . Sophie let me go and then we walked out of the bathroom and into the bar.

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I sat at a table toward the front of the room, sipping a Sex on the Beach, loud music pounding through me like a manic heartbeat. It felt like the clock over the bar must be broken, time moved so slowly. I kept thinking about the hotel room I'd booked earlier tonight. Kimber and Sophie had one connected to it—safety first, right? Assuming everything went well, I'd be taking Liam back to that room in a few hours.

My intentions toward him weren't honorable.

Not even a little bit.

Letting go of my crush on Painter had been hard—good thing I had Liam to get me through and remind me I had options. Whatever else happened, I owed him for that. I swirled the drink with my straw, then looked up to see him leaning against the bar.

Shit. SHIT. Liam was here. Early.

I wasn't ready yet. My mojo was all fucked up. It didn't help that he wasn't smiling. Nope, he was looking at me like a hungry animal. So hungry it was scary, and I actually glanced behind me because I couldn't believe that look was actually for me.

Then he pushed off the bar and started toward me. I froze, terrified. What had I been thinking, meeting a total stranger in a bar? I didn't know this man. He was . . . *bigger* than I'd pictured. I mean, I'd seen pictures but my phone screen was small. "Small" wasn't a word that applied to this guy. Liam in real life seemed to take up more space than the people around him. He was sexy, too. All long, lean muscles that flowed as he crossed the room. His gray henley covered broad shoulders, and his faded jeans moved like a part of his body.

He also wore biker boots and a Harley-Davidson belt buckle.

Holy shit, was Liam a biker? He'd never said a thing about that. What else hadn't he told me? People moved out of his way, the women eyeing him speculatively and the men uncomfortable meeting his eyes.

Then he stopped in front of me.

“Em,” he said, reaching out to catch a strand of my hair. He rolled it between his fingers and smiled. It transformed his face from terrifying and dangerous to outright glorious. His eyes were a rich dark brown, with long lashes, and his hair really needed a trim. I wanted to touch it. “You’re prettier in real life than your pictures.”

I warmed, feeling what had to be a truly dorky grin take over my face.

“You’re taller,” I said, projecting my voice over the music.

He leaned forward and kissed my cheek, then slipped into the chair opposite me. I felt myself relax with the distance, until I realized that now I had to face his intense gaze head-on. The pictures hadn’t conveyed the power of his eyes—not even close. I had no idea what to say or do, so I took a sip of my drink. He cocked his head, eyes fixed on my lips. I sat there like an idiot, watching him watching me.

“You want something?” a waitress yelled over the music, breaking my Liam-induced trance.

“Yeah,” he told her. “I’ll take an IPA, whatever you have on tap. You want another?”

I shook my head and the waitress moved on to the next table.

“This is really awkward,” I said, giving a nervous laugh.

He held a hand up to his ear. Great. He couldn’t hear me.

“This is really awkward,” I yelled. “I mean, I know we know each other, but meeting in person is weird.”

Liam’s mouth cracked in a panty-wetting grin.

“It’s different,” he said back, voice pitched to carry. “But I like it. It’s good to finally be in the same room. Are your friends here?”

“They’re dancing,” I told him, my voice faltering. Jesus, at this rate I’d end up with a sore throat from trying to talk so loud. “They want to inspect you.”

He grimaced.

“Of course they do,” he answered. “Sophie and Kimber, right?”

I nodded, impressed that he remembered their names.

“How do you know them?”

“Um, Sophie is . . . hmm, hard to explain,” I said, thinking about the Reapers, her weird nonrelationship with Ruger and all the reasons I hadn’t told Liam my full situation earlier. I took another sip of my drink, trying to decide what to say. Dad didn’t like me talking about the club, but it wasn’t exactly a secret that we were in one. Not really . . .

Fuck it. If the club was going to scare Liam off, might as well get it over with.

“You know, there’s something I’ve never told you,” I said loudly across the table.

He raised a brow.

“Is this the part where you confess you’re actually a man?” he shouted right as the music died. Heads turned and it was just like high school again. Everyone was looking at me. Liam glanced around at our audience, then winked at me. “Cause if you are, I’m totally into that. Whoever did your boob job is a fuckin’ artist.”

I burst out laughing as the next song started.

