Extreme Ways

by nmikyska

Summary

Chibs is suffering from headaches and recurring dreams.

Notes

Warning you now, that I'm not a fan of Gemma or Clay. There is swearing, violence, and sex. If you aren't adult enough to watch the show, you should NOT be reading this story.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

"Chibs? Where are you going? We’ve got dessert yet…”

Gemma called after him as he stumbled up from his chair. His head pounding from the headache that plagued him since he woke in the morning, growing ever more painful by the minute.

Dinner at Gemma’s was the last straw after a long day. Gemma’s idea of a celebration for everyone getting out and Opie’s upcoming nuptials with Lyla. Now that everyone was out of Stockton, it was back to business. Clay and Jax giving them marching orders of how to deal with the Russians at the wedding reception.

Muttering his apologies that probably sounded more like just grumbles than actual words, he pressed a hand to his head as he swiftly escaped the house.

The cool night air was a slap in the face against his overheated skin. His hands shook as he strapped on his helmet, his breath pluming white as he took deep breaths to try ignore the pain long enough for him to get home where he could crash.

His body, mind, and soul stressed from work, headaches, Gemma’s cooking, the loud noise of the party, to the dreams that haunted him. He hasn’t had a moment of relief in weeks. And he doesn’t know why or what to do about it. And its not for a lack of trying.

He grimaced as he heard the door open behind him as he straddled his bike. Annoyed that his escape wasn’t as swift as he hoped for.

Jax strolled next to him. “Hey. You okay?”

Glancing up at Jax, the slant of the porch light making Jax’s eyes murky with his concern.

“I have a headache. Going home.” He said shortly as he slipped on his worn leather gloves.

Jax shifted on his feet as he watched him. “Ope and Piney...they both mentioned you’d been off. Beating the shit out of Kozik? Something you want to talk about?” Jax tried to coerce him into a deeper conversation.

“Jesus Christ.” He shook his head.

Ope and Piney reminded him of the teenagers at Nancy’s school. “Gossiping like a bunch of teenage girls that can’t keep their fucking gobs shut. And Kozik was fucking asking for it.” He muttered darkly. His helmet on, fingers scrambling with the straps.

“They’re worried about you. I’m worried about you. There’s a lot of shit that needs to get done. Just wondering if you’re up for it.”

Chibs glared hard at his VP. “I’m glad your home, Jackie boy. But you don’t know what the fuck you’re talking about.”

He swiveled his bike upright.

“I’m going home to get some sleep. Busy day tomorrow.”
“Chibs...” Jax trying to forestall him. But he fired up his bike, the noise cutting Jax short with whatever he was going to say.

He gave Jax a final look and rolled out off the driveway. Leaving Jax standing in his mother’s driveway. The deep rumbling of his bike underscored the spike striking inside his head.

The traffic was practically non-existent this late at night. He was able to open up the bike for the longer stretches of road as he crossed through town. The ride allowed his thoughts meander over the events of the day, back over the past few weeks.

He was exhausted by it all...by everything. Nearly took a header swerving away from the shithead sheriff’s as they chased after Clay and Jax. Thought he was going to heave as Juice started talking about his cleanse shop. Jesus, the kid had no filter.

At home, he tossed his leather jacket and kutte on the coatrack. Toe-heeling his boots off, leaving them in the front entry. Walking sock-footed into the kitchen, he poured himself a couple of fingers of his favorite single malt scotch to chase down the Kaopectate to calm his stomach from Gemma’s crap cooking. He’d left the under-cabinet lights on before leaving for dinner. It was the only light on in the house except for the moonlight spilling in through the skylights.

Drink in hand, he moved down the hall to his bedroom. Sitting on the bed, he grabbed a joint from an old cigar box on his nightstand. Lighting it, he took a deep draw on the hazy smoke of the weed. Another attempt to kill his headache or at the very least get him drunk and high enough that he didn’t care that his head wanted to crawl off and hide in a corner.

Drinking and smoking, he felt the weight of the effort he carried through the day slip off. He’d been hiding his problem from the club for a long time now. He didn’t like having anyone worry over him. It was easier to hide it here, in the dark of his home. But tonight at dinner, he mulled, showed him that his efforts weren’t as good as he thought. He’d hoped that by the time the boys got out of Stockton that he’d have a handle on himself.

Tomorrow they had to get their guns back from the Russians. Under the cover of Opie’s wedding, no less. The club was going to take out Putlova and his crew. He knew they had to take retaliation for the attack on Jax inside. But he wished that they could have celebrated a wedding without the bloodshed. He was getting tired of the blood and the race to stay one step ahead of the law and the other outlaws. These headaches...these dreams weren’t helping.

He snuffed out the last of the joint and slugged the last of his whiskey as he finished stripping off the rest of his clothes. Collapsing into bed, he begged to the gods above him to grant him a dreamless sleep. And a break from the headaches.

Fuck.
Chapter 2

Bobby drove the catering truck out of the carpet warehouse. Cases of weapons piled up next to him and Juice. Their part of the retribution completed. They were heading back to their warehouse. Juice and Happy talking to their plans on going back to Opie’s wedding reception.

He grimaced when Juice asked if he was going back with them.

“No. I’ve got a headache. I’m tired.”

Tuning out, his mind drifting as he stifled back the pain in his head. Firing that rifle felt fucking good. Imagining he was taking out Nancy’s tormentors. Which he admitted to himself sounded idiotic since it was just a fucking dream.

His woolgathering interrupted as the truck stopped, Bobby pulled open the back door. They hopped out and quickly unloaded the weapons, securing them into the warehouse.

He waved Bobby and the boys off as he got onto his bike to go home.

Lighting up a joint and pouring himself a whiskey, he groaned as he settled onto his sofa.

He’d never had recurring dreams like this before. A couple of days sure, but for months now, every night without fail. He thought it had to do with the knock on his head he got from that car bomb.

The headaches started then, too. But the doctors ruled everything out. Eventually just giving him pain meds and sending him out the door. One even wanted him to see a shrink.

He didn’t go back to that doctor.

Her name was Nancy Fraser, he learned. Some nights he visited her in a high school. Followed her, as she walked briskly through the hallways. Her head down, eyes watching the other kids that crushed around her as they went to and fro to their own classes. She kept close to the wall, protecting herself on one side at least. He figured if the walls could swallow her up, she would have taken it. Cringing when anyone pressed too close to her. Some veering towards her tauntingly. Laughing as they saw her flinch and huddle.

Her long reddish-brown hair was pulled back in a ponytail, but strands were slipping out if the band’s hold and were wispy around her downtrodden face. She rarely looked directly at the people around her. When she did, his heart stopped at the sight. She was beautiful. Her eyes were a startling shade of purple with flecks of blue and gold that shifted color under the light. Eyes that captured you. Age and knowledge staring right back at you. Made you question what it is you were doing with your life.

But what really got him was the deep scar running from her jaw to her temple. It was thick and jagged as it wound its way across her cheek. It was old he could tell by just the coloring of it. He ran a hand over his own Glasgow grin when he first saw it.

While, he was able to use his battered, scarred up face as a sort of armor. The sight of it to put the fear of God in whoever dared to go up against him. Even so, it took a long time to let himself get over the injury done to him. Eventually, he took the time to learn his knife work to meet the expectations people had of someone nicknamed after a street blade.
But seeing Nancy’s scar, he could tell that she wasn’t able to use it like he did. It just made her more of a target to her peers and anyone who approached her.

He spent a lot of hours wondering what happened to her that she got such an injury. But as the dreams continued, he didn’t have to wonder long. Her home life and life in general was for shite. And it only brought more questions that he didn’t have answers for.

She clutched her books to the front of her body like a shield; a heavy backpack slung over her shoulders. She never seemed to stop at a locker, carrying all her books with her everywhere.

Her clothes were large on her thin frame. They were clean but threadbare. Seams from her thick sweatshirt were starting to fray. Her tennis shoes had signs of fraying as well. He was able to determine that it was winter where she was. He’d never seen her with a winter coat or boots. Her hands red and chapped when she walked into the house or school if the temperature was low enough and the wind was blowing.

He trailed just behind her. Annoyed that he’d get stuck in some of her classes. He was an okay student, could have done better for himself if he had buckled down. But he didn’t really want to apply himself when he turned into a teenager. Cutting school was more fun with his lads that learning some dried up old history lesson or boring as fuck math lesson. His brother, Andrew was the scholar of the two of them.

Now visiting Nancy in her classes, he was watching her and listening to what the teachers were droning on about and Jesus, she was smart. Half the stuff she was learning was fucking over his head. She was in advanced honors for math and science, those classes were smaller and with the nerds of the school.

Her other classes were with the regular kids. He noticed that Nancy would sit down either closest to the door or in the back along the windows if there were any. She’d stare out the window while the teachers were giving their lecture. Or she’d have her head bent over her book or notebook, scribbling and flipping pages studying.

But more often than not, it wasn’t the book for the class she was studying. He wasn’t sure what it was, it was filled with mathematical equations, charts, and graphs. Whatever it was she was intent on learning it.

Once in awhile she’d tune in to the lecture, her eyes wary as she looked over the room of her classmates as they either paid attention to the teacher or was goofing off, sending each other notes back and forth.

He was brought up short from his thoughts as Nancy became trapped by a gang of kids.

A mix of jocks with their team jackets, the girls in their cheer outfits. Perfectly groomed as if they were going to have their picture taken at any moment.

She was trapped by an asshole jock named Chris, his friends fanned out around him and Nancy as she pressed her back against the wall. Chibs didn’t like this one. While most of the kids were simply stupid in their torture, this one used his sleazy charm to get what he wanted.

He’d gotten Nancy cornered and was feeling her up. His friends watching and commenting on his performance. Impressed he was able to get hard with a skeleton freak.

His blood went cold at what he was seeing and hearing. He reached for his weapons but swore at himself when his hands came up empty. Like all the other times, he was only able to watch.
Nancy’s eyes shut tight, trying to meld into the wall. Her bookbag and notebooks fallen to the floor at her feet. Her hands unable to move as Chris leaned his whole body against her. His heavy weight propping her upright.

Tears slipping out from her lids as she tried to figure out how to stop the assault. He could see the thoughts racing across her face, but whatever she thought to try was past the point of being effective. And so she froze.

Chris kept grinding his hips into Nancy. Using Nancy’s body as his personal cum post. Chris’s friends cheering him on. Laughing and encouraging him to fuck the shit out of Nancy.

Her tense cry haunting him and he cursing that he couldn’t fucking do anything. Fucking bastard, he swore as the onlookers laughed at her reaction.

The sound of her rapist entreating and threatening all at the same time. Promising that if she lets him fuck her, he’ll protect her from everyone else. That she’ll be his girl. The added insult of him licking her scar as if it were welcome and sexy, but only added to the humiliation. The asshole grinning, knowing exactly what he was doing. Enjoying abusing her. Fucking piece of shite!

Chibs paced tightly as he was forced to watch.

The asshole eventually gave a final jerk against her, giving her a self-satisfied smile. Next time, he promised her, he’ll fuck her til she couldn’t walk as he wiped his jizz on her sweatshirt. Zipping his jeans back up.

The crowd fucking cheered their friend. Back-slapped by the guys, the girls cooing and gifting the asshole with kisses for a job well done as the whole lot of them drifted off. Several of the jocks passed over cash to the rapist. Fucking assholes. It was a bet. Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Stunned, he turned back to Nancy as she shakily grabbed her things and stumbled to the nearest bathroom. Her breathing harsh and jerky as she fought to keep from breaking down completely. He followed her, hot on her heels. Fuck. She lost her lunch and passed out on the floor.

He paced back and forth swearing and trying to wake her up only to be useless like all the other times.

A group of girls came and saw her passed out on the floor, they gave her looks of disgust. One gash gave her a kick to wake her up. Laughing when she lay limp. A bell rang and a quick rush of feet and doors banging signaled the start of the next class. The girls leaving in a wave of giggles and insults.

After a few more minutes, she roused enough to get up off the floor and over to the sink to rinse off her face and sweatshirt. Her hands shaking as she ran water over the bastard’s remnants left on her. Using the hand dryer to try and dry the wet spot.

Once she was as clean as possible she escaped into the library. Her body hunched and her legs shaking as she furtively moved through the tight aisles. She collapsed into a private corner surrounded by Ancient History.

Her hands shaking as she pulled out a book from her bag. But she simply held the book in her lap, her gaze off to the distance. Her eyes tearing up and haunted with despair and hopelessness. He once again tried to hold her as she shook in her tight ball of limbs.

He roared awake. His heart pounded, and his head was splitting open again. His body wracked in pain and stiffness. He fell asleep on the sofa. Fucking hell.
He swore at himself as he got up and stumbled into the master bedroom suite. Heading right into the bathroom. Stripping his clothes off, dropping them to the floor without a care.

The water pounded over his head. Sluicing down his trembling body as his mind wouldn’t let up on the rape he’d witnessed. Anger and despair flooding his nerves as he punched at the tiled wall.

That was it. He couldn’t spend another day or night like this.

He had to know if she was real. If she was, he had to help her. If she wasn’t, well then, that would be a whole other problem he really didn’t want to entertain.

Decision made, he flipped the shower off and ran a towel over his hair. Tying it off at his hips. Going into his home office, he sat down in front of his laptop and took a breath. He realized he didn’t know her address. He’d walked next to her back and forth from school and back more times he could count, but he didn’t fucking pay attention to the signs. But he knew the school. Knew their mascot. The name of the school was painted on walls and used on uniforms.

Googling the school name and mascot the location for the school filled his search results. He checked the photos associated with it. And he got chills looking at the building. Exactly like he dreamed it. Fuck, she was in some town in Illinois, outside of Chicago.

Staring at the search results, practically every news link was about their fucking sports teams. He recognized some of the jocks he’d seen bully Nancy. Grinning like it was their God-given right that they be treated like royalty because they won some stupid game.

She was there. She had to be. Somewhere in that school, Nancy was there. And he knew without a doubt, he was meant to find her. There was no logic or reason to his feelings. It’s like the dreams were a message sent to him by God. It was his mission to find her. To help her.

He shook his head as he chastised himself for being an idiot. For not doing this before. Letting months go on when he could have gone for her. Well, he knew better now. He was going to get her.

He pulled up a map to get to this town, highlighting the quickest route. Settled some of his bills, dressed, and packed a bag. Time pressed on him to hurry, he’d waited too long as it was.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

In the coming chapters, I'll be bending time to make this story work. Sutter created a very dense story and trying to break it up was the most difficult part in this. Ages will be fudged a bit. You'll see as the story develops. Not to worry. No under-age shenanigans here.

I'll also have some translations in the notes at the bottom of each chapter. Chibs is going to slip into his Gaelic more. All of my translations were taken from Google translate. So if I'm off, go blame Google.

And thank you for your comments, I've been working on this for so long, I'm not sure if its as good as I think it is.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Pulling into the lot, he parked and strode to the garage. Grabbing the schedule out of the mess on the desk next to his bay.

“Tig, I need a favor, think you and Happ can cover my schedules for the next couple of weeks?”

Tig looked up from the Cellica he was swearing at. “Yeah, guess so, what’s going on?”

“Gotta go help a girl.”

“What? What girl?” Tig asked as he straightened up, wiping his hands on a dirty rag slung over his shoulder. “You clear it with Clay? It’s not exactly a good time to be taking off…”

“Fuck! You think I don’t know that! God damn it.” He swore in frustration, cutting off Tig’s diatribe.

“Jesus. What the fuck is the matter with you?” Tig took mild offence.

By count of the bikes, he noted that most of the guys were here, a miracle given the time.

“Damn it, I’m calling church. Might as well tell everyone all at once.” He tossed the clipboard back onto the litter-strewn desk and started for the clubhouse. “Tig, round up the guys for church.” He called over his shoulder.

“What? Now?” Tig complained.

“Fucking now.” He ordered. Tig threw up his hands calling for Juice and Happy from their bays into the clubhouse behind him.

He stalked into the clubhouse, making a side-trip into the storage area off of the kitchen where they kept the medical kit along with the usual cleaning and kitchen supplies.

Chucky popped up next to him. “Everything okay, Chibs?”
“No. Yes. Fuck. I don’t know.” He answered as he mentally debated about grabbing some of the medical supplies. He didn’t know what he’d need when he found her. By the look of her she needed food, pure and simple. Figuring he could stop at a pharmacy there, he decided against the med kit for the trip.

“Is someone hurt?” Chucky asked, worry laced his voice as he watched him pawing through the kit.

He shook his head. “No. Everyone is fine. Go back to what you were doing.” Zipping up the kit and sliding it back where it was always kept.

“Sure, okay.” Chucky said and wandered off.

He dropped his cell in the shoebox Tig was holding at the door. Soon as he stepped inside, everyone turned their attention to him.

Tig closed the door behind him. He twisted around and growled in annoyance at the sight of the door shut. Just another obstacle to get through and be out onto the road, to find her. Jesus, what the fuck was the matter with him. It was just a door. His head felt like it was on fire. He paced and ran his hands through his hair in frustration.

“What the fuck? That time of the month?” Tig asked snidely in the face of Chibs anger.

Chibs glared at Tig and flexed his fists, doing everything he could to keep from hitting Tig in his goddamn ugly mug. Luckily, Tig was oblivious and sat in his chair. But Jax, Opie, Kozik, and Piney shot him worried looks.

He was so amped up, he couldn’t sit. And he didn’t want to spend any more time than he needed to. If he sat down, Clay or Jax would try and find ways of keeping him here longer. He wanted to leave soon as he told everyone he was leaving.

He paced the tiny space behind Piney. He mentally counted the steps from the far wall to the door and back again. He felt the weight of all the guys staring at him perplexed with his behavior. But he didn’t have the time, patience or energy to cover up the pain and panic he was in. He’d been covering as best he could while the boys were inside. Managed to get through Opie’s wedding and the Russian take down.

With the dream last night... the fucking gloves were off. There was no covering for that.

“He’s been out of sorts lately.” Opie said dryly.

“No shit.” Kozik agreed darkly.

Kozik still nursing the beat down he suffered about a week ago. Not one of his finer moments, he mentally sighed.

He dug out a joint and lit it, ignoring the guys a moment longer to try and keep his anger in check.

“What’s going on, Chibs?” Clay asked authoritatively.

Pacing in the tight room, he felt everyone’s eyes on him and felt trapped. Trying to figure out the best way to tell them what was going on without sounding he was off his fucking rocker. And all he wanted to do was get on his bike and go. Just fucking go. Christ.

“I know the timing is fucked right now. But I have to go to Illinois and help some girl there. I’m
going to be gone two, maybe three weeks.” He bit out.

There he said it. He didn’t bother looking at the boys, he headed for the door. His blood rushing through him, he felt ready for the ride, for the fight to save the girl in his dreams.

The guys all yelled for him to wait, halting him after he was only a step and hand on door knob away from leaving. Pressing his lips tight in annoyance for the delay. He should have known that they would hold him up with their questions.

“Whoa, hold on, what the fuck you talking about?” Clay asked above the din.

“What girl?” Jax chimed in concern as his blue eyes swept over him.

“Does this have to do with your anger issues of late?” Kozik asked amidst the din. The guys looked from Kozik to him in silent regard. Their eyes demanding answers.

He groaned and tried to calm down, running his hand through his hair massaging his scalp to try and alleviate the pounding at his temples.

“It’s going to sound crazy, I’m half-thinking I’m making this shite up myself and need to check myself into some shrink ward.”

“What is it, Chibs?” Piney asked.

“Ever since the car bomb, I’ve been having these headaches. Its also when the dreams started. Every night, I go and dream about this girl.” He explained waving a hand around for emphasis.

The guys looked at him and each other in comical disbelief. Not sure if he was pulling their legs or not.

“The headaches started small. But now…” He broke off, shifting uncomfortably. Seeing the guys look at him in concern, he felt he had to tell them how bad it gets.

“I’m ashamed to say that there has been more than a few times I’ve thought about eating a bullet just to end the pain.” He confessed, his eyes on the door that separated him from the road. He couldn’t look at them.

The humor dying through the guys around the table.

“Chibs…” Jax said in stricken shock.

At Jax’s reaction, he faced the guys. Seeing the reaction to his situation spreading to the rest of the guys. Well, not Clay.

Clay was sitting back and calculating, wheels turning behind his steel-blue eyes. Giving nothing away. But worry laced his heavy brow, at least. Whether it was for his well-being or for the complications he was becoming for the business of the club he wasn’t sure. The way Clay has been force feeding the cartel down the club’s throats since they got out, he was leaning towards the club complication side of the argument.

“But whatever pain I’ve been having…its nothing compared to the pain this girl is in. I can’t stop thinking about her. If she’s real or not. If not, then I’m definitely losing my mind. If she is…”

He looked up from the floor to his brothers. “I can’t spend another day or night not doing something to help her. I can’t.”
Taking another drag on the joint to try and quell the anxiety and fear flooding him. The sense of time pressed on him. He needed to be on the road already. He might be too late, given how thin she was. He felt the guys watching him and it only set him on edge further. His eyes staring at the door.

“Hang on, did you go see a doctor? You did knock your head pretty bad with that blast. Then again with the truck going up in Belfast. Maybe you’ve got something going on there.” Bobby asked.

“Aye. Several. Everything is fine according to them. Ran some scans and gave me some painkillers that should knock out a fucking elephant...didn’t work.” He waved the medical issue aside, impatiently.

“This…” he waved the joint at them, “...isn’t working. Whiskey...nothing fucking works. I’m going fucking mad.” He paced angrily.

“Jesus, why didn’t you say something before?” Kozik asked, his voice horrified.

He gave Kozik an annoyed look. “And what exactly would you have done? Force me into the ring, again? Tell me to go off with a bevy of croweaters? Drink, drug, and fuck myself into a stupor? Fuck you.” He accused at not just Kozik, but Piney and Opie as well.

The three of them shifting their eyes to each other and he knew that they've been doing just that in dealing with him of late.

“We just wanted to help. You've been more unhinged lately.” Piney explained warily.

“Dog threatened to walk off the job when you went after him over him borrowing one of your tools.” Opie added.

“What the fuck? Chibs?” Clay’s admonishment adding to the overall confrontation in the room.

He hissed and stared up at the ceiling. His body was tight with tension and he forced himself to take another deep drag on the joint. Holding the smoke for as long as he could. Trying to stay calm.

“Dog didn’t ask me to borrow that tool. I didn’t know he took it until I’d spent forty-five goddamn minutes looking for it! I was fucking pissed and wanted to rip my fucking head off because of the pain. I don’t have any patience anymore. Even now, standing here telling all of you this... I just want to tell you all to fuck off and fucking leave. My head is already on the fucking road. The fact that I’m not, is pissing me off even more. The fact you are questioning me over leaving for a few weeks is pissing me off.”

His eyes landed back on the guys. “It’s taking everything in me to stand here right now.”

He saw Happy staring at him as if he’d never seen him before. Like he was a threat that needed to be dealt with. And wasn’t sure he could go up against him. And given how he was feeling lately, he’d probably kill Happy or anyone who stood in his way.

He took another draw on the joint. Distracting himself from the thought that he was scaring the shit out of Happy. He was falling back into a role he thought he’d put behind him. God damn it.

“Chibs, if we’d known, we would have helped.” Bobby said, his forehead furrowed with concern, his eyes glancing around to the guys for confirmation of what he was saying.

He shook his head in frustration and started pacing again. “Jesus Christ. You don’t get it. More than half of you were cooling your heels in Stockton. While you were gone...it was me, Ope,
Kozik, and Pinney making things work out here.” Pointing to the men in turn.

Pressing his lips tight and looking at Ope, regret that he had to bring this up. The rest of the guys didn’t know what it took to keep shit together.

“And sorry Ope, but with you and Lyla planning your wedding, you’ve been busy. Pinney was holding things down with the garage and the prospects. So, it really was just me and Kozik running the guns back and forth. Which was fine. We made it work.” He waved an arm back and forth.

“But, I’ve waited as long as I could. I can’t do it anymore. The things I’m seeing of her...what she’s suffering...she’s being beaten and abused by everyone. At school and at home. Nobody is doing anything to help her. No one.”

The guys slid questioning looks with Opie, Pinney, and Kozik, whom all shrugged or nodded with what Chibs was saying at how the work had been divvied up while the rest of them were in Stockton. Jax slumped in his chair, as he realized the depth of how much has been going on while they were inside. Shooting him a worried look.

He paced and smoked as he came to a decision of how much more to tell them.

“My grandparents lived up in the Highlands. Me and my brother would spend holidays at their farm growing up, my grandmother would tell us stories about banshees.”

His voice lowered and fell deeper into his brogue at the memory of being on the farm. Fuck, he missed being back in Scotland. Simpler times. The memory of that farmhouse...Nancy would love it there he was sure.

“Banshees?” Tig questioned.

He saw the guys confused looks. “Ghost stories.” He clarified. “I never put much stock in it. Just something to scare us to keep us out of trouble.”

“You’re out now and I have to find her. The only thing I haven’t done is go and find her. I can’t get her out of my head. She’s fucking haunting me like a banshee. I can still hear her screams. I won’t be any good to the club until this is resolved. I have to go before its too late.”

He looked to the door again as the room fell silent again.

The guys not sure what to believe as their most steadfast of brothers admit to the hell he’s been going through.

“You’re dreaming of her in school? How old is she, exactly?” Juice asked.

“High school. From her classes, she’s got to be a junior or senior. So around seventeen or eighteen I’m guessing.”

“This has been going on since the car bomb?” Clay asked, questioning him. As if he was lying about all this.

“If she is real and this is happening to her, why isn’t she leaving or going to the teachers or the cops even?” Opie asked concern in his eyes.

“Chan eil fios agam!” He exploded. Pacing angrily as he tried to calm himself down. Worry of what was happening to her now as he was fucking trapped in this meeting.
“Hey! English!” Clay reminded him with a sharp look.

“I don’t know!” He hissed, glaring back at Clay. Running a hand through his hair.

The guys jerked back at his vehemence. Swearing at himself to keep it together a little bit longer. He took a breath.

“I don’t know.” He said more calmly. “Something is keeping her there or she can’t get out. Which is a real probability. Her step-mother and father, they lock her down in the fucking basement. I’d take solitary over that fucking basement.”

“The teachers that I saw, they don’t do shite. Just fucking turning their heads the other way or give her grief for causing problems in school when she didn’t do shite to deserve the bullshit that is going on. The kids...fucking *cheered* when she was knocked unconscious by some asshole, that was from a few days ago. Last night, another jacked off on her, in front of all his asshole friends, promising to rape her next time. Fucking bastard, want to carve the skin off that one.” He said darkly.

“For some reason, that God himself only knows why, I’m dreaming about her every night for months. There has to be a reason for it. I’ve tried to protect her, talk to her, but I fucking can’t through the dreams!” He panicked, his body tight and his eyes filled with fear and anger as he looked at his brothers.

“And when I’m awake...I’m fucking worried over her. Wondering what is going on when I’m not there. Fucking out of my head in fear that next time I dream, I’ll find her dead.” Tense silence fell over the room as he ranted.

“You say you’re seeing all this in your dreams...how the fuck do you know she’s even real?” Clay countered.

He knew Clay didn’t want him leaving. But he was resolute, nothing Clay said would change his mind. This meeting was him just telling the club he was taking off for a bit.

“The town’s real. The school is real. Googled it this morning. I feel it in my bones. She’s real. And she’ll be dead if someone doesn’t step in and fucking help her.”

“And that’s a sad story.” Clay said patronizingly. “I’m sure there are thousands of other kids in the world who are in the same or worse conditions. It doesn’t mean you can just go running off and save them, too.”

He stood staring at Clay. Jax and the guys all tennis-matching their looks from him to Clay and back as he stared down Clay. His blatant disregard for his pain, his plea to let him go. And he fucking knew why he didn’t want him leaving. Needed him to make sure this fucking cartel deal happened with the Irish. And it was partly his fucking fault for opening that door.

How did the club get like this? He felt sick in disgust. Jax, Opie, Bobby, Piney all looked stricken at the fight Clay was putting up. Trying to keep him here just to keep the club business kosher.

Running a hand over his forehead and through his hair, gathering his thoughts. Everyone was looking at him with varying degrees of shock and worry. Opie and Kozik sliding him careful looks. Wary of what he was going to do.

He’d surprised everyone with all of this, he acknowledged to himself. It was rare for him to rant and rave like this. Preferring his own council. Not one to go running to the boys for advice. He was the loyal Son. Doing the shit that needed to be done everyday without much complaint. He didn’t
like to air his dirty laundry. Enough of his laundry was aired when he first came to Charming. Filleted open by Jimmy’s knives and the Kings excommunicating him from his home and family. He missed JT. He was the one he could talk to. Know that what was said was kept between them. And knew that if JT were still President, he wouldn’t hesitate in letting him go. In fact, would be packing his shit up to go with him.

The silence grew as everyone watched him, waiting to see what he was going to say or do next.

He stubbed out the joint on the floor as he pulled out a cigarette and lit up, taking his time. He looked at the guys around the reaper table gravely.

Breathing in the bitter tobacco, his eyes narrowed on Clay.

“We went to war when Gemma was attacked.” Breathing out a plume of smoke through his nostrils.

Shock rippled around the table. He knew bringing up Gemma would get their attention. That he was dead serious about needing to find her. If this were Gemma or even Tara...Clay and Jax wouldn’t hesitate to go find them. Fuck, it was Tara after they got back from Belfast. It was the entire club at their backs in their times of need.

But when it was him, Clay fought him on it. Fucking asshole. Doubt about Clay and his leadership and this deal he cooked up was raising red flags. It was too soon and he didn’t have all the information about the deal to make his own determination, but it was on his radar. But first he had to go find Nancy.

“Gemma had us to avenge her honor. Nancy...she has no one. I think...I’m meant to find her. That God is sending me visions of her. The longer I don’t look for her the headaches get worse.”

“Gemma is our queen. We were...are bound to protect those in our family.” Juice piped up.

He shot Juice a searing glare, Juice hunched down in his chair at his look.

“I’m fucking getting worse by the day. If I keep going like this, it’s going to kill me. Story goes about banshees...they are a harbinger of death. Warning the living that death is near with their screams.”

He noted the uncomfortable shift the guys had as they listened to him, looking to each other. Sending each other worried looks.

“I’m going.” Chibs stared down Clay. This wasn’t even a negotiation to him. “I’ll fucking strip my patch if it comes to it.”

“Zobelle and Weston were real people in Charming who attacked Gemma and this club! Not some wacked out dreams your head is making up!” Clay fought.

He slipped out of his kutte and tossed it on the reaper table as Clay finished ranting at him.

“Jesus, Chibs.” Jax, Bobby, and Piney all sputtered practically in unison.

The silent battle stretched between him and Clay, his message as clear as he can make it. It wasn’t just his membership in the club that he’d strip.

He didn’t wait for Clay’s approval or not. He was done talking. Done trying to convince Clay that he had to do this. The need to get out on the road rushed over him again. And he strode
purposefully to the door.

“Shit.” Jax swore. “Chibs, hold up. Take Tig with you.”

The guys lifted their eyes up at Jax’s pronouncement in surprise. He turned to face Jax. His back at the door. Glaring hard at his VP for holding him up. For trying to foist a babysitter on him.

Clay stared at Jax angrily. That Jax made a decision unilaterally without his approval. Jax simply stared back at Clay challengingly. Interesting, he thought to himself.

Tig’s head swivelling from Chibs to Jax and settling on Clay for his take on Jax’s plan with a shrug of his shoulders.

“I can move faster alone. Tig was going to help cover for me in the garage.”

“Ope and I will cover for you two. I don’t want you out there alone unhinged like this.” Jax ordered.

Jax sending Clay a hard look, daring him to contradict his order.

“Take Tig. Do what you need to do and get back here, brother.” Clay nodded finally. “And put that kutte back on.”

He seethed at the addition to his trip. But the stern look of the guys told him that they weren’t going to let him go without one of them.

“Fuck, fine. Pack. Be ready to go in ten or I’m leaving your ass.” He hissed, pointing a finger at Tig.

“Road trip, awesome.” Tig said with a light voice, treating this trip as if it were a fucking vacation. The guys chuckled at Tig’s humor. The tension in the room dissipated with Tig’s lame joke. Fucking nightmare this is going to be.

Piney stood up and handed him his kutte. Which he put back on.

“Take care of yourself, Chibs.” Piney said gruffly.

He gave the old man a nod. The others were up out of their chairs as the meeting broke. Tig still giggling and talking with Clay, Bobby, and Jax. Fucking waste of time.

“Hurry the fuck up, ye’ bastard.” He threatened as he burst through the blasted door. Finally. He ignored Chucky and the few croweaters as they stared after him, striding out of the clubhouse.

Double checking that everything was strapped on tight to his Harley. The guys followed after him to wish him a safe trip. Hugs passed around. Normally, he appreciated their concern but the longer he had to wait the more angry he got with the delay.

Gemma ventured out the garage office to investigate the commotion. “What’s going on?”

He rechecked his bike one more time as Clay and Jax filled her in. Her dark eyes looking at him in suspicion.

“You’re leaving? Now? What the fuck are you thinking?” She railed at him.

Her hands on her hips and demanding answers as she got in his face. The sound of her voice
ramping up his headache again.

“Gemma, since when do you dictate what I do or don’t do?” He glared down at her.

“Since you’ve obviously lost your goddamn mind. The club needs you, Chibs. You can’t be gallivanting across the country searching for some gash that you’ve made up in your head.”

He saw red, staring down at Gemma. He must have made a move because Jax slid closer to Gemma, his hand going to his mother's arm. Pulling her back, away from the danger she put herself in by getting into his face.

“Ma, he’s going. Back off.” Jax interjected quickly.

At Jax’s direction, Gemma softened her stance and her tone. Realizing that the decision had been made and that nothing she said was going to deter him from leaving.

But her words left him feeling uneasy. He’d never felt this way about Gemma before. He’d even taken advice from her. But now, listening to her, he was angry at her for trying to keep him from leaving. More like ordering him, as if she had the power to do so.

Gemma grabbed him into a hug. He was frustrated, his head hurt, and Gemma wanted a hug.

He felt trapped, his skin wanted to crawl off him the longer she held onto him. He fought the urge to throw her off him when she pulled back from the hug and still gripped his arms, staring at him with her dark, heavily made up eyes.

“You take care of yourself, sweetheart.”

He knew that she expected a kiss on the cheek. He’d done it before with her when she was grabbing onto him, she does it to all the guys. Mostly to Clay and Jax. And he’d always given her that kiss and promise to do what she says.

But all he could see was Nancy. Her thin frame, wide purple eyes haunting him. Felt if he gave in and kissed Gemma...it would be betraying Nancy.

Anxiety filled him the longer he stared down at Gemma, willing her to let go of him. Her eyes getting hard as she noted he wasn’t reciprocating her hug and kiss.

“Let go.” He hissed at Gemma. As if by her holding onto him, he’d give up this quest. He saw her eyes flare in anger at his tone. He stared down at her, forcing himself to not throw her off him.

Thankfully, Tig burst out of the clubhouse, bags in hand. Everyone’s attention moved to him as he jogged over to his bike and the guys. Gemma released him as her head turned to Tig, watching him strap on his bags.

As soon as he was free of Gemma's grip, he felt like he could breathe again. Fuck, what the hell was going on with him? Another question he didn’t have an answer for.

“About fucking time. Hurry the fuck up.” He growled at Tig.

“Jesus, don’t get your panties in a wad. You realize its winter in Illinois, right?” Tig rolled his eyes in frustration over Chibs ‘no shit’ glare.

“Tig’s going with you! What the hell are you thinking?” Gemma shrilled at them anew.

“Ma...Tig’s going. It's a club decision.” Warning his mother to back off.
He was annoyed with the drama of him leaving. His head already thinking of his route and being on the road. Not here, passing the gauntlet of goodbye wishes and fighting with Gemma of him and Tig leaving. His body vibrating with the need to move already. He couldn’t take it one more second.

He mounted his bike, firing it up with a loud roar, drowning out Gemma’s voice as she argued with Clay and Jax.

Gemma hauled Tig into a hug and he couldn’t stand to watch it. Wasting more time with this goodbye shit. He should have just left from the house he decided to himself as he rolled out the parking lot.

Tig catching up to him a few minutes later, flashed him the finger. He just laid down on the gas, moving faster to put some serious miles on as soon as possible. There wasn’t any time to waste.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I don’t know = Chan eil fios agam
They rode all day and into the night. Pressing the speed limits. Stopping only for gas and food. And when Tig stole his keys, they stopped for some sleep. In retaliation, he woke Tig an hour before the sun broke the horizon. Regardless of what time they turned in.

He was glad for the dreams, in a strange way. Every dream was assurance that she was still alive yet also another horror she was suffering.

One dream he watched Nancy as she diverted the gang of jocks away from bullying a special needs kid. Putting herself in their way, allowing the kid to get away. He was pissed that she did that. He understood why, but he was worried for her health.

He didn’t know why she was always passing out. Someone touching her and she fainted right in front of them. He could see that she struggled to not pass out. Lurching to and fro as she searched out a place to be safe. The library was one of her favorite places.

She didn’t eat much as far as he could tell. He saw her eating oatmeal for breakfast, taking the cash from the kitchen counter for her school lunch. Left out for her every morning she had school.

At school for lunch, she bought a peanut butter sandwich, piece of fruit, and a bottle of water. Getting only a few coins back, which she hoarded. Once she had enough coins, she hiked to the nearest grocery store and bought an economy size jar of peanut butter. If she was lucky, to find some canned vegetables on sale.

Hiding her purchases in her backpack to smuggle into the house. Once in the basement, she tucked the jars up into the floor joists. When he first saw her doing that, once he got over being pissed over her having to do that in the first place, he realized that it was the perfect hiding place for her stash. Her step-mother nor her father ever found it. People always forget to look up, he mused.

But even with her secret stash, she was way too thin. He’d walked next to her as she left the house for school. Walking with her regardless of the weather. He saw school buses stopping along her route but she never got on. She actively veered away from people. Avoiding crowded spaces. Some of the time, she was successful in her endeavors. But it was like she had a fucking target on her back. People just gravitated to her. He couldn’t understand why they had such hatred or fear of her.

When she got home from school, her father, Roger, would grill her. Slapping a thick set of papers in front of her. At first, asking her to sign the papers. But she refused to do so. Looking at him, “It isn’t yours.” She would tell him.

With her refusal, the yelling started. Claire, her step-mother slapping her. Yelling at her to do what her father is telling her to do. Still refusing to sign whatever papers they were fighting over, Claire would end up dragging Nancy by the arm, by her hair, over to the basement door.

Nancy stumbling and grabbing for the handrail as she was pushed down the wooden stairs. The door slamming shut, the sound of a lock snapping into place. Nancy left there, staring up at the door and up through the floor above her. Her eyes tracking the movement and talking going on between her father and Claire. Sometimes, Nancy passed out on the stair. That was the worst time. Watching her pass out, left vulnerable in her state.

Nancy’s passing out, he guessed was probably from the starvation.

Fuck, he had to move faster.
They passed over the mountains and hitting the endless plains of the prairie states, the wind pushing them along as if to help them get closer to their destination all the quicker.

As they drew nearer to the Missouri and Illinois border, the road turned hilly crossing over the Mississippi River, to turn flat again. The cold air and grey sky's reminded him of Scotland. If it were only raining, it would complete the effect. Tig complaining the whole way regarding the cold.

He just ignored him most of the time. Once in a fit of exasperation, “If ye’ can’t handle a bit of cold then turn the fuck around and go home, ye’ pussy.”

To which, Tig rolled his eyes and flipped him a ‘fuck you’.

With each mile they drew closer to Naperville, Chibs felt the urgency press on harder. The headaches growing more intense. He smoked weed at every stop. It didn’t stop the dreams, just made him not care so much for the pain.

As he rode hard, each mile he raced to her he saw her eyes grow more distant as she drew further and further inside herself. Watching her force herself to get up in the morning. Her groan as she hefted her book bag filled with all of her books. The weight hunching her over as the bag settled across her back.

Dreaming of her hiding up in the dusty corner of the library. Her limbs folded into her body as she wrote in a notebook absently. Give up after a few minutes to simply fall asleep and nap.

He knew, from his medical training, that her body was stressed to the max with the starvation. The way she walked everywhere. Forced to participate in her gym class. Every motion was expenditure of calories that she didn’t fucking have. Her body attacking itself for fuel to keep going.

And when she bedded down for the night. Her eyes tight with pain and exhaustion. Her head turning to the floor above as she listened to her father and step-mother going at it. Either yelling at each other or fucking.

His heart drumbeating with every mile that drew him closer to her.

He ignored Tig when he called back to Charming, checking in with the club. Tig pressed jerky and water at him whenever they were refueling, Tig’s ice blue eyes worried. His face, too, drawn with the stress of the hard ride.

Exhaustion beat at both of them. He felt like his body was made of stone. The pounding of the road and the bike, stripping his body down to bone and hard muscle. But despite the exhaustion, he felt he was being prepared for the war to come. He wanted to be ready for her.

He sighed to himself at how idiotic he sounded even to himself.
He nearly missed the exit sign for Naperville, waving at Tig for the exit. They pulled off the highway and pulled into a Red Roof Inn just off the exit.

“I’ll get a couple of rooms. Shower, get some food, and we’ll figure out where to track this chick down.” Tig said.

“I have to find her.” His body still vibrating with the bike even though they’d stopped.

He started to right his bike up when Tig grabbed his key from the ignition. Chibs growled lowly at him. Tig looking at him with a mixture of exhaustion, fear, and annoyance.

“Chibs, it’s fucking eleven at night. Unless you have her home address, we can’t get her now. Better to get some sleep and clean up. We’ll find her in the morning. Come on. I’m exhausted and you look like shit. Your girl will probably run screaming the other way when she takes one look at you, worse, pass out from a whiff of you.”

He listened to Tig, glaring at him for taking his fucking key again. If he wasn’t a brother, he’d have decked him. “Asshole. Fine. Get the rooms, I’ll get the bags. Hurry the fuck up.” He threatened Tig. “And give me my keys.”

Turning towards the motel office, Tig shook his head, muttering to himself as he tossed his keys back to him.

He felt marginally better after the shower, washing the grime off his face. Blearily blinking at himself in the mirror.

“Chibs, food!” Tig yelled.

“Aye.” He sighed as he pulled on fresh clothes, collapsing into one of the chairs at the small table Tig had set the pizza on. He even managed to get some cold beers.

“Thanks, Tig.” Chibs said, rubbing at his temples.

“No problem. So you know a last name for the girl?”

“Fraser. There’s at least twenty Frasers in the phone book in Naperville. I know the school and what she looks like.”

“Not her house?”

He shook his head. “Her house is a basement, it’s all I know. I could probably find it from the landmarks I see when she’s walking to and from school.”

“Tomorrow’s Monday, so she’ll have school.”

“Aye.” He said tiredly.

“Okay. So we find her there. Been a long time since I’ve seen the inside of a high school. It’ll be a blast checking out the cheerleaders and their short skirts. There’s cheerleaders, right?” Tig asked.
He sent Tig an annoyed glare to shut him up about the cheerleaders.

“What?” Tig asked bewilderingly as he caught his dark glare.

“Jesus, the cheerleaders are one of the main ring leaders in making her life a misery.” He pointed out.

Tig just looked at him like he wasn’t sure if he wanted to believe what he was saying. It pissed him off that Tig was questioning what he was telling him.

“They’re all fucking assholes, all of ‘em. Even the teachers and her parents. I wasn’t fucking kidding, she doesn’t have a single friend. Fuck, I don’t know what I’m doing.”

“She probably has no idea who I am and probably will pass out seeing the two of us rolling up on her. If she’s even real.” he said, suddenly depressed. “Christ, what the fuck am I doing?” He questioned himself. He’d spent the last few days riding across the country to save this girl. His mind solely occupied with getting here. Now that he was here, he wasn’t sure what the hell he was going to do exactly.

“Hey, we’ll play it by ear. Check it out. You just need some sleep is all. You’ll see, it’ll be better in the morning.” Tig bolstered. “Besides, you crazy fucker, you didn’t drag my ass across the country in the middle of winter for nothing.”

He gave Tig a scathing look. Debating if he should argue with him some more or not. As entertaining that might be, he was tired and going twenty rounds with Tig would only make him more tired and pissed. But Tig did have a point. Fuck, he hated it when Tig was right. “You know...its extremely disturbing when you’re the rational one.”

Tig tilted his head and had a shit-eating grin on his face. “What the fuck do you know, I could be making shit up to tell the guys when we get back. Chasing after some ghost your granny told you about.” Tig tossed back the last of his beer. “Get some sleep, brother. Tomorrow, we’ll go get your girlfriend. And she can hand you your balls back.”

Tig escaped into his room, ignoring his flying finger to Tig’s flippant humor.

He fell onto the bed. The traffic noise filtered through the thin walls of the motel. Before he knew it he’d dropped off.

He was in Nancy’s grey cell. She was huddled over the card table studying in the harsh glare of the bare bulb over her head. She was shaking slightly as she was writing in a spiral notebook. Watching as she rubbed her eyes and closed up the notebook, stuffing it into her bookbag.

She stepped up on her cot, reaching up above her, pulled out a jar of peanut butter from the floor joists. He watched her stare at the jar of food, trying to decide if she should have some or not. Deciding not, putting it back up into its hiding spot. Jesus Christ.

He didn’t know how she kept going. He would have blown this place a long time ago. Hell, he did when he was a brash teenager. Thought he knew better than his own parents. Got pinched by the peelers. Judge giving him a choice of jail or the army.

Chose the army, fell out from there. Went to Belfast and joined up the IRA. Met Fiona, married her. Had Kerrianne. Then Jimmy took it all away from him. Banished from Ireland, McGee shipped him to Charming so he’d live. Start over as a Son.

Was pissed angry about the whole thing, nearly flew back to Belfast to take out Jimmy for what
he’d done; several times. JT and Piney talking sense to him. Telling him that if Jimmy knew he was on his way there, or was spotted in Belfast, Fi and Kerrianne would suffer for it.

He knew what that meant. More than the club did. He waited, planned, watched, then one day it all came to fruition. Thanks to Jackie, he was able to take his revenge on the man who had once been his friend. Man who turned on him, stolen everything from him. Lording over him that he’d been defeated. Watched as Jimmy’s eyes fade to dark as he thrust his knives into his throat. Twisting them to cut the arteries and tendons. Jimmy falling to his feet, bleeding out.

He and Fiona talked more after. Things still unsettled in Belfast. And from Kerrianne’s reaction, she barely knew him. Had her life in Belfast with her friends and school. Time and distance cooled his and Fi’s love to the point where they were no more than friends. The passion they held for each other died.

Sighing to himself remembering the last time they hooked up. They had changed too much. Fiona’s voice ringing in his ears, his heart crushed with her telling him she wasn’t his old lady. Hadn’t been for a very long time. That he had no right in telling her what to do anymore, even if it was for her safety.

Realizing that his hopes and dreams of her and Kerrianne coming back to him were just foolish notions on his part. After he got rid of Jimmy, he and Fiona finalized their divorce. Both agreeing that being married was pointless with him in Charming and her in Belfast. And Fi needed to be in Belfast for Kerrianne. He had his life here in Charming and the club.

Fi and Kerrianne held a space in his heart and soul, but he was alone. A free man with his own life. A life that was unraveling and all-consuming with Nancy now. A girl who if she were in her right mind would tell him to piss off.

Nancy settled into her cot. He sat next to her, holding her hand. She sighed and fell asleep. He watched over her, a sense of peace filled him as he held her as best he could. It was such an odd feeling, to be twisted up so much over a girl in a dream.

“Tomorrow, mo chridhe.” He whispered to her.

Chapter End Notes

Translation:
My heart = mo chridhe
He woke with a start. Today was the day. He quickly showered and dressed.

Knocking on the connecting door to Tig’s room. “Tig! Get dressed I’m getting some food, back in ten.”

“Coffee! Make sure you get coffee.” Tig muffled back.

The main road was heavy with traffic. Dodging around half-melted snowpiles, he hiked over in the cool morning air over to a Dunkin’ Donuts at a strip mall across the street from the motel.

Balancing the tray of food and coffee in one hand as he unlocked and opened the motel door.

Tig rushed out of his bathroom, fresh from a shower and snagged one of the coffees and a sprinkle donut before he was able to set the food down on the table. Colorful sprinkles fell into Tig’s goatee and down the front of his shirt.

“Pig.” He chided Tig. Tossing him some napkins.

“Oink, oink.” Tig joked with a roll of his eyes.

The TV on they watched the local news as they finished their donuts and coffee.

“Still dreaming of her?” Tig asked as he brushed the last of the donut crumbs off his shirt.

“Aye.” He said plainly as he winced as his headache ramped up.

“How’s your head?”

“Like I want to rip the fucker off.”

“Well, let's go get her.” Tig said, standing up and automatically checking his weapons.

“Let’s try and not scare the shit out of the locals. I don’t want to have to bail you out. Jesus, you’re on release, you shouldn’t even be here. Fuck. What was I thinking letting you come?” He muttered eyeing Tig as he rigged himself up for bear.

“If she’s been beat on, then I don’t care what the locals think. They can fuck all. And fuck the parole. Now, quit stalling. Christ, you’re a nervous nelly.”
He checked his own weapons and double checked the map to the school as they walked to their bikes. Settling his shades on as the sun broke through the clouds.

“Let’s do this.” He said.

Their bikes roared and rumbled as they rode into town.

They slowly took in the upscale downtown area, a lot of high-end shops and restaurants. One shop catered to just gourmet dog food and whatever else crap a dog needs. He shook his head in disbelief. The shit people did never ceased to amaze him.

People on the sidewalks turned to look at them from the noise of the bikes, rattling off the brick and stone of the old gentrified buildings. He eyed the people, seeing if he recognized anyone. But to no avail.

Tig, gave his bike a bit more throttle than needed, setting off the alarm on the SUV parked next to them from the vibration. More heads turned towards them, ever the show off. He shot Tig a warning look, Tig just shrugged and gave him a sly grin.

They found the large sprawling building that was the high school that Nancy attended. Pulling into the drive and rode past the large numerous athletic fields covered in a few inches of snow. The football stadium was massive. It boasted a fucking jumbo-tron. He never got into the American football. Bunch of wankers padded up to the gills. He didn’t think they would have a fucking chance going up against real footballers out of Glasgow.

The parking lot was filled with cars taking up every square space available. Even along the drive from the lots back to the exit/entrance were cars parallel parked. The majority of the cars were the higher-end brands. A lot of SUV’s mixed with sports cars.

They parked up on the wide sidewalk, disregarding the hunt for a space to park. Snow had been shoveled into mountainous piles at the end of the lot. The curbs were slushy with small patches of snow missed in the plowing. Sidewalks were wet with a residue of salt that crunched under their tires and feet as they got off the bikes. The building was just as he dreamed it. It felt surreal.

“This it?” Tig asked.

“Fuck.” He swore. “I must be losing my mind.” He tried to get his mind to match up the dream world with the reality.

Tig gave him a grin, “Well, that’s a given.” Earning him a glare. “Come on, let’s check it out.” Tig started forward with a bounce.

He quickly joined Tig as he stepped through the door. The sun behind them, sent their shadows across the linoleum floor of the wide hallway. The walls off-white with accent colors of orange and blue, the school colors.

Looking at his watch as the bell rang through the halls. Realizing, Nancy should be heading for the cafeteria.

They woke up late for the start of the school day and with the size of the school, he was sure they had to break up the lunch breaks over a couple of hours just so everyone had a break.

Which meant the earliest lunch started at eleven. It was just past that now.

The halls were swarming with teenagers, heads turning to stare at him and Tig. Their voices a
“Which way?” Tig asked with a frown, as he turned and twisted back and forth checking out the two directions they could go.

As his eyes took in the large hallways and echoing metallic noise of lockers being slammed shut amid the laughter and teenagers talking rapidly with each other. Packs of students flowed up and down the halls before them.

“Should we head to the office? Say you’re an uncle or something?” Tig suggested. “Chibs?” He asked when he didn’t answer him.

He recognized the decorations on the walls for the upcoming pep rally.

“No. This way.” Ignoring the direction signs for the administration offices, he turned left. He tucked his shades into a pocket of his leather jacket, stripping off his leather gloves as they moved through the throng.

“What? Okay...but where exactly are we going?” Tig pestered him.

His heavy boots struck the linoleum floor with purpose compared with the squeak of sneakers as teenagers parted for him and Tig.

“Just fucking watch my six.” His eyes glared hard at anyone who dared to try and stop him.

Tig beside him furthering their way down the hall. “Was it just me? Or was there not two Starbucks within three blocks of each other coming here?”

“Focus, Tig.”

“Jesus, they were on the same fucking street. These people can’t manage to walk to just one?” Tig continued to pester him over the fucking Starbucks.

“Tig, for God’s sake! We aren’t here to discuss why this shitty town has two fucking Starbucks!”

Tig shrugged and fell in line with him down the hallway.

The noise level rose as they approached the lunchroom. Students moving amongst the tables, teachers barely keeping control over the mass of teenagers; or simply not even trying as it was a futile effort.