“No,” I replied, rolling my eyes. “But there’s a reason I haven’t dated very much. My dad’s part of a motorcycle club. The local president, actually. Anyway, one of the guys in the club has a nephew, and Sophie’s the kid’s mom.”

Liam straightened, his face turning blank. I don’t know what I expected . . . Concern, maybe? A snide remark? Somehow the total lack of expression in his eyes was worse.

“What’s the matter?” I asked. Damn it, carrying on a conversation in this place was nearly impossible. Had I made a huge mistake? Shit. Would Liam be like all the other guys, too scared of Dad to make a move?

He shook his head.

“Sorry,” he said. “Just remembered something I forgot to do earlier. Hey, you want to get out of here?”

“Um, I’m not sure—”

“That came out wrong,” he told me, smiling again. Had I been imagining things? “I meant, do you want to go to another bar? Public place, lots of witnesses, but maybe a little quieter? I want to really talk to you and it’s kind of hard in here. There’s a place down the street I like. Owner is an old friend of mine.”

I frowned.

“I don’t know,” I said. “I don’t want to leave Sophie and Kimber.”

“We don’t have to,” he yelled. “No worries.”

I smiled, thankful he wasn’t going to push me. My phone vibrated in my pocket, and I dug it out to find a text. Several of them, actually, including one from Liam telling me he would be early. It’d come in at the same time Sophie sent the picture. Oops.

KIMBER: He hre yet? I want to check out his ass. See if its worthy . . . think he’ll let me touch? I think we shud make him dance with us!!!!

I frowned.

“Everything okay?” Liam shouted. I studied his handsome, concerned face and pictured his reaction when Kimber Davis, Sexual Bloodhound, started groping him on the dance floor. I wasn’t sure what would be worse—if it bothered him or if he liked it. Either way, it would embarrass the shit out of me.

“Let’s hit the other place,” I hollered. “You’re right, it’s too loud in here.”

“Text your friends and finish your drink,” he said. “Let’s go talk for real.”

Liam’s choice surprised me.

I don’t know what I expected, but not some grotty little hole in

the wall my dad would've loved. The sign outside said Mick's, and the guy behind the bar looked like a giant pit bull. I'd never been here before, and for good reason.

It wasn't the kind of place you went with your girlfriends.

The room was long and narrow, with a bar along the left wall and rows of high-backed wooden booths with battered tables down the right. Liam held my hand, gently tugging me toward the back. The place wasn't exactly busy, mostly guys who looked rougher than your typical Saturday night club boy. A lot rougher, actually. Hell, they could've been Reapers. Fortunately I grew up around tough guys and they didn't scare me. I wouldn't want to come in here alone, but I felt safe with Liam.

"Here we go," he said, stopping at the last booth. I slid in, and then he sat down next to me, his long thigh pressing against mine. I could smell his scent, too. Clean and fresh, with just a hint of strong soap.

"Lots of witnesses, but privacy, too," he added.

Sitting so close felt like being a little drunk. My hormones were all happy and I wanted to reach down and grab his leg. Instead I forced myself to make small talk.

"So how long are you in town?" I asked, appreciating the fact that I didn't have to shout.

"Depends," he replied, smiling at me.

"On what?"

"Whether there's a reason to stay."

Oh, I hoped there would be a reason. Despite how nervous he made me, Liam made Painter look like a Ken doll.

"What about work?" I asked, realizing I didn't know what he did for a living. How had we never talked about that?

"It's flexible," he replied. "I guess you'd call me a freelancer. I take on jobs as needed, and it seems to balance out in the end. Have you heard back yet on that aesthetician's program you applied to down in Portland?"

“Not yet,” I said, feeling sheepish. I’d been planning on sending my application for two weeks now but kept putting it off because I didn’t know how to tell Dad I was considering a move. “I only sent in the paperwork a few days ago. I kept losing different parts of it, and . . .”

My voice trailed off as he reached up to touch my cheek, running the back of his big finger across my skin. Pure fire. I couldn’t think. I didn’t *want* to think.

And I really, really didn’t want to talk about getting my aesthetician’s license.

“I’m gonna kiss you,” he said. I nodded, and then his lips covered mine.

Fuck small talk.