He halted abruptly as they stepped through a double set of doors. The smell of overcooked food hung over the air of the large room. Long rows of tables lined either side of the room. Two ends had the cafeteria lines. Smaller stations sold beverages, chips, and cookies.

A kid with a case of raging acne passed in front of them with plastic looking pizza slices. Christ, if that’s what they served, no wonder Nancy got the peanut butter sandwiches. Everything else looked like shit.

“Jesus, this place is a fucking zoo.” Tig muttered next to him.

He searched the weaving mass of people. He ignored the obvious cliques that were already huddled at their unseen ranking of hierarchy. He knew she wouldn’t be caught dead in the middle of them.

He checked his watch again, searching the room.
“Do you see her? Maybe she didn’t come to school today?” Tig offered as he searched with him. Even though he had no clue what Nancy looked like.

He took a couple of steps further, deeper into the crowd.

And there she was across the room, paying for her lunch. His heart skipped a beat as he stared at her. Blinking and looking again, making sure he was actually seeing her.

“Holy Mary, mother of Christ. She’s real. Fuck! She’s fucking real.” He said hoarsely.

His eyes pinned on the girl that had been haunting him for months. And she’s so fucking thin. Worry etched inside him as he couldn’t take his eyes off her.

Tig sighted in the direction he was looking at. “That’s her? At the register? Shit, she’s practically just skin and bone.”

“Aye.” He breathed with a thickening accent as he felt his eyes prickling in tears. His emotions a swirling mass ready to overwhelm him.

“I told ye’. Fuck. Everything in the dreams, they have to be real. Oh my God.” He said hoarsely to Tig. Unable to tear his eyes away from the girl that haunted him for so long.

His heart pounded, as his feet started him forward before his brain registered that he was even moving. The pull was undeniable. He had to get to her.

He moved faster, weaving and dodging through the throng, beelining right for her. Growling in frustration as he kept moving, trying to keep her in his line of sight but the crowd kept his sight of her bobbing in and out.

Tig keeping pace with him. Watching his back, as they crossed through the crowded room.

He pushed at an idiot teenager wearing a football jersey, who stood in his path and didn’t move out of his way fast enough. “A-mach à mo shlighe.” He threatened, as the kid stumbled back out of his way.

“What?” The teenager stuttered stupidly, but he was already moving past him.

He and Tig were untamed predators let inside a pack of sheep. Even the few adults were wise enough to stay out of his and Tig’s way.

About half-way across the room, the kids started noticing their presence. Ignoring the sudden attention that was being turned to him and Tig as they moved through the sea of teenagers. His eyes only on her.

He saw her juggle a little with her lunch and her heavy bookbag. Her head lifting up in confusion as she noticed the change of volume in the room, her eyes sweeping the crowd.

Her eyes widened in shock as she froze in place, her eyes locked on him coming towards her. The items she’d been trying to grab hold of, dropped to the floor. Her bookbag making a heavy thud. The plastic tray clattering sharply, drawing the attention of the entire lunchroom. The kids nearest her clapped and laughed at her clumsiness.

“Way to go, Concentration Camp!” Someone yelled sarcastically off to his right.

Nancy didn’t react to the insult, her eyes pinned on him. He heard Tig swearing next to him,
keeping pace. But everything and everyone faded into the background as he drew near her.

She took a couple of steps towards him. Her face pale in shock.

He was afraid she was going to pass out. The closer he got to her the faster he moved. Needing to get to her before she hit the floor.

He felt a higher power pushing him along. He doubted he could have stopped or turned around. At times when he was fighting, he felt that same power guiding him. His mind clear as his body moved. No question or doubt of what he was doing. This was the same. His entire body and soul were of one mind. The mind of divine action. And anyone who dared try and take him off this path would reap the hell he would inflict upon them.

He forced himself to breathe, old memory made him shiver from the feeling of thick, warm blood coating him. Ashby chanting in Latin.

Fuck! He mentally ripped himself back from that memory. He wasn’t back in Belfast. He found the girl that he’d been dreaming about for months. His head felt like it was on raging fire. Driving him faster still. Tig swearing behind him, but he was focussed on the dangerously thin girl just out of his reach.

Whispers trailed after them as they moved through the throng. Questions asking who they were and what they were doing there.

The whispers grew as they approached their target. Realizing who it was that he was heading towards.

He broke through the last of the crowd, finally.

He didn’t hesitate a single second to scoop her into his arms. One around her waist, his other hand coming to her cheek, cupping the side of her face. Their eyes locked on each others. His thumb automatically sweeping away her tears.

She gasped at his touch, his presence, he didn’t know. All he cared about at the moment was holding her. Relief filled him.

He barely had a chance to register that he was actually holding her, when the pain in his head dropped off a cliff.

The shock of it sent him to his knees. With his hold on her she fell with him. Her hands coming to his shoulders. Nancy shook in his arms and he gripped her tighter. Offering his body for her to cling to.

All he could sense was her. The texture of her smooth skin, her vanilla scent, how the harsh lighting reflected off the red in her hair. She was beautiful.

She raised up her hand to his cheek, and the pain fell back even more.

“Oh fucking Christ. Thank God. Thank you.” He groaned, hugging her closer.

The pain was gone. Realizing he’d been living with the pain for so long he’d gotten oddly used to it. The weight of it grinding him down. With Nancy in his arms, he felt all that weight shed off him. Lightness and joy joined the relief he felt. Looking into her confused purple and gold-blue eyes he saw her feel it as well.
“How...?” She asked in confusion.

Before he or she could answer her unspoken question something holy came over him. Over them. He’d felt it only once before. He felt the quickening in his blood and bones. It was powerful as it swept them into its golden light. He could barely breathe through that light. And he didn’t fucking care.

She gave a great sigh and gripped onto him tighter. He saw her exaltation as she rode that golden light. Grateful that he wasn’t the only one feeling it. She looked down at him and he wanted to weep, grateful that she deigned to look upon him.

It was a state of grace. All that mattered was her. Everything else faded into the pale. He wanted to beg her forgiveness for all the sin he’s ever done. Wanted to rip his own beating heart out of his chest and hand it to her to do with as she liked with it. Promise her his life. Love her to his last dying breath. And he felt the purpose of serving her.

The power built up over him. Crushing whatever walls he’d built inside himself. And in their place, she took over. Filling in the cracks of his soul. As if she were always a part of him that he hadn’t known he’d been missing. He was drowning in her and all he could do was grab hold of her. It fucking scared the shit out of him, but it enthralled him at the same time.

Her eyes stared down at him through that golden light, her gaze held a depth of wisdom that was beyond her years. Beyond his own. Beyond anyone’s, he suspected. The divine patience in her gaze rocked him to his core. Staring down at him as if she had all the time and answers in the world. Jesus, if he wasn’t on his knees already, he’d fall prostrate right then and there. The strength of her gaze, fuck, she had a core of fucking steel inside her. That was how she survived. And what, he suspected, made her a target. Who wouldn’t try and go up against that gaze? It was lizard-brain human to fear that gaze.

She blinked and that brief glimpse of her knowing look faded and mixed with confusion. Unsure of what was happening to them. He gripped her tighter in sorrow at the loss of seeing that divine gaze. Wondered if with his help if that gaze would come back. And fuck, the thought of that sent shivers down his spine. She’d fucking rival the fucking Pope. Holy Christ.

She threaded her hand to the back of his head. Her trim nails gently scratching at his scalp. He shivered at the caress. His cock went hard faster than a blink of an eye. He groaned as he felt the crushing grace rise up over them. Pushing further out around them. Encircling the two of them at its center.

He fought his mind and body. Both twisting and breaking from his control. Looking into her eyes again, thankfully, she didn’t look afraid of him. A small part of him relaxed under that knowledge. And with that relaxation, desire for her took over. Fucking hell. What the fuck was he doing?

His lips moved to the slope of her neck, kissing her hammering pulse. His lips moving along her jaw. She groaned and swayed, tilting her head to give him better access.

Pulling back to catch his breath. She filled him, and it felt so utterly good. He had no idea he could feel this good. It was primal, as he found his true mate. Felt it deep inside him. He’d never felt anything like this before. Not even with Fi.

It was a knowing.

“God!” He couldn’t stop shaking.
Nancy cried out and gripped him tight herself. As the golden power engulfed them. Drowning them into its power. Binding them together.

He didn’t even think about it. He captured her lips with his own again. Her jaw tight and he whined, giving her pecks and small, quick licks at her lips, silently begging her to let him in.

Her lips and jaw opened slightly. He took advantage. The kiss grew in intensity. The pressure he felt for her grew.

His cock begging to be let out from under the tight cage of his thick denim. Sure that he’d have zipper marks embedded on his cock. But he didn’t fucking care. His tongue swept gently along her minty teeth and he twisted his head as he felt her tongue against his.

He groaned again, deep in his chest. Her breathy mewl squeezed around his heart, as he drew back to allow for air. Only to dive right back to her. His heart hammering in his chest.

He shifted and laid her down onto the floor, hovering over her. His hands capturing hers, fingers dovetailing as his hips ground into hers. His primal self rushing over him. Wanting to mark her as his. Needing her. Only her. And he didn’t care about anything else in the world except her. Protecting her, making her his, loving her. And hope to God that she feels an ounce of what he’s feeling for her.

A small sliver in the back of his mind screaming at him to back off. That he was probably scaring the shit out of her. No better than her rapist. But the binding light wouldn’t let him up. His worry eased a bit as her legs wrapped around his hips, trapping him over her. Urging him on.

Need filled him up inside. Her responding kisses hesitant at first, but grew bolder as they kept on. She learning. The thought of teaching her, being her first...fuck...his heart flipped over in his chest as his thoughts raced away from him. His body acting on instinct. His nerves felt like they were on fire.

His hips rocked over her, driving her as mad as he felt. The thought of making love to her, plunging into her depths, spilling his seed in her, drove him fucking round the bend. He grew frustrated at the barrier of their clothing. He couldn’t stop.

They couldn’t stop. Whatever that had been driving them these past few months came to fruition right here, right now. And there was no stopping it. Sweat slid down along his spine, his hips rocking over hers. He needed to please her. Her legs wrapping tight around him.

He broke from the kiss with a cry. Body strained and tense as he shook and climaxed in her hold. Whatever power that was driving them hit critical mass and exploded within and without.

She cried out with him. Her fingers clenching hard over his as her body shook. And she was glorious. He couldn’t keep his eyes off her. Watching her break apart in his arms. Satisfaction filled him. Fucking hell, he couldn’t wait to do it again. He felt like he won the fucking lottery.

He shook his head, mentally taking order of himself. He was sure he’d cum all down his jeans, but looking down at himself, he hadn’t. Thank God. But he felt as if he’d had the best sex of his life. Yet there was no evidence of it. Vaguely remembered Juice talking about cumless orgasms. Something to do with tantric sex or yoga, he couldn’t remember.

His brain was racing with questions, but his body was so fucking relaxed. This was the most relaxed he’d ever been. He was purring over her. And he felt like laughing in joy at the same time. God, he was fucked. Because he knew, that whatever was happening to them, it wasn’t done. It let
them go this time.

He crumpled over top of her. Careful to keep his weight balanced on his arms so he wasn’t crushing her. Breathing hard, he pressed his forehead to hers. Their sweat making the contact slippery, but he loved the closeness he felt from the contact. He released her hands and curled around her. His thumbs swept her tears from her face. Her hands slid under his t-shirt and wound around his waist. Their eyes locked onto each other as they calmed down from whatever it was that they just went through. Cosmic sex, he mused.

His body cooled off and his rational mind managed to regain control. Christ, not how he wanted to introduce himself. He gave her a wry grin at his own stupidity. Figuring he should at least tell her his name. He picked his head up and captured her eyes, making sure she was okay.

“Hi.” He said, knowing he sounded like a fuckin’ idiot. But he couldn’t stop grinning at her as the joy inside him spilled through him.

She stilled for a moment, tilted her head, looking into his eyes. Giving a small huff, her eyes quirked at him, “Hi back.” She replied answering his humorous tone with her own.

He huffed a low laugh, turning to a deep groan as her hands stroked gently along his spine and trim waist.

He couldn’t seem to stop holding onto her. Couldn’t stop looking at her. He didn’t think he would ever let her go. After all the fucking dreams where he couldn’t touch her. Finally to touch and hold her. Take care of her.

Nancy looked at him, her entrancing purple eyes searching his, “I’m dreaming. This has to be a dream, or I really am dead.” She said softly, her voice shaky.

Chibs shook his head at her words. “It’s no dream, mo chridhe. And you’re not dead.”

Her eyes tearing up again as he spoke to her. “You’re real? You’re really here?” She asked in a small voice that nearly undid him all over again.

“Aye, I am. Do ye’ know who I am, mo chridhe?” He asked, his voice broken and thick with his brogue.

“I...I’ve seen you in my dreams. Chibs? Filip?”

He gave a soft laugh in joyous relief, “Oy, thank Christ. I’ve been dreaming of you too, darlin’. I had to come find ye’.”

Tilting back down to kiss her again and it was just as intense. He knew he should slow down and take things down a notch, but the feelings she wrought inside him he couldn’t deny. The gods have shown him his purpose and it was her.

“Christ, m’ anam, I’m so glad I found you.” He said in heavy sighed relief as he hugged her tighter in his arms. She sighed and gently stroked his jaw and cheek with a tender smile. Her legs twisting around his, holding him to her.

“Chibs!”

He heard his name being yelled. Frowning he twisted towards the panicked voice that dared interrupt his communion. His eyes narrowed on Tig. He’d never seen Tig that shade of pale before. Or the frightened eyes.
“Chibs, man, we gotta go.” Tig prompted. His voice tense. And from the way Tig was looking at him, he’d been calling for him for a while.

Reality rushed back as he took in their surroundings. The cafeteria was buzzing with laughter and yelling. Tig’s hand floated at his holster, not drawing but ready to, as his eyes swept the crowded room. Adults in suits were rushing towards them.

“Oh my God.” Nancy breathed, as she curled tighter under him.

Reality rushed back over him, his eyes narrowed as he tracked who was yelling the insults and jokes towards them. Their safe little bubble burst as he realized he’d been practically having sex with her on the floor of the goddamn cafeteria in front of the a few hundred teenagers. Jesus Christ. Their eyes looking towards where Tig was nodding to.

Tig tilted his head towards a fat man he’d seen before from the dreams.

“What are you? You are not allowed on school grounds without authorization!” The fat man huffed and puffed. The students around him oohing and laughing at the drama unfolding in front of them.

“It’s the principal, Mr. Snyder.” She informed them. “And his staff.”

He looked back at her. “Let’s get out of here. Aye?”

At her nod, he pressed a hard kiss to her again in relief. Pulling himself upright he assisted Nancy back to her feet.

Tig gave him a raised brow with an amused smile, “Thought I was going to have to hose you two down.” He joked.

“Shut it, Tig. Not now. We need to get out of here.” He chastised Tig as Nancy blushed next to him. He bent to grab her book bag, hefting it over his shoulder.

He grimaced as his headache rushing back at him like a battering ram. Fuck! He looked back at Nancy. Her hands gripped her head. She looked up at him, blinking around the obvious pain. Confusion in her eyes.

Curious, he took her hand in his and he felt the connection with her again, his headache receding again.

Her eyes widened in surprise as she looked at their linked hands and back up to his eyes. Putting together what was happening. Her hand curling in his to keep the connection going. The intensity of the headache subsiding more. By her confused look, she didn’t know what was going on either. Perfect, he thought.

“Chibs…” Tig warned.

“Right. Mo chridhe, this is Tig. Tig, this is Nancy. Let’s get out of here before weeble wobble manages to waddle over here.”

Tig laughed at his description of the fat, sweaty man heading their way.

Tig took point in heading back the way they came to get back to their bikes. Nancy huddling close to him. Nancy casting nervous glances, as everyone watched their little group walk out.

“Ms. Fraser! You will come over here with me. Your behavior is unacceptable! Your father will
hear of this!” The fat principal yelled as they walked out of the cafeteria.

He heard ‘Concentration Camp getting some’ followed with laughter. Nancy’s hand squeezing tight on his, just spurred him out of there faster. Wanting to get her out of this hellhole.

“What the fuck is with these assholes?” Tig asked as he kept them moving.

Hearing the jeers and laughter set his teeth on edge. Moving faster, keeping tight hold on Nancy as she clung to him.

“Sorry,” She said with a cringe.

Her soft apology made him look at her with a frown. But he kept moving, needing to get her out of this building. Away from danger. The principal still waddling behind them trying to catch up with them. But the swell of people kept him far behind them.

“Tig.” The pressure to pull his weapon welling up inside him. He gripped tighter to Nancy as they hustled towards the doors.

“Almost through.” Tig said in response.

He breathed easier once they were at the front doors, the cool, crisp air refreshing after the tight confines of the cafeteria. He looked to Nancy once more and saw her shiver. Fuck, she didn’t have a coat.

He halted abruptly. Tig, halfway down the concrete stairs, looked back at them in confusion of why they stopped. Chibs dropped the heavy book bag and took off his kutte.

“Hold this a second, m’ anam.”

“Uh..What...?” She stuttered but her hands held the kutte he handed her. He shrugged out of the thicker leather jacket.

“Here put this on for now.” He manhandled her into his jacket that swam over her the size was so ridiculously large on her. He put on his kutte again to hide the pair of guns and knives in his shoulder holster.

“But...wait..what about you?” She protested.

“Don’t worry about me. I’m Scottish. Weather would be more like home if it were raining.” He said with a proud grin and a wink.

His grin widened as he caught her ‘you’re an idiot’ glare. But she nestled into his coat. Satisfaction filled him that he was taking care of her. Shaking his head, he gave her another kiss. She melted into his embrace making him groan and purr.

“God, Christ. Chibs! We gotta go. Morons on our bikes.” Tig’s voice jarred them from their kiss.

“What?”

Tig just pointed at their bikes. And saw what Tig was talking about.

A group of teenagers were ogling and taking turns sitting on their bikes. Cheerleaders. His eyes narrowed as he caught sight of the asshole who threatened to rape his chridhe. And the blonde bitch who tormented her, as well. Phones being swiveled and shared for their selfies as they crawled over their bikes.
“Fuck, don’t these people have any manners.” Tig complained as they moved down the set of stairs and towards the bikes.

“Fuckers.” His eyes honed in on the rapist on his bike. “Chris, right?” He asked her.

Nancy nodded, her eyes questioning how he knew that.

The idiots hadn’t realized they were there yet. Chris sitting on his bike. Jennifer and her band of bitches cooing and snapping selfies, completely oblivious.

He put on a fake smile Tig following suit. They knew the drill in dealing with clueless admirers.

Handing Nancy her bookbag, “I need my hands free.” He said as he pushed her behind him.

He hissed as his headache started flooding back at him. Hearing Nancy whimper behind him. He wanted to grab her up again, but he needed to take care of this piece of shite once and for all.

Their presence was noted by the crowd of teenagers as they moved down the concrete stairs. Jennifer’s eyes took in Tig and himself with interest, turning cold as she saw Nancy behind them. She slid an evil smile to her and twisted to make some comment that they couldn’t hear. The girls giggling nervously with their leader.

Tig glanced at him.

He nodded to the asswipe on his bike. “He’s mine.”

“Hey man, you like Harley’s?” Tig asked.

“Yeah, they’re cool.” Chris replied.

“Aye, they are.” He agreed easily with Chris’s opinion.

Tig grabbed the kids phone, “Here, let me take a picture for you.” Tig snapped the pic of the kid hamming it up on the bike. The girls crowding in behind Chris with bright smiles.

He stared hard at them.

“Oh my God.” Nancy said behind him.

Tig checked the phone for any more photos of their bikes. Jennifer swayed up to Tig.

“Could I get a ride?” She asked Tig. Her voice oozed what he guessed she thought as being seductive. A child trying to sound like an adult, but failing at it.

“Oh my God.” Nancy said again.

Tig’s eyes turned frosty as he thumbed through the phone. Deleting any incriminating photos that could be traced back to them.

“Sorry, doll. No can do. We’re on a tight schedule.” Tig appeased the blonde who pouted at him. Jennifer huffed and flounced back to her group of gashes at Tig’s refusal.

Tig turned back to Chris. “That was the before.” Tig said.

Chris looked confused at Tig’s comment. As he got off the bike for his phone.
“What?” Chris managed to say before he hit the ground hard.

He glared down at the kid who lay at his feet.

“Owww! Fuck!” Chris’s hand covering his jaw where he had punched him.

Tig leaned in taking another pic. “And that’s the after.” Tig giggled in glee, dropping the phone carelessly.

The girls all reared back at the sudden violence. A chorus of “Oh my god!” coming from their grouping.

“Fuck, that felt good. Finally, able to protect ye’.” He said to Nancy, keeping careful eye on Chris.

Chris’s face turned red in embarrassment that the girls saw him be brought down. Anger in his eyes directed in his direction.

“Who the fuck are you? Don’t you know who I am? Who my father is?” Chris screeched out, as he made to get up.

He raised a brow at Chris. Pressing his heavy boot over Chris’s crotch. “Stay down.” He ordered.

Chris whined at the pain, hands going to Chibs ankle, trying to move from under the pain.

“I am hers.” He nodded towards Nancy. “And yes, I know who ye’ are. Nothing more than a piece of shit rapist who likes to torture girls. And I don’t see your daddy here now, do I? Stupid fucker ye’ are. Be glad she’s here, or I’d have carved ye’ up into a million pieces for what ye’ did to, mo ghaol.” He hissed down at Chris.


Chibs leaned harder over Chris’s crotch, Chris’s yelp hitting soprano. “Ye’ aren’t in a position to be insulting my queen.”

She watched the scene in horror. Everything was moving so fast. Not sure what to do.

She waved to Tig, he looked at her in surprise that she was drawing his attention. He came closer to her. Chibs still toying with the idiot kid. He leaned towards her. “What is it, doll?”

“Um...the girl with the blue sweater, she’s recording this.” Tig’s eyes flicked to the girls. His eyes narrowed on Jennifer, her phone pointed at Chibs and Chris.

Tig looked at her in surprise. “Got it. Thanks.”

Tig’s broad frame blocking what he was doing from her vantage point. A lot of outraged hey’s were said by the gaggle of girls. Tig simply ignored them and grabbed Jennifer’s phone right out of her hands. Breaking it and tossing it to the ground where he crushed it further with the heel of his boot.

“Hey! You destroyed my phone! You can’t do that! That’s vandalism!” Jennifer argued.

“Fuck you. Mommy and Daddy will buy you a new one. Now, move your rank pussies back to class. Stupid gashes, better off spreading your legs for whatever pencil dick that walked by. Oh wait, you already do according the that shithead’s phone.” He insulted them, as they stood there
staring at him like bewildered cows.

She swore she could see steam coming out of Jennifer’s ears as Tig berated them. Nobody ever talked to them like that. Nobody ever talked to Jennifer that way.

Jennifer’s hard blue eyes glittered as she stared at Tig. Trying to come up with some insult to defend herself with. But Jennifer had never been faced with anyone like Tig. A man that didn’t kiss her ass just because she was beautiful.

Tig moved right into her personal space, leaning into her face. “Move, or I’m going to think you want to swallow my dick.”

Tig continued to glare at Tig

Tig started unbuckling his belt. “Been on the road a week, haven’t had a decent shower, so make sure you get in all the nooks and crannies. If you’re good at that, I’ll let you eat out my ass. And if you’re lucky, I **might** give you the fuck you’ve been begging for.”

“Eww gross, how rude!” Jennifer’s face soured, her girlfriends grabbing her, pulling her with them to go back inside the school.

“Of course, it would be Concentration Camp. Probably going to get fucked by the both of them. What a whore.” Jennifer said snidely, over her shoulder.

She felt her face turn hot at Jennifer’s insult, huddled deeper in Chib’s coat. The smell of musk, leather, and cigarettes distracting her. Giving her a moment to collect herself and take courage that she wasn’t alone anymore.

She caught Tig’s eyes and shook her head. Telling him to leave it alone. Tig narrowed his eyes at her and she emphatically shook her head again.

Tig glanced back at Jennifer, who had managed to flee back to the safety inside the school. Tig heaved an annoyed sigh, stalking back to where Chibs was still dealing with Chris.

Tig muttering as he came back to Chibs. “Why’d you stop me?” He complained to her.

But turned his attention back to Chibs with Chris still wriggling under Chib’s boot, before she could answer him. “You going to stand on the asswipe’s nuts all day or what?” He said testily.

“This is the one that wanked off on her.” He said darkly.

Tig looked at Nancy’s growing red face and down at the said asswipe with a look that would kill if Chibs hadn’t been handling shit.

“How? You want to cut his nuts off like the last one?”

Chris’s eyes widened at Tig’s matter of fact question, as if he were deciding on hot dogs or burgers for lunch.

“No.” He said darkly. Pulling his gun and racking the chamber dramatically.

“Holy shit.” Chris’s eyes going cross-eyed as the barrel of the gun pressed into his forehead. Going absolutely still, but with the hard press of his boot over Chris’s groin it was hard to keep from squirming.

Tig grinned as he watched Chibs fuck this kid’s world up. Chibs was one of the most controlled
guys in the club. Not much riles him up. But when he’s pissed, he’ll deal with you swift and harsh. And looking at the girl, huddled in Chibs leather jacket, he knew Chibs was right to come for her. Chibs didn’t tell him much of what he saw happened to the girl, but the sheer panic and anger, the wild drive to find her, he knew it had to be bad. Given her thin frame, he believed. Especially after seeing some of the photos of her on the idiot kids’ phone.

“Never touch another man’s bike, ever. And you put your hands on another girl, I’ll come back and cut your tiny dick off and feed it to ye’. Nod if ye’ understand.”

Chris hesitated but nodded after a beat.

He straightened up, holstering his weapon, twisting his boot as he went.

Chris yelled, his voice rising in pitch to where she thought only dogs could hear him.

Tig laughing at Chris.

“Fuck, what is with these kids? Can’t take a beat down, can’t give decent head. Fucking waste, was looking forward to some cheerleader ass.” Tig commented as he moved to his bike.

“Uhm, probably best you didn’t. Jennifer has already had syphilis and gonorrhea so far this year.” She said.

Tig and Chibs swivelled questioning looks at her comment. Nancy shrugged under their stares.

“Jesus.” Chibs muttered.

“Unbelievable. Come on, Weeble Wobble is heading our way.” Tig prompted.

Chibs nodded.

She hesitated a moment, staring down at Chris still rolling on the ground.

“Don’t drink and drive, Chris. You’ll regret it for the rest of your life. Your father can’t save you from everything.” She said to the kid as he managed to get to his knees on the sidewalk, clutching at his groin.

Chris staring up at her in pain and anger.

Nancy sighed as he wasn’t listening to her. “Idiot.” She muttered as she moved to where Chibs was waiting for her.

Chibs and Tig watching her with a curious eye, questioning looks directed her way. But with the approaching principal and the commotion going on, she just shrugged and waved at the bikes. Reminding them they needed to be away from from here.

“Ready?” He asked, taking her hand. The two of them sighing in relief again as the headaches pulled back once more.

She nodded to his question.

“Is your bike okay?” She asked looking over the bike trying to discern if anything was broken on it. But she didn’t know anything about bikes. As Chibs grabbed the helmet.

“It’s fine.” He said as he set the helmet to her head, his fingers easily tightening the straps.
“We’ll get you your own helmet. We need to talk. I don’t know what is happening with us, all I know is that we’re meant to be. God, Fate, Murphy’s Law, whatever...just don’t stop touching me.” He said as he finished fastening the helmet, his eyes coming to hers.

Nancy nodded. And he stole another kiss.

“Fuck. Let’s go!” Tig yelled at them in annoyance.

He sighed heavily and sent a glare Tig’s way. Tig merely shrugged and head cocked towards where the principal was talking with the girls. Their arms waving and pointing in their direction.

“Don’t worry about Tig. He’s cranky.” He explained to her with a grin. He mounted onto his bike. Pulling it upright, holding it and himself steady for her to swing on behind him.

Pointing out where to put her feet, as her hand went to his shoulder for balance as she swung her leg over. Carefully put her feet where he told her to. Her hands automatically sliding around his waist gently.

The two of them shuddering as their collective headaches eased off. Chibs keyed and fired up the bike.

His hands taking hers and pressing them tighter around his waist. “Hang on.” He said.

Tig leading them out of the parking lot and heading back the way they came in.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My heart = mo chridhe
My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
Out of my way = a-mach à mo shlighe
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Some questions are answered.

Trying to stop using the word 'glare' all the time. Don't think I'm very successful at it. I'm working on it.

And the POV is shifting quite a bit. Sorry. I think it's still readable and clear of who is speaking or thinking.

We're in February for the beginning of this story.

Naperville is a real town, the school is a real school. The events and people described are fictional.

Thanks again for reading and your comments.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

He felt Nancy grip tighter onto him as they slowed down and reversed. Parking in front of a pub that sat along the river that ran through the town.

Helping her off the bike and unsnapping the chinstrap of the helmet.

“You ever been here?” He asked, as he took her book bag from her, strapping it and helmet down to his bike.

Nancy shook her head. “I never had the money.”

Taking her hand. “Well, there’s no more of that anymore, not with me.”

Tig was already pulling the front door open and they followed him inside. Their eyes adjusting to the dimness. Tig bellied up to the bar and started chatting up the tender there.

He led Nancy off to one of the tables in the back that looked out over the river. It was quiet as the last of the lunch rush emptied out. His hand holding hers, he debated the seating arrangements. The table was pushed against the window, it had three chairs on the remaining sides.

Nancy made to sit in a chair closest to her, but it felt wrong. He sat and gently pulled her towards him and had her slip into his lap. That was better, he thought to himself. His eyes searched hers as she looked to him in equal parts wonderment and confusion. He mentally sighed, figured the best way to go about this was to start with the basics.

“How old are you, mo chridhe?”

“Nineteen, in a couple of weeks, the twenty-fourth.” She answered. Her eyes widening at his question, recognizing what he was doing. “And you? How old are you?” She asked.

“Thirty-two. Thirteen years difference.” He calculated. Seemed like a big gap, but the way he felt
with her. It didn’t seem to matter. “Does that bother you?” Wondering if she felt the same.

Nancy tilted her head in thought. “No. Does it bother you, that I’m so young?” She asked.

He groaned, his body tense as he watched her bite her lip. Desire swept through him at the sight.

“The way you make me feel...I could care less if you were nineteen, thirty-two, or sixty-four. But let's just say I’m glad you’re legal.” He joked in relief as Nancy blushed, catching his meaning.

“You mentioned you’d been having headaches?” Nancy asked, her brow furrowed in thought. Turning back to their question and answer session.

“Aye, I was caught up in a car bomb little over a year ago. Since then, I’ve been having terrible headaches. Nothing seemed to help. When I was able to get some rest, I found myself visiting you in my dreams. I saw what you were going through. I couldn’t get you out of my mind. Thought I was going crazy. I had to do something to help you.” His voice going hoarse with the memory of his fear for her. Her eyes went wide at what he was telling her. He rubbed his thumb across her knuckles, assuring her that it was okay.

“I...I have headaches, too. Dreamed of you, too. I...I thought...all this time...I thought you were nothing more than a figment of my imagination. The car bomb...that actually happened?” She said with a choked cry. “God, I saw that. Dreamed it. Oh my god.” She grabbed him into a tight hug. Her fear for him and his safety flooding over her.

“Hey, now, it was a long time ago. Got a hard head.” He cajoled.

Chibs rocked her gently, soothing her. His heart squeezed tight as he felt how thin she was. Her tears wetting his neck as he felt how thin she was. Her tears wetting his neck as she was overcome with emotions. Her arms tight around him as the dreams became reality.

She pulled back, sniffing and wiping away her tears from her face and swiping at his neck. “Sorry, I’m not usually this emotional.” She apologized.

He hushed at her, “It’s okay. I’m here. I’m not going to let anything happen to you.” His thumbs helping her brush away her tears. She giving him a hopeful smile. He grinned, glad to see her let go some of her distress.

Tig fell into the chair opposite them, setting down a couple of beers and a soda for her. “Seriously? You can’t let her sit in her own chair?” Tig rolled his eyes at him.

“No. I don’t like it when she’s not with me.” He said.

“Didn’t realize how stupid romantic you are Chibs.” Tig teased.

Nancy blushed at the teasing, ducking her face down, her hair hiding her face. He heaved a sigh and flipped him the bird. Tig merely grinned at the two of them, unrepentant.

“I’ve ordered burgers.” Tig informed.

“Thanks, Tig.” He said.

“How’s your head?” Tig asked.

“Better. Our headaches come back when we aren’t touching, though.” He told Tig, holding up their linked hands for Tig to witness.
Tig raised his brow, looking at them. “You have headaches, too?” He asked her.

She nodded to Tig, but looked back at Chibs.

“So how did you find me?” She asked.

“We’re from Charming, California.” Tig answered, interrupting his and Nancy’s conversation without thought. “And this crazy Scot boyfriend of yours, came in one morning and told us he had to come find you, out of the blue.” Tig finished by taking a swallow of his beer.

Tig rolled his eyes when he caught Chibs glare for oversharing, realizing that her question wasn’t for him to answer.

“What? It’s true.” Tig defended. “Jesus, here I was hoping that you’d chill the fuck out once you found your…” Tig cut off whatever he was going to say when he caught Chibs heated glare again.

Nancy swiveled her head back and forth between them. Her eyes going to his, silently asking him what was going on.

“From the dreams. I didn’t know where you lived. Wasn’t paying attention to the street signs or the house number. The only thing I had to go on was the school.” He explained further.

“You…you came all the way from California, for me?” She asked him in amazement.

“Would have gone to hell and back for you.” He said gruffly. His heart breaking at her small voice. He didn’t like the implication that she might think she wasn’t worth the effort to save. Hating the people who put that idea in her head.

Their burgers were slapped down by a gruff older woman. Nancy flinched in his arms at the abruptness their food was brought to them.

“Thanks, doll.” Tig winked at the server cheekily. The woman just grunted at them and left them to their meals.

He reluctantly let her go to sit in her own chair so they could eat. Groaning in irritation that she wasn’t in his lap or arms. His headache flaring up at him. Looking at Nancy, she whimpered as the pain started up for her, too. Tig smirked at him in amusement before diving into his lunch.

He watched Nancy stare down at her plate of food. Like any pub worth their salt, they served large portions. The meat thick and juicy, cheese melted. Lettuce, tomato, and onion slices stacked high. The bun fresh baked and toasted. The fries were thick steak cut. Tig had already stripped his burger of the offensive vegetables and was slathering ketchup over his fries. He caught Tig watching her, too.

She must have felt their stares at her, she looked up gave them a small smile.

“Dig in, luv. Eat what you can.” He entreated.

She took up her knife, cut the burger in half. Finally, taking one of the halves in her hands.

Tig dived into his food, looking out over the river. Giving them an illusion of privacy as he encouraged her to eat.

She took small bites, chewing carefully. Once she started eating he felt it okay for him to eat his own burger. It was a good burger, better than the fast food they’d been chowing down on the road.
Her eyes kept going to him or Tig. Like she couldn’t believe that they were all sitting here together.

He ate quickly, the pain in his head increasing by the minute. Soon as he finished eating, his hand was out for hers. She slipping hers in his, their fingers wrapping around each other. The two of them shuddering as the pain of the headaches eased off.

Tig watching silently, brow raised as he tried to figure out what the hell was going on with them. Chibs was practically swooning as he held her freaking hand. Like a wet-behind-the-ears teenager. Going so far as carrying her books for her, giving her his coat to wear. The guys weren’t going to believe this shit.

When Chibs and the girl touched for the first time, he’d never seen anything like it. The two of them completely oblivious of their surroundings. He didn’t dare try and get between them. He liked his life and wanted to keep living it. Chibs told him to watch his six. So that’s what he did. Hoping that Chibs would come to his senses sooner rather than later.

He didn’t want to have to pull his gun to keep the massive crowd away from them. And the club had rules about pulling on innocents. But what he heard being yelled at towards them, he debated that these morons weren’t as innocent as they appeared. The yelling and catcalling raised his hackles. The situation was fucked. He called for Chibs several times, but he didn’t seem to hear him.

They needed answers. He wanted answers. Fucking rode out here in the middle of fucking winter and he wanted to know why.

“So, how did you know about STD girl? Doesn’t sound like information she’d share with anyone. Tig asked her. “And who is that asswipe’s father? And why did you tell him not to drive drunk?”

She looked to Tig nervously. Chibs hand tightened around hers.

“It’s okay. You can tell us.” He prompted.

“It’s incredibly stupid. I can’t believe no one’s stopped them. One of their parents...someone. I tried...but nobody listens to me anyway.”

“What’s stupid?” Chibs asked.

“Jennifer and her friends, they're all on the cheer squad. They have this...game. Sleep around with as many of the guys at school as possible. Getting an STD is part of the thrill for them.” She shrugged.

“What the fuck! Are you fucking serious?” Tig exclaimed.

She didn’t need to say anything, her expression was enough to convince him of what was going on at school. “Jesus fucking Christ, stupid gashes.” Tig muttered. “How do they decide who wins?” He questioned.

“Tig…” Chibs warned.

“What? It’s a valid question.”

“There’s a whole point system they concocted. Freshman, sophomores only one point. Juniors two. Seniors three. Teachers five. And before you ask, they all stopped taking their birth control. Getting pregnant is an automatic win. Satisfied?” Nancy spit out. “It’s disgusting what they’re doing. Putting so many people at risk over a fucking game.” She huffed as she realized her
phraseology. “Literally.”

“Jesus Christ” Chibs groaned. “I never picked up on that.”

Tig slapped a hand to his face, staring at her, looking to see if she was putting him on. Chibs tense next to her, his hand tight around hers.

“With all the medicine out there to treat STD’s even the morning after pill...they think there isn’t any harm to what they’re doing.”

“And those gashes dared to call you a whore. Un-fucking-believable.” Tig shook his head.

He leaned in towards her again. “What’s the deal with the two Starbucks on this strip of road? They’re barely three blocks apart.”

She blinked and it took her a minute to process what he asked her. Huffing a laugh at his swift change in topic and how earnest he was in wanting to know.

“Tig! We have more important questions than your curiosity over the fucking Starbucks. Let it go, for Christ’s sake.” Chibs sent him a glare to shut him up.

“Fine. I’m going to find the answer to that sooner rather than later though.” He pointedly said.

Chibs rolled his eyes and shook his head at Tig’s absurd obsession with Starbuck.

She watched Chibs and Tig argue between themselves and she didn’t know if she should break them up or not. It was entertaining to watch. The dreams she had where Tig was around, always had a bit of comedy about him. Even in some serious situations, Tig managed to find some off-color humor about it.

“And the asshole?” Chibs asked her, pulling her attention back to the table. “Why did you warn him over the drinking and driving?”

“Chris’s father is the mayor here in Naperville. He’s had to bail out Chris before.”

Chibs and Tig glanced at each other, then back to her for more clarification. She sighed and continued.

He’ll get drunk and kill a couple of people in a head on crash. The cars will be totaled. Chris walks away with barely a scratch. When he sobers up and realize just how much trouble he’s in...he’ll think his father will get him out of it. He’ll end up in prison. The very heterosexual, football jock that has no problem with attacking girls will become a...'boy' while in prison. He’ll fight it...but...”

Her thoughts running away as she sees the lesson that Chris has to learn. “Cosmic retribution for his misdeeds. Forcing himself on others to be forced himself in the end.” She mused to herself.

Tig and Chibs exchanged a what the fuck look and stared back at her.

“How do you know that that will happen to him? You’re talking like you know the future...” Chibs asked, drawing her attention back to them.

Nancy blushed and dived her head down. The intensity of Chibs and Tig’s attention making her feel like a bug under a microscope. At her hesitation, Chibs raised her chin, bringing her eyes up to his.

“It’s okay. No matter what it is, you can trust us. How do you know?” Chibs entreated.
“Anyone who touches me, I...I fall into them. It’s like drowning. I know them from the day they were born. Their past, present, future, their emotions and thoughts. I can’t stop it. It just happens.” She said quickly, her voice whispering so that they had to lean in to hear her. Hoping that they will believe her.

“So you’re what? Psychic?” Tig asked quizzically.

“I don’t call myself anything. If you need to define it, then yeah, I guess. It just sounds so ridiculous.” She admitted tiredly.

“Do you read me?” Chibs asked worriedly.

“No, I don’t know why.” She dragged in a shaky breath. “You are the first person I’ve been able to touch without reading or passing out from.”

She looked into Chibs eyes. “You don’t know how long its been since I’ve been able to touch someone and not be afraid of what I’ll see. Scared if I’ll get stuck. To possibly never come back to my own mind and body…” She broke off as her emotions were getting away from her.

“How long?” he asked her. “How long has this been going on?”

“I’ve been this way since I was eight. I was in a coma from a car accident. Ever since I woke up.”

“Shite, that the accident that killed your mother?” Chibs asked putting the information together from the dreams.

Nancy jerked upright, looking sharply to Chibs. “How did you know that? I...I was thrown from the car.”

“Saw your step-mother more than a few times. Her yelling at you. Screaming at you, that you should have died with your ma’.”

Tig gave Chibs a hard look. “Someone said that to her?”

Chibs nodded to Tig, his eyes on Nancy though.

“I’m sorry.” she said harshly. Shame flooding her. “I’m so sorry. I didn’t know you were there. That you saw... God... I…” She stuttered in horror as she realized that he was visiting her, like she had visited him. Witness to her life here. Oh God. “So you... know what everyone... I’m so sorry.”

Chibs took her into his arms, hauling her into his lap again. “Stop. You have nothing to be sorry for. I’m sorry.”

“What?! No…” She shook her head in denial.

“Oy, the way I see it, we didn’t have a choice. I don’t know about you, but I tried not to have the dreams. Went to doctors, had scans, took pills. Smoked weed, drank myself into a stupor more times than I could count. Even tried not sleeping. Nothing worked. We were meant to find each other. The dreams helped us find each other. Whether it was you or me. And given the shite I’ve seen you had to put up with, it’s understandable why I’m here now. If anything, I should have come for you sooner. Thought for so long that you were just a dream. You have nothing to apologize for.”

She didn’t know what to say. She was horrified that Chibs had been suffering from seeing her in her situation. She should have tried to have gotten away herself. To have him know her to be so
weak, shamed her. That he risked his life to find her. And now to hear him take the blame for not finding her long before now. Oh God.

Chibs looked to her, his hands running down her hair and spine. Soothing her. Her hands clutching at him. “I still should have found a way. It feels like I left you alone in all of this. Something that you shouldn’t have had to take on.”

“What kind of shit life is making you apologize for shit that isn’t your fucking fault?” Tig asked.

“I’m sorry. I…”

“Jesus. He’s sorry, you’re sorry. You’re both sorry. Get over it.” Tig interrupted irritingly.

“Tig.” He warned.


She shrugged. “I was just a kid. Where could I go? I had to grow up. I’ve avoided touching people for over a decade. And later, how would I live? Find work? I can’t shake someone’s hand without falling into them. I pass out, worse, lose my stomach over it. And then the headaches…”

“Aye, know what that’s like. What about you…said you’d had dreams of me.” He prompted.

Nancy blushed, her eyes dropped from his abruptly.

He grinned in amusement. “Come on, what part of my life did you stumble into?” He teased, willing to become the source of entertainment to get her to relax and let go of her embarrassment.

“Fuck, must have been good.” Tig grinning at her reaction.

His comment had her rolling her eyes in exasperation at Tig. Realizing why Chibs seemed to be so annoyed with him, if this was what he had to put up with.

“It just…was mostly you working in the garage, in the clubhouse, or in your home. At meetings with the other guys. I saw you at a couple of parties. Caracara and one for Bobby.” She blushed again when she mentioned the parties.

His mind racing, thinking back. “Shite, you saw me with those croweaters, didn’t ye’.” His eyes widened in surprise.

Tig watching them talk in growing amusement.

“It’s not like you knew I was there. I averted my eyes.” She defended herself, her voice panicky, thinking Chibs would be mad at her.

"Averted her eyes.” Sending Tig into a laughing fit, hands clapping in mirth. “Oh god, classic. Wait’ll the guys hear about this. Averted her eyes.” Tig snickered.

Chibs groaned and slapped a hand to his eyes.

She frowned, glaring at Tig. “Sure Tig, laugh it up. I know you’re out on parole. Jesus, if you’re here, that means Jax, Clay, Gemma, Tara, Opie, all of them are real too…” She muttered to herself.

“Oh my god.” She groaned. “Did Juice really give Opie and Lyla colonics as a wedding gift?”

Chibs choked a laugh at her opinion of Juice’s idiot idea of a gift. Tig was staring at her like she’d
pulled him up by the short curlies.

“He did.” Chibs confirmed for her. ”And he is on parole.” Pointing to Tig.

“For the weapons charges, Stahl and Jimmy O. Holy cow.” She filled in. Slapping a hand to her face. “What the hell is happening...I thought it was just dreams.” She lamented rhetorically.

“How far back have you seen my life?” She questioned him.

Chibs frowned. “Not sure. Seemed to be jumped around, I think most if it more recent given your age. Something we’ll need to talk about, compare notes.” He suggested. “How far back have you gone in my life?”

“I’m not sure either, it’s a lot of jumping around. Some of them weren’t linear at all. I dreamed of Belfast. You weren’t there.” She looked to Tig.

“Gemma took my place on the plane.” Tig said, looking a little queasy.

Turning back to Chibs. “I’m sorry about your nephew.” Her hand tightened around his, empathizing with his loss. Remembering herself of the dream she had of that day for him. The shock and horror of that bomb going off. The pain he went through when he found his nephew’s body.

Tig eyed Chibs as he breathed in, his eyes wide in shock that she knew more about them. Of him than he realized. Nancy’s eyes soft in sorrow but continued.

“I’ve seen you in gun fights. Once woke up before I knew if you were okay or not. I was so worried the entire day. Watched the clock all day, wishing it would move faster so I could go to sleep sooner to see if you survived. Thought I was crazy to be so worked up over a dream. Hoping that I’d still dream of you just to find out if you were okay. Worried that I’d never know, that I’d be left hanging not knowing if the dreams stopped.” She rattled out quickly. Chibs hand tightened around her.

“I had no idea that you were real. Oh my god. What the hell is happening to us?” Her voice edging into panic mode.

“Shit, this is bad.” Tig said, pointing a french fry at them.

“No, it isn't.” Chibs glared to Tig. “I don’t know, mo gràidh. But we’ll figure it out.”

“How can this not be bad? Some outsider knowing club secrets?” Tig argued.

Nancy hitched a soft laugh at Tig’s worry. “Seriously? Who would believe me? I’m a pathetic loser in this town that passes out if anyone touches me. You heard what the everyone called me not even an hour ago.”

“Don’t say that.” Chibs said harshly. “You’re not a loser.”

“Fuck.” Tig muttered to himself.

She looked to Chibs sadly. “You know...you’ve seen in the dreams...I don’t know how much...but you must know what its like here. What people think of me. Say about me. I’ve tried to help them, despite all that. I have. I do. But they hate me for it. And I didn’t have a chance to defend myself. It was too late the moment I woke up from the coma.”

Nancy shook her head with a sigh as Tig and Chibs listened to her. She looked to Chibs. “I didn’t know you were real. I thought it was just me. A way for my mind to distract me from...Even
thought I had a brain tumor or something. The headaches...these dreams, seeing you and everyone of the club...It kept me going some days. I see now how selfish that was of me.”

“No!” Chibs argued with her, not liking how she was taking the blame.

Tig sent a worried look to Chibs.

“God, Snyder has probably called Claire by now.” Nancy rocked and pulled her hands from Chibs. Her mind on what she would come to find at home. Her panic of going home.

“Claire?” Tig asked.

“Her step-mother.” Chibs answered, as he felt Nancy tremble in his lap. Sensing her fear of going home.

Chibs gripped her to look into his eyes. He staring hard at her. “I won’t let anyone hurt you anymore. You hear me. They won’t hurt you. These dreams we share, we were meant to find each other. I know it. And you know it, too.” He reassured her, but he could see she didn’t quite believe him. He didn’t expect her to. The shit she had to endure, its no wonder.

“Listen to me, you have nothing to be ashamed about, so get that out of your head. And I doubt your theory about a brain tumor. The odds of the two of us with the same symptoms, the same reactions to each other...having a tumor is pretty slim. Especially, since I’d had my head checked not that long ago. You’ve had a raw deal, I’m not letting you suffer this life here anymore. We’ll figure this out.”

She saw the absolute truth in his eyes and grabbed him up in a hug. Overwhelmed that all this was happening. She never expected to have a lifeline like this. Never dared to hope. Her burning tears sliding down her cheeks as she held on tightly. His arms coming around her waist, holding her close. His voice low and crooning in her ear as he soothed her fears.

She took a deep breath, relaxing in his strength. She loosened her hold on him and they pulled apart. His hands coming to wipe away her tears. Giving her a kiss. His eyes checking her when he pulled back from the kiss. Their foreheads leaning against the others. She felt like she could stay just like this forever.

“So what’s the plan?” Tig asked, interrupting them again.

“Well, I thought that Nancy would want to pack up some things, and we can hit the road back to California.”

“We’ll need to get her some leathers and a helmet.” Tig pointed out.

Chibs nodded, “You want to ask around for a local Harley dealership?”

“Sure.” Tig went back to the bar.

“That okay with you?” He asked her. “Would you be okay, leaving here, coming home with me to California?” Hoping that she said yes. He didn’t know what he would do if she said no.

“Really?” She asked in a small voice.

“Aye, absolutely.” He affirmed.

He squeezed her hand as she stared at him in disbelief. She nodded with a tight grip on his hand.
He sighed and gave her another kiss in relief.

“Can we go see the ocean? I’ve never seen the ocean.”

“Aye, we’ll go to the ocean. Tig will complain, but that’s half the fun.” He joked.

“Thank you.” She said gratefully. Her shyness kept her from grabbing him up into another hug. He came for her, saving her, taking her into his life and back to Charming. She didn’t want to be a burden for him.

“Um, I’ll need to get some things from the house, I have some papers I need. They’re important.”

“No problem. We’ll go there first, stop off at the Harley dealership and get you some gear. Take the night to rest up and head back west in the morning. You didn’t eat much, aren’t you hungry?” He frowned as he looked at her nearly full plate of food yet.

She sighed. “I know I should be. I just don’t...feel hunger much anymore.” She said in frustration.

Chibs looked to her in worry. “How long has the starvation been going on?”

“Long time. You don’t know what I’ve had to do. To get fresh fruit and vegetables.”

“I do. Some of it. I can guess on some.”

“Sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. We’ll get you beefed up.” He joked to cheer her up.

She smiled gently and ran a hand along his temple. He moaned under her touch, his eyelids fluttering.

Again, he felt transported, his mind calm and peaceful under their shared touch. He leaned into her and kissed her again.

“Awww, you two kids...so fucking cute. Makes me want to puke.” Tig teased as he came back to their table, jolting them back to reality.

He groaned as he pulled back from the kiss. Glaring at an unrepentant Tig. “Asshole, you have no idea what this feels like.”

Nancy sighed as Chibs and Tig fell into their banter with each other.

“Here, finish this up.” Chibs pushed her plate towards Tig.

“Sure you don’t want more of this? You barely ate any of this.” He asked her.

“No. I’m full. Go ahead.”

Tig tested her with a look, ultimately shrugging and finished off the rest of her food in less than a minute

Chapter End Notes
Translations:
My heart = mo chridhe
My darling = mo gràidh
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Chibs, Tig, and Nancy go to her house for her to pack.

Chapter Notes

Chibs pov

This section took a lot out of me. Finished one of my classes up. Still have one major final project to get done for next Friday and a bit of work to get caught up on. Posting as quickly as I can.

Thanks for your patience and comments. How am I doing for my first fan-fiction? Much appreciated.
Enjoy.

He recognized the white house with blue trim and its deep red door that Nancy pointed out.

The tree-lined street was filled with similar Victorian-style houses. Some with Christmas lights still up even though it was February. A few had large, decorative wreaths on their doors.

Coming out here to Illinois, seeing the snow and feeling the winter bite of cold had him missing the four seasons. Ever since moving to Charming, Hogmanay and New Year just didn’t feel like the holidays without it.

It was late afternoon by the time they parked in front of her house, school buses passed by them unloading kids from school. Some neighbors were out walking their dogs. The noise of the bikes and the sight of them had the neighbors staring. Jesus, it was as if they’d never seen bikers before.

“Nice house. Bigger than Gem’s.” Tig commented. Waiting for Chibs and Nancy to unstrap her back pack.

“I’ve got it.” She told him when he tried to take it from her.

“It’s too heavy.” He complained.

“It won’t be for much longer. I’m going to pack my clothes in this. It’s fine.” She explained her reasoning.

“Okay.” He frowned, fighting himself to let her take the heavy bag. Fuck, the faster they got out of here the better. “Let’s just get in and out as quickly as possible.” He told Tig.

Nancy was peering down the driveway that slid up alongside the side of the house. A detached garage in the far back of the property. It matched the styling of the house.
“God damn it.” She swore.

“What is it, doll?” Tig asked.