The kiss started out softly. Liam threaded his fingers into my hair, tracing his tongue over my lips, parting them gently, almost worshipfully. I opened for him, my eyes falling closed as he moved in. I’d been kissed lots of times, despite Dad’s reputation for shooting my boyfriends (which was totally unfair—he’d only shot one, and he swore it was an accident). This was a whole different world of kissing.

I lost myself in Liam’s lips, drifting along on a wave of sensation that grew as I forgot the room around us. Then his fingers clutched my hair and the kiss hardened. His head slanted across mine, taking instead of asking. My nipples tightened, desperate for more. I reached down and found his thigh. It felt like solid rock. My fingers dug deep into the muscle and he groaned, hips shifting.

Seconds later, he broke free of my mouth and shoved the table across the booth floor, creating more space for us. Then he lifted me to straddle his lap.

“Liam, we can’t do this!” I hissed, eyes wide. Sure, people were pretty open around the Armory, but this was a *public bar*. “We’ll get thrown out.”

“Mick’s a friend,” he told me, eyes dark and intent. “Don’t worry about it.”

He leaned forward and nuzzled my breasts, which were conveniently located in front of his face. The corset served them up like a fucking buffet. Shit, were people watching us?

“Jesus, you got good tits,” he said, not sounding quite like himself. Rougher somehow. Then he slid a hand down my back and grabbed my ass, crushing me into his hips. I think my womb clenched. Or *something* did. If it wasn’t my womb, I had a very confused appendix. Liam grabbed my hair with his other hand and pulled me in for another kiss.

This one went straight past gentle, all hard and deep and full of desperate hunger. I shifted my hips, unconsciously rocking over the rapidly stiffening length of his cock. He responded by pushing up at me, grasping my hips. Eyes closed, I gave in to sensation. Even with all the fabric between us, my clit felt everything and was begging for more. I rocked harder, my desire for him blowing up like a match striking pavement.

Liam’s mouth tore away from me.

“Look at me,” he commanded, and I did. His eyes were dark pools of hunger, so intense my insides twisted. “Unhook the front of this corset thing you’re wearing. I want to see you.”

I shook my head, but his fingers dug into my hips, dragging me back and forth across his now-solid cock. Holy shit, that felt good.

“Do it,” he ordered. I nodded, forgetting why I’d protested.

I reached for the little hooks down the center of my corset, popping the top half of them open. My breasts spilled out. A small part of my brain screamed that anyone could see us, but when I glanced around there was nobody. The high walls of the booth gave us total privacy and the tables across from us were empty.

Liam studied me carefully for a moment, then leaned forward and caught my left nipple with his teeth.

I shuddered, terrified that he’d bite me and that he wouldn’t, all at once.

No biting, though. Nope. He sucked it in deep, dropping his

body lower on the bench. The hard edge of the table against my back didn't make it easy, but somehow he managed to deepen my back-and-forth slide along the ridge of his erection. If it wasn't for our pants, I'd have him inside me.

Stupid pants.

Liam groaned, then let me go abruptly. He lifted me by my hips and set me down on the bench next to him.

"Are we doing this?" he asked, his voice tight and tense.

I looked at him blankly. My clit wanted to know why we'd stopped, because she was *not* a happy camper about it. Neither were the girls up top. Liam took a deep, ragged breath, eyes intense.

"Are we having sex?" he asked bluntly. "Because if we aren't, I need to go jerk off. Not trying to pressure you, Em, but it's the fuckin' truth."

A wave of lust hit me hard, and I made my decision.

"Let me text my friends," I said breathlessly. "Then we can go back to the hotel."

"You sure?"

"Oh yeah," I whispered. "I'm sure."

I don't know what I expected after that. Maybe a stately exchange of text messages with Sophie and Kimber, followed by all of us walking back to the hotel together. They'd meet him, we'd all laugh, and then when they quietly gave me a thumbs-up I'd steal him away.

But Liam was a man of action.

He grabbed my hand and pulled me out of the booth, all but dragging me behind him as I clutched my corset closed in shock. To my surprise, we headed toward the back of the bar instead of the front door. Brushing past a muscular guy who slapped Liam on the back, I followed him down a darkened hallway. On our right were some dubious-looking bathrooms. On the left was a door, which Liam opened, pulling me in.