Nancy jerked back at Tig’s question. “Umm, sorry. Claire’s car is here. Which means she’s home.” She said pensively. “Just... sorry ahead of time, for whatever she says...or does.”

“M ‘anam,” he gathered her into his arms, “She won’t put a hand on ye’. I swear it. Okay?”

“Yeah, okay. Let’s get this over with. I really am sorry.”

Tig shrugged and she led them up the porch steps to the front door.

Nancy bit her lip pensively, staring at the door knob for a few seconds. Finally, reaching out twisting and pulling the door open. But before she could open the door all the way, the door was ripped from her grasp. She stumbled a little from the unexpected yank on the other side.

“You fucking whore!”

He moved before he thought about what he was doing, pushing Nancy back with one hand, the other grabbing the bony, fist that was flying towards where Nancy had just been standing. His foot planted in the doorway to prevent the door from being shut on them.

“Holy shit!” Tig exclaimed. “What the fuck?”

“Sorry.” Nancy apologized again.

He didn’t have time to check Nancy, his hands full with the she-beast from his nightmares. He quickly stepped into the house, forcing Claire to back up. “Tig!”

Claire fought his grip. Tig quickly stepped inside and helped him get control of the crazy blonde.

Nancy quickly shutting the door behind them.

“Who the hell are you!?” Claire screeched. “Ow! Get your fucking hands off me!” Claire continued to yell and squirm. “Get the fuck off me! You’re hurting me!”

“M ‘anam...lead the way.” He said to her.

“Yeah, this way.” She said and quickly moved past the living room and the dining room. The hall led towards the kitchen. Coming to a stop in front of the heavy door that led into the basement.

“Who are you? You can’t just barge into my house!” Claire questioned.

“Jesus. Shut the fuck up. I think dogs ten miles away can hear you.” Tig complained.

He and Tig manhandled Claire between them, following her. She opened the door and looked a moment to watch them drag Claire with them before disappearing down the stairs.

He swore as the gash kept fighting them. Tig even looked ready to just pop her one. They got to the top of the basement, they shuffled and resituated to manage down the stairs. Nancy glancing back at them from the bottom of the stairs. Her face pale, eyes wide.

“Jesus Christ. What the fuck is with that lock!?” Tig exclaimed when he caught sight of the heavy lock that was screwed into the frame. “Who fucking locks their basement door like that?”
“Not now. Let’s go.” He said tightly as he forced Claire ahead of them to take the first step.

“What the fuck are you doing?!” Claire yelled, as they forced her down the stairs.

At the bottom, he saw Nancy over at the flimsy card table. Dumping out her bookbag of her textbooks.

“What the fuck is this shit?!” Tig swore again. His blue eyes wide as he looked around.

He knew what to expect from the dreams. But seeing it in person, feeling the cold, the dim light and the rudimentary furniture set his nerves on edge. There was no comfort here. Nothing here that she could feel safe, feel fucking wanted. Buried under this big house like a dirty secret.

“We had more stuff in Stockton than what she has here. What the fuck!” Tig said as he took in the room.

The grey concrete making them shiver with the cold retained from the frozen ground. The windows for the window wells were painted over and, on closer look, were welded shut.

The furnace kicked on behind them. A small, single-sized cot with it’s thin mattress, was made up with a blanket and a thin pillow was pushed against a concrete wall.

A small, plastic crate was at the foot of the cot. It held her clothes, neatly stacked inside. Her books and school supplies organized into neat piles.

Over their heads, roughly in the center of the room, a bare bulb the only light source. It’s light making Nancy look paler than usual. Casting cool shadows as she moved to the end of the cot. She quickly selected the items she wanted and moved to the small bathroom, tucked into its own room next to the furnace and water heater. There was no door to the bath and the shower area had no curtain, just a tiled floor and a utilitarian shower head.

Claire squirmed as they watched Nancy move around this basement. The way she wouldn’t look at him and kept her eyes down, focused on the task at hand, pissed him off. The beaten and ashamed look on her face. The hunch of her shoulders as she passed him again. Toothbrush and comb in hand.

“Tig, take this gash.” He couldn’t stand to have his hands on the woman who had taken a child, and forced her to live down here like this.

Tig shifted and took hold of Claire. Tig kicking one of her legs out from under her, forcing her down to her knees. Hands just above her elbows, pinning her arms back and up.

“Ow! Fucking let go of me!” Claire yelled again.

He moved to Nancy as she was quickly pushing her clothes into the bag. He took up her toothbrush and saw it was long used and needed replacing. The comb had lost some of it’s teeth, too. Some of the clothes he caught sight of were thin and worn out, just as he saw in the dreams. She was going to need a whole new wardrobe. But it was good enough for the ride back. Figured she can go clothes shopping once they’re settled.

She reached for her toothbrush in his hand, looking up at him why he wasn’t letting go of the toothbrush.

“We’ll get you a new one. This, too.” He said tossing the toothbrush and comb to the floor. “We’ll get you kitted out proper.”
She hesitated and finally nodded under his directive. She went off to the dryer and crouched down, reaching behind.

“What…?” Tig asked, matching his confusion of what she was doing.

Confused himself, he moved to the dryer and made to shift it from the wall.


Nancy moved back to her bag, stuffing the ziploc with her clothes.

Her hiding things around the basement made him look up into the floor joists. He froze, spotting the peanut butter jar and a couple cans of carrots and peas. Tig saw his look upwards and looked up himself. Swearing anew. He glared back at Tig, with a stern shake of his head.

“What the fuck are you doing, Nancy? Your father is on his way. He’s not going to let you go without signing those papers.” Claire yelled at Nancy. Realizing what she was doing. Stupid gash took her time putting that together.

“I am no longer your problem, Claire. I’m leaving.” She said as tucked a thin, yellow folder into the bag. Zipping the bag up and turned to face Claire, sliding the bag across her back.

“The fuck you are!” Claire spit out.

“You have everything, m ‘anam?” He asked desperately. He wanted to grab her and get her out of this hole. Not liking how pale Nancy was looking.

“I need to get into the safe…”

“You are not taking those! They’re mine! Roger promised me that they were mine!”

“They weren’t his to give away!” She yelled down at Claire.

“So…what you’re just going to leave? What about school? Can’t graduate if you leave. All the hand holding we had to do so that you could go to that school. That fat fuck principal of yours calling all the time.”

Nancy just watched Claire as she ranted and raved at her.

“Hey, shut the fuck up!” Tig shook Claire.

“What is she paying you?” Claire questioned Tig. “It can’t be money…she doesn’t have any. Sex? Who’d want to fuck her? Stupid bitch spouting off nonsense, embarrassing her father and me in front of everyone. You know she’s crazy as a loon, right?” The gash directed to him. Turning her head back to Nancy, “Can’t stand to look at you. Should have just fucking died with your bitch mother.” Claire sneered.

Tig hissed as Claire went on her rant. His hands holding her tighter in his constricting hold.

He couldn’t take it anymore, he slapped Claire across the face. It was sharp and fast. The sound of his hand striking Claire’s cheek echoed against the concrete and metal. His handprint flared red on her cheek. Claire’s head swung from the force of the hit. He leaned over her. Eyes dark with fury.

“She’s mine. And she’s coming with me.” If Nancy weren’t right there, he’d have shot her dead. Most people that got on the receiving end of his fury, recognized the shit that they were truly in.
His fury with Claire was met with the vindictive anger in the gash’s eyes. And he knew that Nancy wouldn’t have survived to escape this gash.

He went to Nancy, pulling her into his arms. “No more of this. Ye’ hear. Ye’re free of this shite.” He whispered into her ear. Nancy nodded and hugged him back.

“You have everything from in here?” He asked her as they pulled back.

“Yes. Just the paperwork in the safe.”

“Aye, okay. Let’s go.” He said, ushering her towards the stairs.

He glanced meaningfully at Tig. He wished he could do it himself, but he felt Nancy shaking in his arms and knew she needed him more.

“I got this.” Tig’s eyes cold as he quickly released Claire. Pulling his gun, pressing the muzzle into Claire’s forehead.

“Oh my God!” Claire yelled, shock and thread of fear lacing her voice.

Nancy paused at the sound, looking back to Tig and Claire. “Don’t kill her.” She ordered.

“She deserves it, doll.” Tig replied as Claire gasped.

“I know. But death is too easy for her. Leave her in here.”

Tig looked back at her then to him. Questioning what to do. He stared back at her, that she’d let the bitch live.

“Please.” She entreated.

He nodded after a minute.

“Let’s go, Tig. Leave her.”

Tig backed off, gun still pointed at Claire as he and they climbed the stairs back to the main floor.

Tig slammed the door shut and he snapped the heavy lock into place. They stared at the door as they heard Claire storming up the wood stairs, the knob wriggling back and forth violently as Claire tried to get out. The heavy lock rocking slightly with Claire pushing on the door to open. Her yelling and screaming.

He pulled her into his arms again as they stared at the door a moment longer.

Nancy shivered in his arms, hearing Claire yell and bang on the door. A door that had kept her trapped down there for ten years. He smiled grimly at Nancy’s brand of retribution. She was right, putting a bullet her that gashes brain was too good for her.

“Safe?” Chibs prompted after another moment.

Tig looked beside himself at what was happening.

“This way.” She led the way up to the second floor, bypassing the guest rooms and her old room.

She tried the door to the master suite and found it locked. “In here, I don’t have a key.” She indicated. He gave the door the door a testing push.
“Where do they keep the keys?” Tig asked.

“Claire and my father have one each, they wear them around their necks. This room is always locked. Damn it. Sorry. Should have had it grabbed it off her.” Nancy berated herself. “Sorry.”

Claire started caterwauling again. The three of them looking at each other in shared disgust of thinking about trying to get the key off Claire. He looked to Tig, the two of them deciding it wasn’t worth wrestling Claire for a goddamn key.

“Jesus, don’t be sorry.” Tig said. “Felt like she’d fucking chew my goddamn hand off if I or anyone tried to take it from her.”

“Stand back, love.” He said, as he and Tig aimed their guns and shot at the door and lock to work the door loose enough that they could kick the door in.

Tig gave the door a couple of solid kicks and the door swung up from the force and ruined hold of the lock.

The master bedroom revealed, light flooded the room from the picture windows that faced the setting sun. A canopied, king-sized four-poster bed centered the room with thick oriental rugs. The walls painted bordello red.

The furniture heavy and expensive, most looked to be antique. The dresser reminded him of his mother’s dresser back in Glasgow when he was a kid.

Nancy looked around the room, as if she were seeing it for the first time, too.

Tig and he wandered the room and saw the master bath. It too, was decked out in gleaming white marble. Gold fixtures and floor to ceiling mirrors.

The contrast from the opulence of this one room to the cold grey box of the basement where Nancy was forced to live made him want to go back and put a bullet in that gash. Jesus Christ.

Tig moved to the toilet, unsnapping his jeans to use the facilities. He turned around and followed Nancy into a walk-in closet that Fiona would fucking kill for.

It was filled with posh suits on one side and Claire’s clothes on the other. A leather bench down the center, shoes lined up along the bottom of each wall.

Nancy swiftly pushed a set of dresses out of the way, revealing the safe. She punched in a code on the keypad and he saw her breath a sigh of relief as the safe opened. He saw that the safe was filled with jewelry, cash and a thick manila envelope.

She reached in and slid a tray out and picked out two jewel-laden gold rings, leaving the rest. Tucking the rings into a velvet, string-tie jewelers bag. Sliding the tray back into the safe.

He wondered what the significance the rings were. He’d never heard or saw of them before. Mentally adding the question to his growing list to ask her when they were out of here.

Leaning on its edge, she pulled out a thick manila envelope from the other side of the safe. Opening the envelope, she checked the papers inside. Satisfied, she dropped the bag of rings in the envelope and quickly slid the envelope into her bookbag.

He saw her pause as she caught sight of the cash, biting at her lip in contemplation.
“They owe you for the wrong they did to you. Take it. Your choice. We don’t need it, but you should take it.” He advised.

Nancy looked to him at his advice. Reaching in and taking only half of the cash hoard, holding it out to him to take. “For the leathers and the helmet. For a new life. I don’t want to be a burden.” She said trepidatiously, biting at her lip.

He took the cash from her, tucking them into his jacket without bothering to count it. Grabbing her up in a kiss again. “Aye, a new life. And you could never be a burden.” He said when they broke for air. His hands running down her arms, soothingly.

She nodded and reached back to the safe, closing the door. Her fingers flying over the keypad.

“What are you doing?” He asked curiously.

“Changing the combination.”

He grinned and gave an amused chuckle at her brand of evil plan to annoy her father and she-beast.

She caught his amused look and gave a quick grin.

“Remind me not to piss you off, aye? Got a feeling you’re to keep me on my toes.” He teased.

She rolled her eyes at him as they walked out of the closet. Finding Tig laying spread out on the bed. Smoking a cigarette as he waited for them.

“Comfy?” Chibs asked wryly.

“Mattress is too soft.” He shrugged, as he got up. “And you need mirrors on the ceiling. Can’t have a bedroom like that without mirrors. Room like that...gotta go with a rotating bed, too.”

He sighed and shook his head at Tig’s idea of decorating. Quirking a grin to Nancy who shuddered at such an idea.

“Come on, let’s get out of here.” He prompted. They could hear Claire’s yelling and banging even though they were up on the top-level of the house.

“Christ, she’s got a set of lungs.” Tig complained.

“You have no idea.” Nancy muttered.

Tig shook his head, as they trouped down the stairs. The idea of her father and that gash sleeping up here, fucking up here, while their kid was trapped in the basement.

He wondered if they would have let her out if the house caught fire. Looking at Nancy’s thin frame and haunted eyes, he suspected they’d let her burn. Fucking assholes.

The front door opened and Nancy froze as her father walked into the house. He saw his eyes sweeping up the stairs where he, Nancy, and Tig were coming back down.

He and Tig pulled their guns swiftly and sighted on her father. He moving down the last steps to get between her father and Nancy. Tig moving in tandem with him.

The sound of Claire screaming in the basement made her father glance towards the noise and then back to her and the guys.
“What the hell is going on here?” Roger demanded, his face blotchy-red as he stood quaking in rage.

His pale, watery-blue eyes quickly moving towards the bedroom where they had just left. Saw him realize that they had gotten into the bedroom where the safe was located.

“Nancy! Who the hell are these men? And where do you think you’re going? What did you do to Claire?”

“Seriously?” Tig asked astoundedly.

“Told you shit was fucked up.” He answered back to Tig, his eyes remained fixed on her bastard father.

“It doesn’t matter who they are or where I’m going. And Claire is fine. As you can hear. I’m leaving.”

Her father’s face turned deeper red, that clashed with his pale strawberry blonde hair, as the bulk of the three of them pressing her father out of the way of the door. Their presence forcing Roger to back up into the dining room so they had access to the door.

“You’re not leaving! Not without signing those papers! I’ve been working my ass off to keep you and Claire in this house and clothed. And this is the thanks I get!” He screamed at her.

“What the fuck is with the papers they want you to sign?” Tig asked confusedly.

Nancy went still, looking at her father. Giving him a shake of her head that whatever conclusion she came to regarding him, he came up wanting.

“Since I’m such a burden to you and Claire, I’ll free you of that responsibility.” She grabbed the door and opened it further.

“You leave here, I’m calling the cops!” Roger threatened.

“No, you won’t!” Nancy rounded on him. “I’m eighteen years old, I’m no longer a minor. There is nothing you or they can do to stop me from leaving. Your buddy the Chief can’t help you. He’ll tell you the very same thing I’m telling you now. I am no longer yours or Claire’s to abuse.”

“The papers, you need to sign them.” Her father demanded desperately.

“No! I don’t! I never did, and I never will. It was never yours.” She said forcefully. “Mom made me promise. I kept that promise. Unlike you...” Her voice laced in disgust. "...who slept with Claire while still married to mom. You broke your vows, your oath to her. I don’t owe you anything.”

“Fucker.” He grumbled.

“That’s shitty.” Tig commented.

She ignored them, staring at her father. “Why was mom running from you? Telling me how sorry she was. Crying and apologizing to me. To me, an eight-year old. What did you do to make her run from you?”

With every question she leveled at her father, Roger backed up a step. That was odd. He seemed afraid of his own daughter.

“Not even a week after Mom died, you married her.” Her voice dripping with disgust as she
pointed towards where Claire was still banging and yelling against the basement door. “While I was still in a coma!”

“Bastard. You never read him?” He asked her.

“No. He never touched me. He had Claire to do his dirty work.”

He saw her father rocked back at her accusations. The wheels turning in his head that this was the last time he had a chance to get her to do what he’d been trying to get her to do for years. And it was all crashing down around him.

She looked to him, her hand going to his lower back. “Let’s go. There’s nothing here for me anymore.”

“Absolutely, mo chridhe.” He took her hand, keeping the gun trained on Roger as they moved out the door. Tig exiting behind them. Once clear of the door, they hustled down the porch steps and to their bikes. He and Tig quickly holstering their weapons.

Roger came running out the door, yelling after them. He quickly getting on his bike, his eyes sliding to her as she gripped his shoulder, climbing on behind him. He and Tig firing up their bikes, drowning out her father’s enraged voice. Bastard running towards them, but it was too late as they rode away.

They roared out of the quaint neighborhood, pulling back onto the main road. She clutched at his waist tightly. He felt her shaking from the confrontation with her father and Claire. At a stop, he put a hand to hers to help calm her. Christ, what a day. And it wasn’t over yet.

Tig lead the way to their holy site...a Harley shop.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
My heart = mo chridhe
They pulled into the parking lot of the Harley dealership. Tig waiting for them.

“Go ahead Tig, we’ll be there in a moment.” He said to him, as he felt Nancy shivering behind him.

His hand covering over hers at his waist. Felt her turn her head against his back. The sky turning dark overhead.

“You sure?” Tig gave him a questioning look.

“Just need a minute.” Giving Tig a solid look telling him to go away and to give them time alone.

“Okay. If I don’t see you in ten, I’ll come back to check on you.”

Soon as Tig turned his back on them, he twisted around so that he was facing her on the bike. His hands bringing her into a deep hug as she shook from shock. The drama at her house with her father and the she-beast still riding both of them. Her mostly though.

“I’m okay, I’m okay.” Her voice hitching. Trying to make herself believe it.

“Aye, ye’ are.” He hushed, his hands stroking down her back.

“It’s not true what they said.” She said emphatically looking up at him. “It’s not true.”

“I know. Don’t let them mess with your head.” He gave her a solid eye contact that showed her he was with her now and he wouldn’t fail her like so many people before did.

Nancy’s breathing slowed and evened out. She nodding her head. He pulled her into a hug again, as her momentary breakdown calming down.

“Sorry.” She apologized. Embarrassed by all the drama with her father and Claire.

“Hey, you have nothing to be sorry for. It’s your father and that gash who should be sorry. Grateful that we let them live. And from what I’ve seen in the dreams, they deserve more than a tongue lashing. They are evil for what they did to ye’. I have half a mind to go back there and finish the job.”

“No.” She said quickly in a panic.
“They deserve it for what they did to you.” He said seriously.

“I know, but they aren’t worth it. Please.” She begged desperately.

He sighed as he let go the idea of going back. Let go of his anger, how her father and the she-beast treated her. Nancy looked to him nervously. Taking care of her was more important.

Leaning his forehead to hers, eyes locked with hers. He kissed her and she relaxed in his arms.

“Come on, let's get you kitted out.”

Tig was talking the ear off of a salesman looking over some engine kit when he and Nancy walked into the shop.

He steered her towards the leather jackets and quickly started pulling jackets out, along with vests, and a pair of chaps.

A salesperson appeared next to him, “Anything in particular you’re looking for?” he asked.

“She needs a bit of everything. Going on a road trip west. Here...get a dressing room set up for her.” He replied, tossing the items he’d pulled already to the salesman.

He turning to the denim section he pulled several pairs of jeans and shirts. Passing those off to a second salesman.

He eyed her beat up shoes and moved to the boots area. “What size shoe you wear, mo gràidh?”

She blinked at how rapidly the pile had grown in the salesmans arms. “Um, do I really need all this?”

“Aye, you will. Its a long ride to California. We’ll have headwinds, you’ll thank me for the leathers. Shoe size?”

“Uh...nine?” She said as her mind went on overload. Chibs was a whirlwind in the shop, to the obvious delight of the sales staff that were coming back and forth. He studied the available boots and grabbed a couple different ones.

Her head spun as she was shown to a dressing room. The piles of clothes hanging on a rack. Staring at the clothes, she didn’t know where to start.

Claire always bought her clothes from Goodwill, along with a verbal reminder of how grateful she should be. She took special care of the clothes that she got, because she didn’t know when Claire would deign to bring her new ones.

Berating herself for standing there like an idiot, her headache rising, she quickly reached for the denim first. She had just slipped on a pair of jeans. They were loose, but not too badly. Figured once she gained some weight back they’d be fine.

Grabbing up a denim shirt, she was quickly undoing the buttons so she could try it on, when Chibs barrelled into the dressing room with more items for her to try on.

She gasped in surprise, her hands moving to cover her front, turning her back to him.

“Sorry, should have knocked.” He said at her swift move to cover herself. She looked back at him and saw him freeze, his eyes on her back.
“Oh, m’anam.” He said softly, his eyes glued to her back. His fingers tracing not only the protruding bones of her ribs and spine, but the remnants of the whip marks. “She whipped ye’.”

His eyes wide in shock, as he realized once again that his dreams were reality. And her reality was one of pure violence that left its ugly mark on her.

She stiffened in shock, her hand shot out to the wall to help hold herself upright. “You saw that?” She said in a small voice. Tears threatening to spill that he had to see her like this.

“Aye.” He said in a thick voice. He shaken as she was. His hand still tracing the leftover scars. “I should have killed her.”

Twisting around. “No.”

“Fuck. I saw her do it. Saw you patch yourself up. Only to have them bleed again when they forced you to play that fucking volleyball in gym. You needed stitches for what she did to ye’. So don’t tell me no.” He said angrily.

She grabbed onto his arm, holding him in place. “No. Her punishment will come for her without any help from you or I.”

“What do you mean?”

“She’s a sadist. She doesn’t need an excuse to beat the crap out of me. She does it because she can and enjoyed it.” She gripped his arm tighter, noting his eyes growing darker in anger at her words. Shifting so her body was blocking the door as she explained just how tenuous their situation was here.

“But you saved me. You got me out of there. Don’t throw our success today away for revenge that will bite you in the ass when the cops drag you off to jail. We aren’t safe yet. This isn’t Charming.” She reminded him. “Please.” She pleaded to him.

He paced the couple of steps he could move in given the tiny dressing room.

“This fucking town. I want to light the whole damn place up. Fuck.” He vented to her.

“Please, I know its asking a lot to let this go. Nothing good can come from you or Tig running off back to my father and Claire to mete out whatever punishment the two of you can devise. We’ll be lucky if Chris doesn’t call his father.”

“What?” His eyes sharpened on her.

“Tonight is the city council meeting. As mayor, he has to be there. He won’t be home until late to see how beat up Chris is. Chris’s pride will keep him from telling his father until his father takes a look at him. Which won’t be until the morning.”

“It’s why you stopped Tig going after that bitch at your school, isn’t it?”

“Yes. Tig’s on parole. Physically, Tig didn’t harm Jennifer. Only her phone was damaged. Not enough to call the cops with.”

“Jesus. It’s why you reminded your father about your age.”

“I’ve tried to get help before. The chief of police is an investor of my father’s fund, the entire police department, fire department. My principal, my teachers, my neighbors, to even all the city workers and council members. All of their pension and retirement funds are in my father’s
investment company. It’s over a hundred million dollars that my father is in charge of, just on the pension funds. And it’s all that much worse with all the personal accounts they’ve opened under my father’s purview. This town is in my father’s pocket. And everyone is very protective of my father’s well-being. To them, one wrong trade and they could lose over half their investment. It’s actually much worse, but I’m getting off the point...”

“Holy fucking Christ.” He started grasping the depth of reach her father has. How truly fucked things were here. “That doesn’t give them the right to beat...whip the hell out of you!”

“No, it doesn’t.” She agreed grimly. “Legally, the cops can’t come after me anymore because of my age. Chris’s pride will keep him silent of the assault, until tomorrow morning. Jennifer will just go to a store and buy a new phone on her mother’s credit card. She’s been wanting the latest iphone anyway, so her parents really won’t question what happened to her old phone. And she’ll be so busy with the rumor mill after today, she won’t go to the cops to file a complaint. And we’ll be gone before anyone can do anything. Like I said, this isn’t Charming.”

“I don’t like it. Someone hurts one of us, hurts an innocent...retribution is meted out. And they hurt you so badly. They fucking deserve it.”

“I’m sorry you had to watch all this happen. That I’ve dragged you into this. I didn’t know you were seeing it. That it was hurting you. I survived from whatever Claire and everyone dished out. And you’re here now, helping me to get out of here. That was your goal in coming to find me, wasn’t it? Don’t let your success be ruined over some pride. I’m sorry.” She hiccupped as she laid out her reasoning, trying to protect him and Tig.

He grabbed her up into a bear hug. “Don’t. Don’t fucking apologize. It makes it worse. Christ, I’m so worried for you.”

Nancy shook her head. “No. I’m looking forward to getting out of this town...this state. I’ll be okay. We’ll be okay, but we can’t stay here.”

“Okay. Okay.” He nodded, swallowing back his anger and need to seek out retribution. But she was right. They weren’t safe yet.

“Now, how are the clothes fitting?” He redirected their conversation back to the shopping they were doing. His voice gruff from the heavy emotional turmoil.

She stood in front of him as he frowned down at her. The smallest sizes were large on her. She shivered under his assessing look. Her hands and arms holding the denim shirt to her front. “I don’t think I’m going to need all of this. And its all so expensive.” She waved a hand at the rack full of clothes.

“I want you to have at least three change of clothes with ye’. We’ll go shopping proper once we’re back in Charming and settled. And don’t worry about the cost. This is good quality, it’ll last a long time.”

“Sorry. I just usually wear jeans and a sweatshirt. They’re loose now but I figure when I gain some weight back on they’ll fit better.” She explained.

“And I won’t have to do gym anymore. There’s no gym in the club, right?” She asked suspiciously.

Chibs snorted. “Weight room and a boxing ring. But its’ for the guys. No more gym if you don’t want to do it. Promise.” He grinned at her suspicious look, testing to see if he was lying to her. “And if you want to wear fairy dust, then I’m all for it.” Chibs winked at her with a sly grin.
She felt her face turn hot with his suggestive comment about her wardrobe. Or possible lack thereof. Realizing he was teasing her, she rolled her eyes at him. Glad that he wasn’t so hot under the collar to go racing back to her father’s house and do something rash.

“Good, now try on the leathers.” he said quickly, giving her a quick kiss. And was striding back out to the sales floor before she could reciprocate. She heard him chuckling as he went.

She sighed and turned back to the growing pile of clothes.

It was interesting to try on the chaps, she felt silly wearing them. They were thick but flexible enough that she could bend in them. She started giggling remembering the dream she had of Bobby wearing a pair of chaps. All the guys were laughing at him. Bobby telling them he had to protect the man hide.

“What has you all giggly?” Chibs came back with another armful of clothes.

“Nothing…” she waved his question off, as she glared at the pile.

His eyes narrowed at her.

“Fine, I dreamed of Bobby wearing a pair of chaps. All of you were laughing your asses off over it.”

“Oh, Christ. I remember that. Jesus. That idiot and his fucking chitty-chitty-bang-bang bike of his. We weren’t going all that far and he trots out in chaps and that fucking bike.” Chibs aggrieved.

“But our ride back, it’s winter still, much more miles. You’re going to thank me for those. Here try this jacket on.” He helped her into a black leather jacket.

It was heavy and way too big. Raising her arms up, her hands not able to reach the cuffs at all, showing Chibs.

Chibs nodded and went back out and grabbed a smaller size. This one was a better fit, but in a dark brown. She noted the vents and the various hidden pockets the jacket held. It was her favorite piece of new clothing she decided.

Chibs grabbed her discard pile and hauled them back out to the sales floor. Setting the jacket onto her keep pile she tried on the leather vest next over the denim shirt. It, too, was slightly too large.

She stared at herself in the mirror. Pulling at the vest. It wasn’t a type of clothing she ever thought she’d wear, she mused.

“You know, you don’t have to wear the shirt under that.” Chibs teased from behind her. His arms looping around her waist. His eyes catching hers in the mirror.

She blushed as she caught his meaning. Giving him a huff. “Well, it’d look better if I had boobs.” She commented, as she looked down at her flat chest.

He leaned down and kissed the curve of her neck with a deep groan. The feel and sound made her lean into him as he faced her eyes in the mirror again. “You’ll get better. I’ll make sure of it. And it ain’t your boobs or your looks that has my attention. Your strength, resilience, smarts, integrity. You’re downright lethal, m’anam.”

“It’s just...well...I’ve seen you with those women. And they’re well...well-endowed.” She said with a self-deprecating tone.

He sighed. “Nancy, there’s no comparison from them to you. Those women mean nothing to me.
Ever since I started dreaming of ye’, I couldn’t stand to be with anyone else. Even Gemma and her hugs and kisses for when I had to go on a run. Only one I want is right here. And you’ll get better physically. Just keep trying to eat and you’ll see.”

She blushed a little but held his eyes, her hand going to his cheek. He pressed a kiss into her palm as they enjoyed their small moment alone.

“You done here?” He asked.

“Yes.” She said quickly, perking up that he didn’t have more clothes for her to try on. He chuckled at her hopeful look that he wasn’t going to make her put on more clothes.

“Ah, not so fast…” he teased. “You need a helmet.” He announced as he led her back out to the showroom floor. “Ye’ know, most women would love to shop til they dropped.”

She pulled him to an abrupt halt from his comment. He looked back at her. “I am not most women.” She told him emphatically. “I know the value of the dollar, I know the value of truth. Shopping for clothes...just shopping in general...if it’s not for something to be of use, real use, I have no patience for it. It’s a waste of time and money. I don’t expect or want to be coddled. I’m not a Jennifer who expects everyone to buy her things or take care of her for the rest of her life.”

He mentally kicked himself, stepping close to her, her eyes blazing for his inconsiderate joke. “I’m sorry, m’ anam. I know you aren’t like that. I made a bad joke. Forgive me?”

She nodded, suddenly embarrassed that she got all bitchy at him over a stupid joke. “Sorry. I just… I don’t want you to think that I expect you to buy me things.”

“I know. But, you need to let me do things for you. There were so many times that I couldn’t help you. Let me help you, I need that.”

“Okay. Just don’t go crazy on the spending. You need to tell me something, don’t buy me flowers or something instead of just telling me.”

He gathered her in his arms, his hands brushing her hair back from her face. They stood there staring into each other’s eyes as they came to an understanding. They mutually leaned into each other for the kiss they both needed.

Breaking for air, their eyes finding each other again. “You still need a helmet though.” He grinned at her.

She huffed a laugh. “Fine.”

His grin widened and excitedly led her to where the helmets were displayed.

She watched him while he debated style helmets. “Try this. We’ll get the visor attachment to help keep the wind and bugs off ye. And it’s got bluetooth, so we can talk and listen to music on the ride.”

She took the black helmet and set it on her head. It fit well enough, tilting her head side to side testing the weight. Chibs fiddled with the strap. “Feel okay?” She nodded. Chibs grinning at her, looking bobble headed with the helmet on her.

“Chibs, don’t forget gloves and some shades for her.” Tig yelled at him.

“Aye, right.” Chibs pulled her to another counter and intensely studied the gloves on display. He
pointed out a set, the salesperson pulled them out and Chibs studied them up close before letting her try them on. They were brown leather that matched her new jacket.

She thought once they had gotten her the proper clothing for the ride home that they’d be heading to wherever was that they were staying. But Chibs moved on to the parts area for the bikes. Getting a couple of detachable, leather saddlebags and some other odd shaped equipment that she didn’t know what they were. The salesman and even a guy from the back came out to help him. Chibs nodding on the items he wanted.

“You can install all this on now?” He questioned the large service tech.

“Sure, no problem. Take about fifteen minutes.” The service tech answered with a confidant shrug.

Chibs nodded. “Okay, it’s the Dyna with the Scottish flag on the seat.”

The tech guy took off to do whatever it was that Chibs wants done to his bike.

She watched as Tig and Chibs spent another hour going over the bike parts available, Tig texting to the club back home, the salesman gleefully taking their order.

Her heart skipped a beat when the total was rung up. But the guys didn’t blink an eye as they pulled cash to pay for it all, noting that Chibs didn’t touch the cash she gave him. She wanted to say something about it, but thought it best she didn’t make a scene about it. Figuring, he could just reimburse himself later when they were alone.

They were all organizing their purchases to have shipped or have packed. Except her jacket and helmet, her clothes going on the bike, the salesmen cutting tags off and packing everything in the new saddlebags. Which were taken into the back where Chibs bike was being worked on.

Chibs and Tig were so focussed on the task at hand, she wandered off to explore more of the store. Her boots stiff as she wandered through the lines of shiny bikes, circling back around.

She looked back to Chibs as he talked with the salesman and took Tig’s ribbing with an annoyed sigh and eyeroll. Tig grinning like a loon as he teased Chibs. They hadn’t met on any level of normal circumstances. But the way she felt with him was a revelation. Her headache had eased and when he held her she wanted to weep in relief. She gave herself a mental shake. She did weep. Several times. God.

She slid down the wall and huddled into herself as her thoughts and doubts took over, her body exhausted by all the activity of the day. When she left the house this morning, it was just like any other day. Never realizing that it would end like this. With Chibs and Tig helping her.

She’d spent so much time, dreaming about Chibs to having him actually be here. Saving her from her father’s and stepmother’s tyrannical rule. She, of course, imagined Chibs saving her. But that was just silly fantasies. She never thought it would actually happen. Like some white knight saving the damsel in distress. Her fantasies and dreams of him and the club, it kept her sane. Kept her from falling into the despair of being trapped in that basement.

She shivered and was scared that Chibs would decide he wouldn’t want her. Why would he want a girl who was practically on death's door. She felt so unprepared. She was used to living in that house. She knew it was wrong, what everyone was doing to her. But it was what she had. There was a routine and knew what to expect most of the time.

Now, she was to embark on a road trip to California. To Charming. To the club. To a place where she didn’t know what would be expected of her. The not knowing was plaguing her. Worried that
the rest of the club would tell Chibs to get rid of her. Worse, tell him he was out because of her.

She curled up tighter, hugging her knees to her chest, her head was killing her and she didn’t want to bother Chibs. She’d bothered him too much already in just the few hours they’d met. Mentally, giving a hysterical laugh at herself. Not even twenty-four hours, she and Chibs were bound together by a force that she had no idea what it was or what to do about it.

Chibs frowned as Tig haggled with the sales guy. Selecting items that needed to be shipped. He realized time had gotten away from them and he hadn’t felt Nancy’s presence.

His head barking at him, he searched Nancy out. Spotting her across the room curled up in a tight ball in the far corner of the showroom. Fuck, he chastised himself for letting her alone too long. Hating to see her huddled on the floor like that. As if to make herself as small a target.

He started towards her, but he wasn’t fast enough because another salesman stopped by her in concern, leaned down and touched her hand. He saw Nancy gasp, throwing her head up, her eyes wide and unseeing.

Panic pulled at his gut as he ran to her. “Get your hands off her, now!” He pushed the guy off and dragged Nancy into his arms.

“Sorry, I was just checking on her.” The salesman apologized behind him.

“Nancy, you okay? Come on girl, you’re scaring me.” He ran his hands over her cheeks, brushing the her tears away.

“Gonna be sick.” She groaned, sure that the top of her head had exploded. Her stomach revolting on her.

He picked her up and carried her swiftly to the bathrooms. Kicking the door open and they’d just made it for her to lose her lunch. He swore when he saw her throwing up blood.

“Chibs? You all okay in there?” Tig yelled through the door.

“Find us some bottled water would you.” He ordered, halting Tig from entering the bathroom and finding her like this.

Chibs cradled her as she heaved. Embarrassment filled her, having Chibs see her like this. God she was a mess.

“Shhh, darling, just let it out. You’re okay, I’ve got you.” He whispered to her. trying to sooth her.

She let the sound of Chibs voice fill her. His gruff tone, his scottish accent thickening as he switched from english to gaelic, in his worry for her. She felt embarrassed and ashamed for Chibs to see her like this. She felt like she was turned inside out, her head throbbing, each breath it eased off as Chibs held her. God, this was such a fucking mess, she yelled at herself.

“Sorry. I’m sorry.” She cried. “I couldn’t stop. When he grabbed my hand...”

He leaned over and flushed the toilet as she rattled off her apologies again.

“Did he do anything?” He asked as he pulled some toilet paper from the roll, wiping at her mouth. His hands, pulling her hair back as he checked her over. She was pale and he could see just how tired she was.
“No, no, nothing like that, he’s a good person. It just surprised me, I just slipped into him so fast, I couldn’t stop or get my bearings. Sorry.”

“No, no, nothing like that, he’s a good person. It just surprised me, I just slipped into him so fast, I couldn’t stop or get my bearings. Sorry.”

“Okay. We’re almost done here and we’ll go to the motel to rest up. Can you hang on a bit?”

Nancy nodded mutely.

Tig came in and handed him a water. “She okay?”

Chibs unscrewed the top and held the bottle to Nancy’s lips, tilting it carefully. “Come on, you’re dehydrated, sip carefully.” He instructed her. Satisfied that she was doing as he asked. “Aye, just lost her lunch is all. You done out there?”

“Yeah, they’re finishing up your bike. Should be good to go in five.”

“Right, we’ll be there in a minute.”

Tig walked out, Nancy looked a bit more alert. “How long have you been vomiting blood, luv?”

“I’ve been taking a lot of aspirin lately, the headaches. I just couldn’t take it anymore. Not that they were helping, but I had to try.”

“Okay, if this keeps up, we’ll have to get you to a doctor. No more aspirin.”

Nancy shook her head, eyes panicked. “No. No doctor. I can’t.” Her body stiffened in fear as she tried to pull away from him. He held tight to her and hushed at her.

Chibs swore when he saw her panic at the mention of seeing a doctor. Realizing with her abilities having a doctor touch her would be torture for her. “Okay, calm down, no doctor. Tig’s got some weed, that should help. I used up nearly all my stash on the ride out.”

“I’m sorry. I’d understand if you don’t want me.” She admitted softly, waiting for Chibs to say it was too much and he wanted out. Leave her to fend for herself. The water bottle crinkled in her tensing hands. “I don’t want to be such a burden. All the things you’ve done for me. God, I’m such a mess.”

“Stop. Just stop apologizing. You didn’t do nothing wrong. It was me. I lost track of the time and got distracted by the parts we were ordering. I should have been paying more attention to ye’. Letting that guy touch you. I’m sorry. Won’t happen again. And don’t be talking nonsense that I’m going to leave ye’. Just fucking kill me now if ye’ leave me. You are not a burden. I know you’ve had it rough, and it’ll take time. Time for you to trust me. We’ll get a handle on these headaches.”

Chibs said his eyes boring into hers, “We will figure this out. And you are not a mess. Believe me, I know a mess when I see it. You’ve had the deck stacked against you is all. We’ll figure it out, okay?”

Nancy nodded, took another swallow of water. She relaxed deeper into his arms, letting his body heat absorb into her, his hand at her forehead. She sighed, looking into his deep brown eyes. Giving him a weak smile. “Bet you never thought we’d end up here. Crumpled up on the floor of a bathroom stall at a Harley dealership.”

He grinned at her dry, ironic humor. “It has been an interesting day.” He kidded back to her. Glad that she seemed better enough to try and make a joke.

Nancy managed to finish the water and was able to keep it down. “Come on, let’s try standing.” He kept hold of her hands as he helped her up. She swayed a little, but seemed better. “Okay?”
“Yeah, thanks.” She breathed softly.

“Let’s get back to the motel. You can lay down and get some sleep.”

Chibs helped her back onto the sales floor. The sales staff looking at her worriedly. She glanced up at the man who touched her. “Ma’am, I’m sorry if I caused you any distress.” The guy apologized with wide eyes.

“It’s okay. Go to Daytona, you’ll meet your future wife there.” She said to him. His jaw dropped in shock with her unexpected advice. “Thanks for your help.”

Tig raised a brow at her exchange with the salesman. She let Chibs lead her to the counter, helping her into her jacket and helmet.

“You sure you’re okay to ride?” He asked her.

“Yeah. I can do it.” She told him. He frowned at her like he didn’t believe her, but steered her out the door. Tig following behind them.

She blinked at stared at Chibs bike. Now sporting the new, bigger saddlebags. And the parts that she didn’t know what they were for, now she recognized as a small backrest on the back of the seat along with bigger foot rests for her. She didn’t have time to thank him. He already swinging on the bike, his hand out for her to climb on.

Her hands slid around his waist as he readied to ride out. His hands gripping her hands, curling her fingers around the front of his belt. His fingers hard over hers, his intent clear. Don’t let go. She pressed herself closer to him as he started the bike.

Tig eyed them and led the way back to the motel.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
My darling = mo gràidh
Holy cow, I'm sooo sorry for not updating sooner. I've been through finals and had to catch up actual work. Even missed the local weather reports for the past couple of weeks. Can't believe x-mas is just a few more days away.

Anyway, here's the last chapter with everyone still in Naperville. I swear they will get to Charming. Didn't have time to nitpick at the grammar, sentence structure, pov, etc.

And Nancy doesn't know what Chibs is saying with his pet names for her. She's just polite in not bugging Chibs about it. Yet, at least.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nancy swayed dangerously as she climbed off the bike, her hand gripping the back of the newly installed seat back to keep her balance. Shite, he chastised himself as he quickly got off the bike and picked her up.

She whoooshed a surprised breath. “I...I can walk.” She protested. Struggling between wanting to be let down on her feet but not sure if she could walk...to not being seen as weak with Chibs and Tig by being carried to the room. By the grip Chibs had on her, she figured it would be easier to let him carry her. Vowing to not to let this happen again. She'd always managed on her own before. Didn't want to set the expectation that she wanted to be carried around all the time. That was ridiculous.

“Hush. You’re exhausted. Won’t take but a minute to get into the room.”

“Sorry.” She whispered into his neck, her body giving in, letting him carry her.

“Just rest, mo chridhe.” His worry ratcheted up again, realizing that she was barely alert. She’d been wrung through the wringer today.

“She okay?” Tig asked worriedly as hoisted their gear from the bikes, walking beside them to the rooms.

“You still have some weed left?”

“Yep. Never leave home without it.”

“Roll a couple joints for me, I’ll get her settled. She’s been self-medicating with a shit ton of aspirin. I’m hoping the pot will smooth her out and maybe help her eat, she needs calories.”

“Looks like she’s going to be dead asleep soon, why waste the weed?” Tig opined.

“She tossed her lunch, what little she ate. I want something in her stomach. Just get the joints for me. I’m going to need you to go to the store, pick up some milk and food. Toothbrush and comb for her, too.” He ordered to Tig. Tig shrugging and hurried off to the rooms with their gear.
“Give him some of the money from the house, to pay for the food and stuff.” She said.

He sighed and shook his head. “Don’t worry about that.”

She caught his eye, “I noticed you didn’t pay for my new clothes from the cash we took out of the safe. I didn’t say anything before, but I’m serious, I don’t want you to have to pay for my way.”

“Hey, take it easy. That money is yours. I can afford it. Don’t worry about it.” He shut her down on the argument as he stepped into the room. Tig holding the door open for him.

“We aren’t done talking about this.” She warned as he set her down on the bed.

He rolled his eyes at her as he pulled her boots off.

“Talking about what?” Tig asked.

“Jesus Christ.” He muttered, pulling out a fifty from one of the stacks of cash from the safe. “Here,” handing it to Tig, “...for the food and stuff from the store.”

“Satisfied?” He asked her.

“Yes. Thank you.” She said, her eyelids drooping.

He shook his head at her. “Just stay awake a little longer. Okay?”

She blinked at him. “I’m serious, mo ghaol. You need to eat something before you sleep.”

“Okay. I’m awake.” Her hand going to his cheek as he leaned over her. His dark eyes studying her.

“Good.” He said gruffly, giving her a quick kiss. “You got that weed?” He directed to Tig.

“I’ll go get it.”

She sat up and stared down at the jacket she was still wearing. Pulling at the thick tab on the zipper. He took over for her, gently knocking her hands out of his way.

“I can take my own coat off.” She huffed.

“I know ye’ can. I’m just helping. Remember what I told you. You need to let me help you.” He said back to her as he worked the coat down her arms and tossing it towards one of the chairs across the room.

“Why do I have this feeling that you’re going to be utterly ridiculous with this helping me all the time thing?” She pondered aloud with a deep sigh.

Chibs snorted at her. “If you’d see yourself, you’d know the answer to that question.” Relieved that she was awake and bantering with him. Asserting herself with him. That she still had fight left in her. He’d be calling the fucking ambulance if she collapsed on him now.

Tig came back with the joints. He had one lit already, handing it to Chibs. Tig settled back into a chair as he sat down next to Nancy. “She ever have pot before?” He asked.

“No.” She answered for herself as she pushed herself upright against the headboard, tired of Chibs and Tig talking over her. “But wait, we can’t smoke in here.” She pointed to the signage that this was a non-smoking establishment, screwed into the wall by the door.
Tig and Chibs looked to what she was pointing at and collectively rolled their eyes. Tig giggling in amusement.

Chibs huffed, “Mo ghaol, we’re outlaws. Outlaws don’t follow the rules. Lesson one.”

Nancy heaved a sigh of acceptance.

“This should be fun.” Tig teased.

Chibs rolled his eyes. He took a toke for himself. Holding the smoke a moment and breathed it out. Holding the joint to Nancy to take. “Take a small pull on this, not in your lungs at first, just in the back of your throat. Open your mouth and breathe in some air like normal. Then breath out.”

Nancy took the joint and tried to do as Chibs instructed, but ended up coughing from the burn. Smoke puffing out with every cough. She grabbing onto his thigh, his hand covering hers.

“Good Lord!” She wheezed. “How does anyone smoke?” Her eyes watering.

Tig smirked in amusement. “You better shotgun her.”

“What!? Noooo...no shotguns, enough with the guns today.” She whined hoarsely.

Tig laughed hysterically, “Not that kind of shotgun, doll. Oh my god. The guys are going to flip when they hear about this.”

“Go to the store, would ye’? Let me do this.” Chibs said crossly to Tig.

Tig winked at her, handing Chibs the second joint as he got up to go the store.

Nancy was too wiped out to care why Chibs was so angry. Once the door closed behind Tig, Chibs shifted the two of them so that they were face to face on their sides. Their legs entwined, her hand resting on his chest. Looking up at his whiskey, brown eyes as he looked down at her.

He took a drag on the joint again. She was oddly jealous at how easy he made that look.

He winked at her as if he knew what she was thinking. “Breathe in, darlin’.” He warned, as he leaned down and kissed her deeply, he breathing out the smoke of the joint from his draw into her mouth. She looked at him with wide eyes, but managed to hold it.

Chibs pulled back slightly watching her, she looking to him if she was doing it right. Lack of air, she breathed the smoke out.

“That’s shotgunning. A version of it.” He informed her. Blowing more of the smoke down into her face, where she was breathing. Filling the air around her face with the smoke of the pot.

“Ohhh.” She hummed. He lit the second joint, but she felt her body relax, her brain mushy. “I think I’m good.” She said as he wafted more pot smoke over her face. Making her blink.

“Lightweight.” He teased, but gave her another shotgun kiss anyway.

She gave him a mild glare, but he just chuckled at her. The two of them laying next to each other, relaxing finally. No more riding around town, no more parents to deal with, Tig out for a bit, just the two of them alone.

Chibs finished the last joint and she was about to fall asleep when Tig came back from the store, bag in hand.
Tig rolled his eyes at the two of them, curled into each other, hazy from the pot. “Awww, any room for me?” He teased.

Nancy gripped onto Chibs tighter, Chibs giving Tig the look he deserves. “No, you twisted wanker.”

“Whatsoever, I’ll be next door if you need anything else.” Tig tossed the bag at their feet on the bed, muttering under his breath as he walked back to his room.

“Sorry ‘bout that luv. Gotta keep tight leash on Tig.” He said as he grabbed up the bag. Setting her new comb and toothbrush on the nightstand next to him. He handed her one of the milk cartons when she finished sitting more upright against the footboard. Watching her as she opened the carton and taking a drink, he opened the family-size package of Oreo cookies.

“It’s okay. He cares about you.” she said, taking the cookie Chibs was handing her.

“So, what is with those papers you and your father were fighting over?” He asked curiously, drinking his own milk and sharing cookies with her.

She sighed heavily. “My grandparents, they left me a trust when they died. That and their wedding rings.”

“A trust? Like a trust fund?”

“Yeah, I guess. Legally, I couldn’t do anything with it until I turned eighteen. And when I did, my father refused to hand it over.”

“Bastard. Must have a bit of money in it for him to go after you for so long to sign it over?”

“Maybe. I really don’t know.” She shrugged. “My father and Claire, they were just so...intense about it. The more they pushed, the more I resisted. My mother made me promise to never give it to my father.” She blinked and took another drink of the milk, remembering the day her mother died. The day that everything changed. This day, too, she’ll remember for the rest of her life.

Chibs listened to her, handing her another cookie. She rubbed at her eyes as she saw the questions in his eyes.

“I was only eight when she made me promise. I was so scared. We were running around the house, packing and rushing to leave before my father came home. We had to hurry. Get out before my father got home. She was crying and kept saying she was sorry. Even in the car...her driving. Her eyes in the rear view looking at me. I just kept saying okay to try and get her to stop crying. But it only made her more upset. Then the car crashed. Her screaming in pain was the last thing I heard. The sensation of flying and pain as I was thrown from the car. My face hurt for a long time. It was storming, I remember the rain hitting my face, thought that the rain was hurting me. Then nothing.”

Chibs ran an arm around her shoulders, pulling her against his chest.

“Woke up a week later in the hospital. My father frowning down at me as if I’d pissed on the carpet. Claire was with him, her eyes gleaming in joy. Telling me my mother died and Claire was my new mother. Life became...well, you know.” She shrugged.

“If you were supposed to get the trust when you turned eighteen, why did he still have it locked up?”
"He held out hope that I would sign it over. Promised Claire he’d buy her whatever she wanted when I did. When he refused to give me the trust, it made me even more suspicious of him."

She took another sip of the milk and an oreo. Chibs ate another cookie, waiting for her to continue.

"He and Claire, they kept saying I wasn’t smart enough. That it would be best if it was handled by a professional. It pissed me off, I’d been getting straight A’s in all of my classes. Well, except for gym. God...I hate gym. Even with my barely passing grade in gym, my honors classes kept my GPA at the top of my class. Would have been valedictorian if I’d finished out the school year. Not that it mattered because I already graduated high school."

"Wait, what?" He looked confusedly at her. "You graduated already?"

"Took the GED last year, along with my ACT and SAT tests. Had the results mailed to the neighbor’s address. Actually, surprised the school let me in this past year. Technically, I’m not supposed to be there. They never said to not show up, so I kept going." She shrugged as she ate another Oreo. Chibs staring at her in astonishment.

"Mary, mother of Christ. And those assholes beat on you there, threatened to rape ye’. Why would you keep going there if you didn’t have to? Why keep it a secret?"

"It let me out of the house."

"And if they knew you graduated?" Chibs tensed, as he watched and listened to her.

She merely looked to him the weight of what might have happened if she didn’t have to go to school. Locked in the basement the entire time. Never going outside again. Left to live on only oatmeal.

"No more, you’re out of that hell. You’ll be safe with me. I promise ye’."

Their hands weaving into each other at his promise. She smiled to him. "Thank you." She whispered. "I’ll try my best to stay out of your way, to not be a problem for you."

"Hey. I’ve said it before, I’ll keep saying it, you are not a burden. I don’t know what is happening to us. I can’t seem to keep my hands off ye’. The headaches start up whenever we let go of each other."

"I noticed that, too.” She gave him a shy smile. "It felt so good, it feels really good. Like I can finally relax. Yet bigger.” She blushed under Chibs intense look, "Sounds stupid."

Chibs huffed a laugh, recalling how they practically had sex soon as they were in each other’s arms. In front of most of the school population.

"It’s not stupid, cause I felt it, too. And just so you know I’m not some sex-crazed fiend.” He pointed out to her with a soft breath and a small shake of his head. "Didn’t know what the hell I was doing. Soon as you were in my arms, fuck, I’m not letting you go. We’re meant to be. Just know it."

"Seemed the longer we touched each other the further the pain dropped off. And…”

"What?"

"I don’t know, seemed that if there is a God or something…it’s as if they just decided that we were meant for each other. Sending us each other dreams about the other, the headaches. And it was
them saying ‘Finally, took you long enough.’” She huffed.

“Now that’s a thought.” He mused with a grin.

“So, what else have you seen from the dreams?” He asked as he handed her another cookie.

She sighed. “It’s like I said before. Most times, you were working in the garage. At meetings with the guys in the conference room.”

“Chapel.” He corrected her. “Or church.”

“Right, chapel. Belfast. That was interesting. When you were riding and meeting up with the Belfast charter. You were so giddy to see your family again. I read up on Ireland. Mostly looked at pictures. It’s so green there. Not too familiar with this whole Cause thing that everyone was talking about. Everyone was running around trying to find out what happened to Abel and what Jimmy was doing.”

“Did you see Fiona and Kerrianne?” He asked curiously.

“Yeah. Felt like I was intruding, watching you with them. Was kind of pissed at Kerrianne for being such a brat. There you were with the guys trying to fix things and she’s being all shitty about it. Not wanting to leave Belfast for her and her mom’s safety.”

Chibs groaned, recalling the incident in the van. “Okay, need to set some things straight. Kerrianne, she’s grown up practically her whole life without me. She was just a baby when I was sent away. Belfast is her home, her life is there. And she is only fifteen, thirteen when we were in Belfast.” He reasoned with her.

“I missed a lot of her life and her being a teenager, it was no wonder she threw a fit. I would have loved it if she and Fi did come to California with me at the time. But we’d been apart for so long, life took us in different directions. We all grew apart. Soon as Jimmy was dealt with, Fi and I divorced. She and I still talk and email. I send money to her to help with the bills and such. Kerrianne is emailing me. It’s better now that Jimmy is out of the picture. Okay?” He cocked a brow at her, waiting for her to accept the way things are with him and his ex and daughter.

“You were lonely though.” She said softly, the feeling of that loneliness tugging at her just thinking about it. “I’d show up and you would be at the bar, drinking. Watching the guys all hang over the women there. Jax with Tara, Opie now has Lyla. Tig and the rest of the guys having fun with the other women there. You would be off by yourself, watching and drinking. I’d sit next to you. Tried talking to you. But you never saw or heard me. Show up sometimes at your house. All those bedrooms and the big yard. It had to be hard to let that dream of Fi and Kerrianne go.” She squeezed his hand.

“Aye, at times, it was hard. But I couldn’t go back, not while Jimmy was still alive. I was excommunicated from the Army. If I’d gone back, Fi and Kerrianne might have been hurt or worse. I would have been killed most like. I hated it. JT and Piney, they kept me from flying back there, so many times. Wanting to keep me alive. Keep Fi and Kerrianne alive. It all worked out in the end. I got my revenge. Fi and Kerrianne are safe now. But Fi and I both realized that we’d become different people. Fi would never have just come back to me to be my old lady. She’s a good mother, looking out for Kerrianne like she has. I couldn’t bring myself to make them come to California and my life is in the club...in Charming now, I can’t leave it. Jax, he’s like a son to me. And I’m glad. Glad that Fi is okay. That we’re okay. If this was happening while still married to Fi. Oy. I don’t wanna think about that. I’d say, just let things be. It all worked out. So don’t be mad at Kerrianne, she’s just a teenager. I’m sure you felt that way at times.”
“I couldn’t afford to feel that.” She said softly, her voice hitching.

He hugged her close at her soft admission. His heart twisting that she couldn’t just be a teenager and mess up. Messing up meant more beatings.

“I don’t know about that.” He teased, as he pulled away when he felt her relax again.

“What?” She looked at him in puzzlement.

“I’d seen you go twenty rounds with that asshole teacher. History teacher...WWI, wasn’t it?” He grinned as he saw her slap her hand to her head.

“God. You were there for that?”

Chibs chuckled. “Aye. Fucking proud of ye’ standing up to the drunk prick. Then barging into weeble wobble’s office, slamming and pushing the proof of the facts at them. Jesus, I was proud of ye’.”

She sighed, “God. He stunk to high heaven. And nobody was correcting what the hell he was saying. Nobody else was telling him he was wrong. Teaching the way he was. Uhg...I couldn’t take it. It was worth the punishment at home for that.”

“Was that the whipping?” He asked, his body suddenly still and alert as he pressed her for more information.

“No.” She shut down, not liking where his question was leading her.

“Will you tell me what made her do that to you?” He asked giving her a heavy look of expectation. “I want to know what happened to have that bitch whip you.” He prompted.

She shook her head. “It doesn’t matter, nothing came of it.”

He sighed at how she shut down at his question. “I want you to trust me. To tell me things. I’ve seen more than I wanted to of what was done to you but not everything. You’re out of there now...but that torture, it has a way of coming back and biting you in the ass. You understand what I’m saying?”

She squirmed a little. “I suppose with us having to hang onto each other, it’d make sense for both of us to have that open line of communication.”

Chibs gave her a smile. “Christ, you’re smart. Okay. You have a point. Full disclosure?”

She nodded with a yawn.

“You know, I’ve done that myself when I came to you. Sit next to you as you huddled in the corner of the library. Books all around you. Stand in front of you when the assholes were...” He broke off. “Watched over you when you slept or passed out. Got angry with you for letting those assholes treat you the way they did. I didn’t know about the readings.”

She sighed heavily. “I’ve scoured every book on psychology and with the exception of science fiction, I don’t know why I’m this way.”

Chibs grunted in agreement. He, too, couldn’t find what was going on with them.

“Every time I fell into someone, I was so scared. Scared I’d never get back to myself. My own mind and body. I told people at first what was happening. The doctors in the hospital just said it.
was the medications and an active imagination. They put me through their tests and it was the only conclusion they could come up with. That I’d outgrow it or something.”

He handed her another cookie. “Aye, for all their training, docs can be pretty clueless. Went to several of them when the headaches weren’t easing up after the car bomb.”

“Hmm...these are good.” She said absently, her mind too fuzzy to keep up the conversation regarding their shared headaches and dreams.

Chibs grunted. “We’ll be expanding your culinary taste buds from now on. No more oatmeal or peanut butter for you. Christ, even I was getting sick of your diet.”

“So, is Charming really real? The clubhouse?” She asked, changing the subject.

“Of course they are. Charming’s a small town, much smaller than Naperville here. There’s a main drag where most of the shops are. TM and the clubhouse is a little further out. Been in the club since I came to the states after Belfast. Was a bit of a mess back then. The Sons took me in, I still have ties to the Army and we buy guns from them to sell to other clubs. The money goes to the Army...for the Cause.” Chibs paused and looked at Nancy. “How much do you want to know, you know that we’re outlaws, aye?”

“Nooo...really?? And here I thought you were all boy scouts running around town, helping little old ladies cross the street.” She rolled her eyes. As he groaned at her teasing. Leaning in to pass her another kiss.

“Witch.” He teased after he pulled back, his eyes crinkling up at her amusement.

“Look, I’m going to know the truth whether you tell me or not. Been watching you and the club for months, the cat is out of the bag. So might as well tell me. Even if its bad. Not sure what I’ve seen was linear in time or if I was jumping back and forth. I like your hair long like this.” She said in amusement, reaching up to run her hand through his hair.

His brows popped up at her comment about his hair. “Really? Anything else ye’ like about me?” He teased.

Her face reddened.

“Thinkin’ maybe ye’ saw more of me than what you led on before? Maybe didn’t avert your eyes at those parties, perhaps?”

She slammed her hands to her face. “God. I did, too!” She defended herself.

Handing her another cookie. “It’s okay. I am pretty handsome.” He said proudly.

She narrowed her eyes at him. “Ego much? What do you like to do outside of the club?” She asked, changing the topic.

“Don’t have much time lately, usually I’d go on short bike trips, to clear out my head. Read. I like going to vintage music stores. I’m a bit of a music hound.”

“What’s your favorite kind of music?”

“Been digging Johnny Cash lately. Can’t stand pop music, its all too fluffy for me. Need some decent lyrics and melody. Something with grit. Do you have a favorite musician or band?”
“Justin Bieber. He’s sooo dreamy.” She gushed, batting her eyelids.

Giggling when she saw the panic hit Chibs eyes. “I’m kidding, relax. Can’t stand him. Not that I
know who he is. Picked up on some stuff from reading Jennifer and her girlfriends. Saw them
swooning over him.”

“Jesus, don’t do that. Scare the crap out of me. Had visions you bopping around to that teeny
bopper wanker.”

Nancy giggled some more as he shivered the evil thought of Bieber out of his head. He looked
back at Nancy as she hummed and kept a hand to his chest, her face relaxed and her eyes bright
with laughter.

She was lit up like a full moon in the darkest of nights. He felt blinded by her. It released
something inside him, he’d never seen her so happy in all of his visits.

He smiled back at her, his hands caressing her sides. He never wanted her to stop smiling at him
like that. He’d go to heaven and hell and back again to make sure she always smiled like that at
him. He had no idea how he deserved such a look from such an innocent person.

“I’m so glad your still alive.” He said softly. Nancy gripped him tighter. “I was so worried. Half
afraid you were just a figment of my imagination, half afraid you weren’t and I’d be too late.” He
confessed. Nancy hugged him tighter yet. The emotions too overwhelming to speak coherently.

He leaned in and kissed her reverently. Taking his time to enjoy the feel of her lips on his, her
hands on him, her under him. He felt his body heat up and his cock grow heavy as they explored
each other.

Nancy’s eyes fluttered from his touch. And he realized, that she hadn’t been touched except in
violence since she was a child. She was skin hungry as much as she was stomach hungry. Starved
of affection, tenderness.

There was a fleeting memory of him and Fi when they first came together, it wasn’t the actual sex
that was so satisfying, although that was good, but it was the intimacy of just touching and
exploring your partner. Even just holding hands was an exploration.

Chibs caught the yawn she had tried to stifle, and he just grinned. “Go to sleep, mo ghaol. It’s
okay.”

Nancy made to protest, but her body understood his command and she dropped off into slumber.
Soon after, he followed after her. The excitement of today’s events, the effects of the pot, and more
than anything, to finally have his girl in his arms. His body shut down for some much needed rest.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
- My heart = mo chridhe
- My love = mo ghaol
He woke pretty much in the same position as he fell asleep in. Nancy had squirmed tighter into his side, her legs twining with his, her arm thrown over his waist. Her soft breaths a gentle puff of air along his neck. His arm wrapped around her, holding her close.

It took him a second to realize that they weren’t alone. He pulled his gun from under his pillow, thumbing the safety off, pointing it to where he sensed the disturbance in the room. His body rolling up, hovering half-over Nancy protectively, while sighting down the barrel. His body on high-alert to the imminent danger.

Tig was wearing a shit-eating grin as he snapped his picture. Completely unfazed for his safety.

“What the fuck are you doing?” He growled.

“The guys have a bet going. Needed proof.” Tig said, his tongue curled around the corner of his lip, his eyes concentrating on the viewfinder of the phone rather than the loaded gun pointed at him. Idiot. He flipped the safety back on and felt his adrenaline drop off. His heartbeat back to normal he set the gun down next to him.

“It’s just past seven. We should get packed and get on the road.”

“Aye, give us a few.” He rubbed at his eyes. “Shite.”

“What?”

“I don’t have a headache. Thank God. Its’ the first day I woke up and didn’t have a headache since the fucking car bomb.”

“That’s good, right?”

“Aye, just not sure why or how.”

Tig scratched at his jaw. “You slept with the girl, every time the two of you were hanging onto each other you felt better.”

The two of them paused as they thought about the implications of that fact. “Fuck, what the hell am I going to do? I can’t take her out on runs. Have her sit with me at the table.”

Tig shrugged. “Fuck if I know. We’ll figure it out though, like everything else. Right now, we need to start putting some miles out if we’re going to get back before the end of the week. So get your ass moving. There’s coffee, juice and donuts on the table.”
Tig left to pack his bag in his room.

He turned to look at the sleeping girl in his arms. Still out of it. He groaned and shifted carefully out of bed, he went to the bathroom and took a quick shower. He felt his head start pounding again and knocked his head against the tile wall. Fuck, can’t even take a shower alone. This was going to get complicated.

He stepped out of the bath and saw Nancy blinking in the morning light. Sounds of the traffic and people moving from their rooms to the parking lot filtered into their room. From the sound coming out of Tig's room, he had some stupid cartoon on.

She looked to him and blushed at his nearly naked form fresh from the shower, wearing only a tiny towel tucked low at his hips. Her eyes taking in his tattoos and the necklaces he wore and how his muscles rippled as he moved towards her.

He smirked as her cheeks flooded with her blush. Shyness of his nakedness but mixed with heated curiosity. He grinned at her reaction. Letting her know he saw it. Which only made her blush deepen. The heat between them flaring, his cock thickening with where such looks could lead. Normally seeing a look like that in a woman he was interested in, he wouldn’t hesitate to move on that instinct. But his headache flared, jerking him back from thinking about sex. He catching the same reaction from Nancy as her own headache flared, too.

Idiot. He chastised himself. Now was not the time to be thinking with his cock. She'd just been barely out of the hellhole she called home, starved and beaten. She didn't need him pressing up on her at the moment. God he felt good with her though. He wanted her to be healed up more before they explored their physical attraction. And Christ, she was a virgin. She deserved better than some rank motel room, where Tig could just walk in at any moment.

He groaned and eased back onto the bed on all fours, Nancy raising her hands to his shoulders as he leaned his forehead to hers. The headache easing back again. Yep, Tig was right, they had to be touching for the headaches to leave them alone.

She sighed as her own headache eased off. One of her hands went to cover her mouth. “Urgh… I forgot to brush my teeth last night.” Her face screwed up.

He chuckled and kissed the hand covering her lips. Her free hand slipping down his chest and around his waist, making him shiver at her touch.

“Morning, mo gràidh.”

Her eyes confused, her hand over her lips setting on his shoulder. “Mo what?”

He grinned. “Its gaelic, mo gràidh means my darling.” He took advantage and kissed her properly.

“Gah! Why are you kissing me? I’m all gross…” She complained lightly.

He shook his head at her all amused by her reaction. Giving her a chuckle. “Mo gràidh, there’s nothing gross about ye’. Besides, once we get on the road, we’ll take another poll on the gross factor.” Kissing her again, despite her annoyed glare.

He slid off to the side of her, their eyes locked on each other. His hand taking hers in his, their fingers dovetailing. He sighed as his headache from his shower finally eased off. God, he did not want to get up from this bed. “Tig’s already been in here, we have to get moving. Its a long trip back to Charming.”
She looked twisted his hand and wrist around to look at his watch for the time. “Yeah, we do need to get going. Let me take a shower and dress.”

“Okay. How’s your head?”

Nancy lifted her eyes to his in thought at his question. “Fine, better in a long time.”

“Okay, go shower, quickly.” At her questioning look for his directive. “Just testing a theory out. Go on.” He watched as she got up from the bed and disappeared into the bathroom. Taking a change of clothes, her new toothbrush and comb with her.

Getting out of bed, he pulled on a pair of fresh jeans and t-shirt. Going to the table, he took one of the coffee cups. Sipping on the coffee as he waited for her.

His headache rushing back. And oddly, his attention was hyper-aware of where Nancy was. His eyes kept going to the bathroom door. The shower shut off, and he heard her moving around in the tiny bath.

When she finally opened the door, she was dressed in her new denims. Her feet still bare. She moved quickly towards him. Holding his hand to her and pulling her into his lap, she sighed in relief along with him.

He lit a joint, taking a drag looking at her intently, she leaned down and kissed him as he blew the smoke into her mouth. She held onto it as they parted, to slowly breathe the smoke out again. He took a toke for himself. Pushing a donut her way.

“Dear god, what is happening to us? I can’t go for a shower by myself without my head wanting to crawl off and die.” She complained softly as she tore the donut in half, and half again. To finally nibble on the small portion of the pastry.

“Don’t know.” He sighed, pushing some juice towards her.

“I mean, we survived before yesterday. It wasn’t great.” She grimaced. He gave her a look. ”Okay, it was horrible, but it was manageable.” He sent her another look. “Somewhat manageable.” She amended.

They ate their breakfast each in their own thoughts. “Whatever it is, we’re not going to figure it out in the next five minutes. You finished?” Nancy nodded and got up from his lap.

She grabbed her socks and boots, sitting on the edge of the bed to put them on, while he quickly packed their stuff.

Nancy finally dressed including her new chaps, helped him straighten out the room.

Holding hands, they made their way down to their bikes. Tig waiting for them, smoking a cigarette.

Nancy watched him pack and stow their gear on his bike. Climbing on first he held a hand to her assisting her onto the bike behind him.

“Keep at least one hand around my belt. If the headaches start up, push my t-shirt up and touch me with your hand.”

Nancy nodded that she heard him. Her hands coming around his waist, one curling around his belt. Satisfied, he started his bike and Tig followed them out of the parking lot. A couple of stoplights and they were flying out onto the highway. The wind in their faces, trying to beat the sun’s progress to the western horizon.
Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My darling = mo gràidh
Chapter Notes

Happy Holidays!

Longer chapter, this time.

Time and distance will be stretched and pulled. And I've never actually driven across the country myself, so any mistakes are all mine. Just using my imagination. And really, the locations of their stops aren't that important.

They made good time heading out of Naperville. Stopping for gas, she wandered around to stretch her legs out. Tig strode inside the gas station to buy more cigarettes and pay for their fuel.

Chibs pulled her into his arms for a hug when she circled back to him. Cooling off their shared headaches. His dark eyes looked her over. “You holding up okay?”

“Yeah. I’m fine.”

“Okay, it’ll be about another hour or so until we hit Davenport. We’ll stop for lunch there, want to try an make it to Des Moines before calling it a day.”

She bit her lip. “Okay.”

He leaning down and capturing her lips. Folding her further in his arms as they swayed together.

Tig came tumbling back out, his concentration on the pack of cigarettes he was unpacking and lighting. “Jesus, if you two are done communing or whatever that shit is you’re doing, let’s go.”

Chibs sent Tig an annoyed look, turning back to her. “I did try and ditch his ass a couple of times.”

He said helping her with her helmet and to climb back on behind him.

She chuckled at Chibs ire. Tig flipping Chibs the finger. “I heard that asshole.” Tig warned before firing up his bike.

Turning out of the gas station and back onto the highway.

When they crossed the bridge over the Mississippi River, she didn’t realize just how wide it was. The edge of the bridge seemed to be way too close for her liking. And looking down, it was a long way down. She shut her eyes and grabbed tighter onto Chibs.

“You okay, darlin’?” His voice came through the speakers of her helmet.

“Yeah, just let me know when we’re on solid land again.”

He chuckled at her. “We are on solid land, it’s called a bridge.”

Her eyes popped open at his sarcastic comment. “A bridge over the widest freaking river I’ve ever seen is not solid land.” She retorted, keeping her eyes glued to the reaper on Chibs kutte.
Chibs laughed outright to her freaked out comment. His hand going to hers around his waist, patting at it. Which freaked her out even more. “Hey! Both hands on the wheel!” She admonished him.

“Mo leanabh, relax, got it under control. Just a few more minutes and we’ll be fine.” He reassured her. “And its a handlebar not a steering wheel.”

“God…” She muttered.

“You’re okay. We’re over the river, officially off the bridge and into Davenport.”

She risked a look around her and sighed in relief that they were in fact on solid ground again. She relaxed and loosened her death grip around Chibs. The bike slowing as they entered the city and dealt with the tighter traffic.

Tig waved at a cafe, pulling his bike into a parking space. Chibs following his line and backing up next to him. Kicking the stand down. Chibs got off easily, looking at her as she struggled to find her legs. His hand helping her. Clutching at his sleeve, she managed to hobble around.

She let go of Chibs to take her helmet off. Taking a deep breath, Chibs chuckling as he looked at her. Rolling her eyes at him, fighting the urge to kiss the ground.

“What?” Tig asked, noticing he seemed to have missed something. She shaking her head at him.

“Nothin’.” Chibs answered Tig, getting off and pulling her into his arms. Holding her steady. “Go inside, grab us a booth. We’ll be a minute.”

Tig shrugged and walked off into the diner.

Chibs riffled through his jacket and pulled out a joint, lighting it quickly. Stuffing his lighter back in his pockets, he kissed her, breathing the smoke into her mouth.

She breathed quickly, inhaling the smoke. Coughing at first, still not used to the burn. Chibs kept his eyes out to passerbyers. They shared the joint until she felt floaty. Her anxiety over crossing the river abated. Looking around, she could see the river and couldn’t believe that they just crossed over it.

“Better?” He asked her.

“Yeah.” She hummed. “Sorry about before. I didn’t think it would freak me out like that. I’ve read about the Mississippi, seen pictures, but I never thought it was that big. It’s amazing, though. To think that if you hopped on a boat, you’d eventually end up in the Gulf.”

He grinned at her as he stamped out the last of the joint. “Don’t worry about it. Love it when you hang onto me all tight...it’s cute.”

She sent him a glare, but she failed at it because he just gathered her up in his arms, grinning at her like she amused him to no end. “Think you can eat?” He asked.

“I’ll try. Tig’s probably going to come drag us in there if we keep him waiting much longer.”

He held her hand as he helped her walk into the diner. Steering her to where Tig had taken up residence, thumbing through the menu and drinking his beer. A beer and a soda was waiting for them as they sunk into the bench. She taking the seat next to the window, Chibs settling in next to her, his eyes sweeping the room and the door.
She knew she was sitting perfectly still, yet her body was still vibrating with the bike. This must be what sea legs feels like she mused. Bike legs? She glanced at Tig and Chibs debating if she should ask them if there was such a term. But their attention was on their menus.

Noticing in front of her was a menu like theirs. God she was high. She opened up the thick, tome-like menu. It took her a minute to realize that she had to choose something from the numerous listings. The menu large and thick, she automatically settled back to read it like a textbook.

Several pages were just for breakfast items, then lunch, and dinner. The back had desserts listed. An insert listed their drinks available. There had to be at least a dozen different hamburgers, another dozen of different types of sandwiches. Appetizers took up a whole page. Two pages of full out entree meals of steak, chicken, pork, and seafood all with their own sides.

Tig and Chibs closing their menus, setting them down at the edge of the table. Their looks to her as she kept flipping the pages. Getting more and more frustrated with herself.

“You know what you want, darling?” Chibs asked her.

She looked at him and then back at her menu, pressure to answer him and come up with something to pick from. “I don’t know. I...How do you choose?”

“You just pick something you like to eat.” Tig said shortly.

Nancy huddled deeper into the corner of her end of the booth. Pressing up against the window at Tig’s annoyed tone. Tears threatening to spill and her buzz dying under the mounting pressure to pick something. “But...how do you choose out of all this?” She asked in a small voice. The pages of the menu flipping, making the listings all blur together.

“Jesus, you just pick something. It’s not rocket science, just lunch. We don’t have all day.” Tig complained again.

“Tig!” Chibs angrily glared at Tig.

The waitress bounced over, “Are you ready to order?” The young brunette asked.

She felt trapped, wanting to just get back on the bike and ride out of here. To never stop. But Chibs had his arm over the back of her portion of the bench. Knowing that he wanted her to eat. But even with the pot, she didn’t feel like eating. She looked out the window, swiping away the tears. Frustrated with herself.

“Give us another minute, darling.” Chibs directed to the waitress.

“Okey-dokey.” Their perky waitress jaunted off.

“What’s going on, love?”

“All I ever had was oatmeal...peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I don’t know what I like. I don’t know.” She looked at Chibs.

Chibs eyes went from confused to understanding. He took her hand. “Mo chridhe.” He said softly.

“I’m sorry.” She panicked.

“Oh my God.” Tig muttered as he figured out what she was talking about.

His reaction only made her feel more like a freak.
“Don’t be sorry. Look, you liked the burger from yesterday, right?” He jostled her into him at his question.

“Yeah, I guess.” She nodded, unable to look at him.

“Okay, so we’ll stick with hamburgers, try some different toppings this time. Here, they have patty melts. How ‘bout trying that today. Tomorrow we’ll try something else. We’ll figure it out. Okay?”

She nodded quickly, just wanting the whole drama to be forgotten already.

Their waitress bounced back at Chibs wave. Tig and Chibs ordered for themselves and Chibs took over ordering for her as well.

Once the waitress had their orders, Tig looked at her, “Sorry, doll. I didn’t know what you meant.”

“It isn’t your fault. I should know…” She apologized back to Tig.

“Hey, it’s not your fault either. Don’t put that guilt shit on your back over something you had no control of.” Chibs deflected.

She nodded after a moment. Tig and Chibs talked more about their planned route, Chibs pulling out a map. She zoned out until the waitress was back with their food. Tig dived right in. Chibs looked over at her as she stared at the brimming plate. The patty melt was a hamburger with melted cheese and mushrooms. French fries spilling over the side.

“Go ahead, give it a try.” Chibs encouraged.

She cut the burger in half and half again. Taking a messy quarter in her hands, biting into the patty melt.

“Good?” Chibs asked her.

She nodded as she chewed. Chibs satisfied that she was eating, dug into his own plate finally. Their table silent as the three of them ate. She finished the quarter of the patty melt she’d cut up, moving onto the french fries. She sighed as she felt a heaviness settle over her. She wasn’t used to such rich food or having pot. She fought the urge to curl up and fall asleep.

“So, really, what is with the Starbucks in that town?” Tig asked.

Chibs groaned next to her as she blinked at Tig. Looking to Chibs that she heard him right.

He shrugged. “Probably best you gave him an answer or he’ll be bugging the shite out of you over that until ye’ do.”

“Asshole. Perfectly good question.” Tig tossed back to Chibs.

Elbow on the table, her head resting in her hand as she watched Tig and Chibs bicker between them, to turn to her for an answer.

“Supply and demand.” She said simply.

“What does that mean? There’s only three blocks between them.” Tig argued.

Their waitress was back with the check. “Lindsey?” She garnered her attention.

“Yes, anything else for you?”
“No, just a question for you. If you don’t mind.”

Lindsey shrugged.

“You ever hear of Naperville, Illinois?”

“Oh, yeah!” Lindsey brightened up at the mention of her hometown. “We took a vacation there last year over the summer. It was a blast. The shops were to die for. Went to Chicago, too. But Naperville was so nice. Must be cool living there.”

“Starbucks?”

Lindsey smirked. “Can’t live without my double shot espresso.” Lindsey looked around abashed suddenly. “Not that the coffee here isn’t fantastic…”

She smiled to Lindsey, “Of course. Thanks for answering a question for me.” She waved her off.

Smirking back at Tig. “The two of you showed up late Sunday night…Monday during the day. Weekenders and out-of-towners don’t come around at the beginning of the work week. But when the weather turns nice, people from all over show up, even in winter. Summers, especially. Weekends, people from Chicago take the train out. The surrounding towns all converge onto Naperville for the shopping, restaurants, and its family-friendly Riverwalk. Downtown Naperville is packed with people. There wouldn’t be two Starbucks that close to each other unless there was a demand for it. Supply and demand. Basic economics.”

Chibs was grinning at her like she’d solved world peace. Tig stared at her like he never considered what she was telling him. She shrugged helplessly. Chibs leaned into her and kissed her.

“Jesus Christ.” Tig swore.

She nudged at Chibs. “Let me out, gotta go to the bathroom.”

He frowned at her and her plate. “You finished already?”

“Yeah, I’m full. Why don’t the two of you finish it off. I’ll go freshen up and we’ll take off.” She suggested.

“Okay,” Chibs conceded as he stood up. “Hurry back.” Buzzing her with a kiss to the cheek, hands gripping tight to each other as they prepared to separate. Preparing for the pain to come back.

Tig already sliding her plate closer, taking the fries and two of her quarter size pieces of the patty melt onto his plate.

She freshened up and washed her hands. Her head pounding making her antsy to get back to Chibs. Opening the door to head back out to their table, Chibs was waiting for her just outside the door. The two of them catching hold of each other as their headaches eased off.

“You ready to go?” He asked her.

“Yep.”

He slid his arm around her and led her out the door. Tig already at his bike waiting for them.

They stopped for the night, finding a cheap motel along their route.
The pounding of the road was hard on her. By the time they stopped for the day, she could barely hold herself upright. The vibration of the bike, pounding her body into submission. “Sorry.” She apologized, as Chibs had to help her into the motel room.

“Hush, it’s okay.” He told her. “We’re riding hard. The pot is helping you keep more food down, give your body a chance to gain some strength.”

Chibs kept feeding her jerky and water whenever they stopped for gas. She hobbling around working out her stiff muscles. Chibs helping her smoking the pot so that she could eat. Both Tig and Chibs had fun having her try out different food. The two of them giggling when she had bacon for the first time. She slumping into Chibs, fairly swooning with the taste.

She couldn’t finish her plate still. Chibs and Tig finishing off her food when she was full. Taking bathroom runs was an exercise of restraint. Fighting the pain of the headaches. Tig shaking his head as he watched them. “God, you two are pathetic.” Chibs would flash him the finger, she would just shoot him a glare.

They were three days out from Naperville, stopped for the night in Denver. They’d gotten some fast food for dinner and had settled down for the night. Nancy curling into Chibs in the bed, humming from the chocolate shake she’d gotten. Chibs smiling and watching her as she discovered the joy of chocolate.

His hands playing with her hair as they drifted off.

“No.”

Chibs stirred into awareness as Nancy twisted next to him. Confused he checked his watch, only two in the morning.

“Don’t.” She cried plaintively. Her body shivering. Tears sliding down her cheeks.

He realized she was having a nightmare. He ran a soothing hand along her back. His heart twisting as he felt the slight grooves of her scars and the deeper valleys and peaks of her spine and ribs. Her breathing hitched and harsh. Crying into his side. Curling up into a tight ball.

“Don’t leave me here. Don’t!” She screamed, the absolute fear filled her voice. Her body jerking upright into the bed. Her scream made him wince at the decibels. Her eyes wide and unseeing of where she was.

He already moving and pulling her into a bear hug.

“Mo ghaol. Nancy, love. Come on. Wake up.”

Nancy fought his hug, her panic hitting her that she wasn’t hearing him. “Let me out.”

“Calm down. You’re okay.” He tried to get through to her. But her panic was overwhelming her.

“Let me out. I can’t breathe.”

He let her go, thinking he was going to hurt her with her panicked fighting him. She vaulted out of bed and bolted for the door. Not even putting on shoes or pair of jeans. Her hands scrabbling at the chain link and the lock on the door. Her face filled with panic and fear, yanking at the door. Her fingers finally releasing the locks and the door slammed the wall from the force of her pulling it open.
“Nancy! Hold up...wait!” But she wasn’t hearing him as she raced out the door.

Chibs was swearing as he yanked his jeans on.

Tig burst into the room, gun drawn. His eyes scanning the room, hair in disarray. Chibs pulled on his boots.

“What the fuck’s going on?” He asked, gun dropping as he realized that no lives were at real risk.

“Nightmare. Panic attack.” He said quickly as he grabbed her boots and jacket at least. Racing out the door to track her down.

She was in the middle of the parking lot when he caught up to her.

“Nancy. Baby.” He said as he approached.

She swivelled towards him. Hunching over trying to get air. Her eyes wide.

He draped her jacket over her, the panic in her eyes told him she was still fighting it.


Kneeling down he put her foot into one of her boots. Her hand going to his shoulder for balance as he shifted to shod her other foot.

“Sorry.” She gasped and sobbed. “God. I’m sorry.”

“Hush. Nothing to be sorry for. You’re alright, ye’ hear. Won’t let nothing happen to ye’.” He stood up and pulled her into his arms again. “You want to tell me what scared ye’?”

She shivered again. And he tightened his hold on her. “Nightmare.”

“Must have been a doozy.”

She nodded. “They were going to Europe for the first time. Paris. Claire was over the moon to be going. They’d be gone for three weeks.” She said haltingly.

Chibs stayed silent, letting her talk at her own pace. But he had an idea he wasn’t going to like what happened to her while they were jetting off to Europe.

“How old were ye’?”

“Nine.” She said in a small voice. Her focus not in the here and now, but in the past.

“I didn’t understand at first. Thought I’d be going with. So stupid. Claire put a crate of food in the basement the morning they were leaving. My father yelling at her to hurry up...that the limo was waiting. Asked her why she was putting food here. It’s your rations while we’re gone she said. Be fucking happy to even have this. I was stunned. Claire was halfway up the stairs when I asked her that I was going too. Claire shakes her head and looks at me. Stupid girl. Why’d we want you on our vacation. She shut the door and I heard the lock. Tore up the stairs and banged on the door. Yelling and screaming. Heard the front door slam shut and the house was so quiet. Standing there pulling at the door.”

Chibs held onto her tighter as she talked. Tears pricked at his eyes as he imagined what that was like for her. The fear of being alone, locked in the house for weeks.
“I’d hear the mail being dropped through the slot. Neighbors outside mowing their lawns. I’d scream and yell, hoping that someone would hear me. My voice broke by the time they came back. Could hardly speak at all.” She gasped, catching her breath.

“There’s a French word, oubliette. Means to forget. They were part of dungeons in medieval times. People put into oubliettes were literally forgotten. Left down there forever. That basement...it was my oubliette.”

“M’anam.” He held onto her tighter as she told him some of her horror. Her eyes pinned and he kissed her. “You are never forgotten. I’d never forget you.” She shifted in embarrassment and swiped at her cheeks, drying her tears.

“I’m sorry. Didn’t mean to wake you up. God. Had to chase me out here. I just...couldn’t breathe.”

“Ye’ had a panic attack. It’s okay. Don’t apologize for it. I can take it.”

She nodded to him. “God. What time is it?”

“After two. Come on, let’s get back. Try and get some more sleep. We’ll go exploring in a few more hours. Hows’ that sound?”

“I don’t know if I can sleep.”

“Give it a try.”

“Okay.” She agreed after a moment.

Chibs led her back to the motel room. Settling her back into bed. Giving her a kiss and watched over her as she fell back into her land of nod. Fighting to keep the tears from falling. Satisfied she was okay. He grabbed his cigarettes and went outside. Lighting up. Tig joined him with his own cigarette.

“She okay?” He asked.

“Back to sleep.” He said absently.

“You okay?” Tig asked pointedly.

“No. I’m far from okay.”

Tig sighed and gave him a long look.

“Had a nightmare about her shitty parents. They went to Paris for three weeks. She thought she was going to go with them. Didn’t understand what was happening. Fucking locked her in that basement for three fucking weeks. She was only fucking nine. And they left her there, locked up like some animal. Thought she’d be trapped in that basement forever. Forgotten. Fuck. I want to go back and kill them.” He shared.

“God damn it.” Tig swore. “What about her, the panic attacks?”

Chibs breathed out a plume of smoke. “She’ll get better. Think with her freed, getting regular food on a more consistent basis. Her body’s healing already, leaves her mind free to work shit out that it couldn’t before. She’ll like the house. Got lots of windows and skylights. Riding on the bike.”

“Yeah. Okay. Anything I can do?”
“Don’t let on you saw her like this.” Chibs asked Tig. “She’d take on that guilt of waking you up over this shite. Like she doesn’t blame herself already. God damn it.”

“Yeah, okay. No worries. I’ve got your back.” Tig crushed out his cigarette, tossing the butt into the parking lot.

“Thanks, brother.” He grabbed Tig up in a hug.

“We might go off early, explore the town a bit, eat breakfast. We’ll bring back some food for you.”

“Yeah, okay. See you later.” Tig yawned and turned back to his room.

Chibs leaned against the post, eyes scanning the night air as he finished his cigarette. Trying to find a way to compartmentalize the shit she’s had to go through. He’s seen his share of ptsd cases and she fits the bill. Fucking tortured and her only a kid. He’s surprised she’s held shit together the way she’s done. That she’s as functional as she is.

He ground out the butt and headed back in himself. Pulling off his boots and jeans, sliding in next to her. Sighing as his headache subsided, gathering her into his arms. Her nestling closer into him. He dropped off again.

He stirred awake as he noticed that Nancy wasn’t in bed with him. Hearing the flush of the toilet and the sink run for a bit. The bath door opened and he smiled up at her. She wearing jeans and a t-shirt. Her hair towel-dried from her shower.

“Didn’t hear you get up.”

She grinned sheepishly at him. “You were pretty out of it. And given my drama early this morning, figured you could do with the sleep.”

He grunted and reached for her. “Come here.”

She crawled over his body. Her front laying over his. His hands finger combing her damp hair, pushing it from her face. His eyes searching hers.

He noted the tiredness of her eyes. The faint bluish tinge under her eyes. “Sorry for waking you up last night. You must be exhausted.” She said softly.

“I’m fine. And don’t be sorry. You’re going through it. You’re so strong. What you went through would have broken most people. Just keep talking to me, aye? I want to help.”

“Okay.” She nodded.

At her affirmative answer he groaned and drew her closer to capture her lips into a kiss. Tasting her minty fresh lips.

She responding to his kiss and the feel of his hands. Her head tilting into the side of his neck.

They pulled apart for air and he gave her another searching look. Grinning and relaxing to see the desire in her eyes, also that she was moving on from her nightmare from last night.

Her hands running across his chest and shoulders. His sliding down to her hips. Holding her steady. She was starting to fill out thankfully from his strict demand of them stopping for at least three squares a day. Gas stops were for water and snack breaks. She still had a hard time finishing her meals but he was sure she would get better. He couldn’t wait to get home where he could cook for
her. Have her all for himself. Not be Tig’s center of attention on their ride.

Breaking the kiss, leaning his forehead to hers. “You up for some breakfast? Look around town a bit?” He managed to ask as his lungs relearned to breath properly, his heart to come back to its normal rhythm.

She nodded.

“Okay, lemme get cleaned up and dressed and we’ll go.” He said.

Nancy moved so he could get up. Forcing himself out of the bed and to the bathroom, his cock hard and complaining to his big brain to get back in bed with Nancy. His big brain telling his cock to shut the fuck up. The cold shower helped win the argument. And the final thought of getting home quickly as possible. His imagination running wild with the sight of Nancy in his bed. Fuck. Okay, a cold shower and a one-fisted wank to get his cock and head on right. Of course, soon as he found his cock’s release, his head was complaining that he’d gone too long without Nancy’s touch. Fuck. He was fucked.

He quickly threw on his jeans and shirt. Catching sight of Nancy waiting for him. Sitting at the tiny table, the bed made, her hand rising to meet his. He pulled out a joint and lit it, passing it to her to take a pull on it. Their fingers dovetailing as they walked outside. She passing the joint back to him.

“Is Tig coming with?” She asked.

“No. Told him we’d bring him some breakfast.”

They held hands as they strolled from the hotel. A mix of professionals and students dressed for work or school moved around them. Chibs asked a couple of college kids where someplace was good to eat. They pointing out a restaurant a couple blocks down. They found the place where more people were coming and going.

Walking inside, they snagged a booth looking out over the bustling sidewalk. A group of bicyclers clad in colorful, spandex outfits caught their attention as they pulled up en masse.

Chibs ordered for her. Describing what he was ordering for her. She grinning at the brogue of his voice. Missing half of what he was saying but she didn’t care. Their fingers twisting and twining as they leaned into each other. Their heads and bodies turned into each other, sneaking secret looks to each other. The weight of her nightmare lifted as they watched the people around them and waited for their food.

Their food arrived and he’d gotten her waffles with sausages and scrambled eggs. The waffles were covered in blueberries and pushed the maple syrup towards her. She carefully poured a small amount. Taking a bite, adding a bit more syrup. He adding syrup to his pancakes. They fell into their sharing routine. He fed her bites of the pancakes and she her waffles to him. She focussed on the eggs and thickly-sliced bacon looking for the protein.

She quit eating sooner than Chibs. And he polished off her plate. A habit he and Tig have taken up on their stops. She’d eat as much as she could, whatever was leftover was free for Tig and Chibs. She didn’t know how they could eat so much. They always ordered the largest plates of food for themselves. Even her. It was no hope, despite all her attempts to get them to stop trying to stuff her up like a goose. She knew they meant well.

Chibs ordered a breakfast to go. “For Tig.” He explained.
They paid and slipped out. Nancy held the carrier on their walk back to the motel.

“So how are you liking the mountains?”

“They’re beautiful. The air is really dry, been having a headache since we started into the mountains. Not the usual headaches.”

“Aye, it’s the altitude.”

“And going down some of those roads, the warning signs for rock slides. Freaks me out. Afraid we’ll get crushed by a slide as we’re riding.”

Chibs grinned. “Aye. Takes some getting used to. Flatlander.” He teased her. She rolling her eyes and squeezed his hand, as he chuckled over her worry.

Tig was up and half dressed. Rubbing a towel over his hair when they showed up. Nancy setting the bag on the table for him.

“Breakfast.” Chibs said.

“Thanks.” He said in a rush as he plopped down to dig into his pancakes and eggs.

Her attention was drawn to the cartoons on the TV in Tig’s room. Sitting down at the end of his bed as Chibs and Tig talked about the weather. She tuned them out as she watched the cartoon.

“Enjoying the roadrunner, m ‘anam?”

“Hmmm. Yeah. Never had a TV.” She said absently.

“Really? No Bugs Bunny? Jesus, it’s like a crime against nature.” Tig commented.

“Who?”

Chibs and Tig groaned collectively.

“What?” She asked a little alarmed that she might have said something wrong.

“We need a list.” Chibs decided.

“A list? List for what?”

“TV shows that you need to watch.”

“Movies, too.” Tig added. “What did you do for entertainment?”

“Read books. Dreamed. Studied. Try to think of ways of getting out of gym. Roadrunner never gets caught or killed does he.” She asked staring at the cartoon again.

“No.” Chibs replied.

“Futility.” She nodded thoughtfully. “Teaches kids about repeating the same behavior, expecting a different result.”

“Are you kidding me?” Tig wheezed.

“What? It is.” She defended herself.
“It’s just a cartoon. Watching the different ways the coyote tries to capture the roadrunner. The roadrunner outsmarting, outrunning the coyote. You’re just supposed to watch and enjoy. Not delve into the philosophy of futility.”

Chibs hid his chuckle behind the palm of his hand. His eyes dancing in amusement as Tig was getting all bent out of shape over her view of the meaning of a cartoon.

“So you don’t get anything out of this except entertainment and wasting time watching it.” She debated.

“No. It’s for fun.”

She looked from Tig to the cartoon. The roadrunner beating the coyote again. “Why would you want to waste time on something that won’t teach you something? I mean they could teach the mathematical formula of calculating the time at which you need to push the weight over the edge of the cliff to hit the roadrunner below, the speed per second, the distance of the cliff to the ground below, based on the weight of the anvil he’s pushing over the edge.”

Tig slapped a hand to his forehead in frustration. Chibs fought to keep from laughing. Tig’s expression was classic. “Why do you need to learn something all the time?” Tig argued. “Some things are just pure fun. You do know what fun is, don’t you?” Tig’s tone taking a snide turn.

“I know what fun is. Riding the bike is fun. But even riding, I’m learning things. Seeing the landscape around me. Watching the people on our trip. Listening to Chibs music, to the two of you talking. That’s learning and fun. I wouldn’t call that a waste of time.” She frowned at Tig. Feeling hurt by his point of view and making her feel like a freak.

“I’m going to make sure we’re packed up.” She said leaving Tig’s room.

Chibs sighed and gave Tig a smack upside the head. “Asshole. You didn’t have to make her feel like crap ‘cause she sees more in a goddamn cartoon than you do.”

“Hey.” Tig whined.

“Hurry up. We need to get back on the road.” He said as he stalked out of Tig’s room to their own.

He saw her in the bathroom, packing his shaving kit. “Left your toothbrush out so you can brush.”

She said as she made to the main room to pack the kit away.

He caught her in his hands. “Don’t pay any mind to Tig. He didn’t mean to put you down like that. You surprised us is all.”

She shrugged. “I didn’t have anything but books. I practically lived under a rock for ten years. All I had was my mind.”

“I know. And its a beautiful thing. I’m in awe of your big brain.” His lips curled into a smile. Drawing her closer and pressing a peck on her lips. Her cheeks, forehead and the tip of her nose to capture her lips again. Deepening the kiss.

“Hmph. Brush your teeth.” She reminded him when they broke apart.

He grinned, “Don’t like my fuzzy teeth?” He teased. Pressing more kisses at her. Making her giggle and squirm to escape his hold.

She was laughing and had escaped to the main room to finish packing. He brushing his teeth,
happy to see her relaxed and letting go of her hurt and fear from the nightmare.

They headed out again. Chibs taking the lead turning south out of Denver. Tig giving him a confused hand signal. Chibs shaking his head and sped up down the road. Tig catching up and flinging the finger at him.

“What’s going on? Why is Tig pissed?” She asked Chibs through the speaker system built into the helmets.

Chibs chuckled. “You want to see the ocean...have to head south from here.”

“Let me guess, you haven’t told Tig yet.”

“Told you it would be fun.” He replied.

Nancy thunked her head to his back.

“At least this way, you’ll get to see the desert and the southern part of the Grand Canyon.”

“Really?”

“Yep. Relax, m‘anam. Enjoy the ride and the tunes. Let me worry about Tig.”

He flicked on his music before she could admonish him. Heaving a sigh as she really didn’t have much say in what or where they were going. So since she couldn’t do anything, she hung on and looked at the passing landscape. Enjoying the music. Her hands flat-palming at his stomach. Her thumb absently swirling around his navel.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My heart = mo chridhe
My soul = m’anam
My baby = mo leanabh
My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 13

Uhmm, a little section from the road. There's talk about climate change. Bit of a rant. If climate change debate gets your blood up, then skip this section or speed read it. This is a story for fun. And I like annoying Tig.

A few hours later, they pulled into a diner for lunch. The outside of the restaurant was faded and could use a fresh paint job. She got off and stretched her legs, slipping her helmet off.

Tig giving Chibs a glare but held off on saying anything. She watched as Tig looked ready to explode but simply strode into the diner.

Chibs chuckled and pulled a map into his kutte, turning to her.

“You know there’s outlaw, and then there’s stupid, right?” She said pointedly.

Chibs gathered her into his arms, their headaches cooling off. He grinning at her like the cat ate the canary. Handing her a joint.

“Got everything under control. Not to worry.” He appeased as she handed the joint back to him.

“If you say so.”

“It’s fun to rile Tiggy up once in awhile. All the crap he gets into, turnaround is fair play, darling.” He said as he led her into the diner.

The interior was a throwback to the fifties. Turquoise blue booths and an old fashioned fountain bar sporting advertising for hand-made malts and shakes with real milk. Her eyes went wide at the dessert cabinet. Pies of every genetic makeup and toppings from fruit to two inch thick whipped cream. They all looked so perfect, they couldn’t be real.

Chibs steered her to a booth that sported a large picture window overlooking the parking lot and road. He picked a menu and reviewed their options, as Tig slid in across from them. The waitress swung by and the guys put forth the orders. Chibs ordering for her and included a thick chocolate shake for her, in addition to the roast beef wrap he decided for her.

As soon as the waitress took their orders and left, Chibs pulled out the map. Tig grabbed it out of his hands.

“Mind explaining to me why we headed south instead of west out of Denver?”

“Getting tired of the cold and risk of a storm if we kept heading west.” He replied. “It’s only another day or two added. Relax.” Chibs said snatching the map back from Tig and smoothed out the folds from Tig’s annoyed grip.

“Asshole. I told Clay we were heading west this morning.”

Chibs shrugged and smiled for the waitress as three hot plates were slid in front of them. Her
chocolate shake icy cold and was absolutely perfect. Quickly spooning a mouthful and moaning in rapture.

Chibs grinned and kissed her, catching a taste of her milkshake for himself.

“Jesus Christ. This is hell. Stuck on the road with a couple of love birds, cooing and shit.” Tig griped as he chewed at his burger and fries. “I am so going to dive into a pack of croweaters when we get home.” He said with a mouthful of food.

Nancy sighed and bit into her roast beef sandwich.

Chibs just glared at Tig. "Christ, don’t talk with your mouth full. Fucking disgusting."

Tig just kept chewing and threw Chibs the finger.

She finished before the guys and grabbed the local paper that was left on their table. Perusing the headlines. Her attention caught the article about the debate between land and sea ice melting in Antarctica. “Oh, that’s not good…” She said to herself. Shaking her head again as the article fell into the debate over if the climate change actually existed, highlighting the local senator’s comments that he’s not a scientist, but…. Her brows raised as the reporter ended their report that the senator was a believer in God’s plan. “Jesus Christ. Seriously?” She gave an irritated huff, thinking out what actual scientists were saying and what the politicians were saying, throwing God into the mix. Idiots. She seethed looking over the interior of the restaurant and then out the window. Not registering that Tig and Chibs were staring at her.

“What’s wrong?” Chibs asked.

“Just idiotic politicians who have no clue what they are talking about, swaying public opinion on science. Idiots. Even going so far as to debunk the scientists with religion and God into the debate.”

“What debate?” Tig asked around a mouthful of food.

“Climate change. Scientists are raising the alarm that the melting of land ice going on is very concerning. Yet the local politicians are claiming that God planned all this. That the rate of melt and spread always fluctuates through the years. Which is true, for sea ice. But the politicians aren’t specifying that, misleading the public.”

“One going so far as saying that it’s all God’s plan. What right do we humans have in arguing with God.” She waved the paper at them. “The gall of questioning people whose job it is to collect data, study the data, extrapolate the data. That’s all they do...all freaking day for years, decades. If politicians had their way, we’d never have gotten vaccines to polio and tuberculosis.”

Chibs snorted. “Politicians are the scum of the earth. All they care about is keeping their cushy jobs. They’ll say anything to pander to the lobbyists and worry about issues until its too late.”

“Meanwhile, it’s not just the melting of land ice, but the number of hurricanes is increasing in number and size. Harsher winters, drier and hotter summers. Every low-lying area around the globe will be flooded. Residents will be forced to migrate to higher ground. Bangladesh is already losing ground to the rising tides.” She added.

“What the fuck are you two talking about? What difference does it make if the some shitty country gets flooded.” Tig argued.

She glared at Tig. “Please tell me you’re not a climate denier.”
“I’m not accepting or denying anything. I just don’t care.”

She looked at Tig in horror. Looking to Chibs that she heard Tig right. He shrugged. “It’s Tig.” He said as way of explanation.

“What?” Tig questioned.

“Tig, aren’t you interested in the world outside of the club? Outside of Harley’s? Rising sea levels around the world will have devastating effects. It’s not just Bangladesh, it’s also happening here in the US. And that’s not the nightmare. With the increase in sea water, it’ll increase the level of salt in the water. As it pushes into the low lying marshes and deltas, it pushes into fresh water ways. Fish and natural vegetation that depend on freshwater to survive will die off or adapt.”

“So?”

“So, it has a ripple effect in the whole natural ecosystem. Reaching to our very own food supply. The less there is of fresh water, the rising sea levels, people move to higher ground. Move to find fresh water to survive. But doing that, the people living there already are pissed that all these new people are moving into their area, the strain on the resources is stressed again. Spilling over into politics and religion as sparking points for violence. And by the way, we humans, we can’t drink seawater because of the salt.”

“But there’s ways to get the salt out.” Chibs said.

“There is, but extracting the salt gets dumped right back into the sea, raising the salinity even more. The cost of running desalination plants is very expensive and uses fossil fuels to run. With the increase of hurricanes, the entire weather system is shifting. The Monsantos of the world are selling modified seed and chemicals to kill off insects to keep them from killing off the crops. We end up eating it, and let’s not kid ourselves, these chemicals, they’re toxic. Insects have a way of building tolerances to the chemicals, forcing the Monsanto’s of the world to create more and more toxic chemicals to combat the issue. The rise of allergies and food intolerance is on the rise like never before. It’ll only get worse the longer this system keeps up.”

“Quite the catch-22.” Chibs commented.

“And that’s only the start. With all the migration, the wars started all because of the access to fresh water and food sources, the financial markets will go nuts.”

She shrugged. “It’s a trading opportunity, but the moral and ethical issues remain. And these politicians spouting off that they aren’t scientists and telling everyone that they should simply put their faith in God. Discrediting scientists as frauds, that they paint them in a light that are anti-religious. Like that has anything to do with science. Meanwhile, scientists are waving the red flags like mad that we’ve got a problem.”

“California, Oregon, Washington, they’ve been having more forest fires the last few years. Summers are getting unbearable.” Chibs added.

“That is a symptom of this whole problem. California is one of the US’s largest exporter of food to the rest of the country. Not even the midwest with all their fields of corn, wheat, and soy stack up to what California produces. Start having a shortage of water, the price of food spikes. If the land is burned, it could become useless to grow food anymore. And it was all because of morons in Congress, people sticking their heads in the sand over climate change.” She wrapped up.

Tig thunked his head to the tabletop. “Seriously? You worry about shit like this?”
Chibs started snickering. Buzzing a kiss to her temple as she stared at Tig. “What? You don’t?”

“Fuck, no. Why do you want to worry about shit you can’t do anything about? I’ve got other things going on in my life than to add the rate of sea ice melting.”

Nancy pushed back in her seat, frowning at what Tig said. “I mean sure, current life events take precedence. But as a human being living on this planet, you must have some concern of the state of the earth. It’s not like we’re moving to Mars if things go hell in a handbasket. And there’s stuff you can do to help the environment. Recycling, writing to these idiotic politicians and tell them to get their thumbs out of their asses. I mean, you vote in elections, right? It’s similar to how you vote on issues in the club, that is, for the good of the club as a whole, don’t you? It’s the same thing with voting for political offices, I’d think.

“Just stop. Stop thinking. God. You’re giving me a headache.” Tig rubbed at his eyes.

“Sorry.” she shrugged.

“I have never met anyone that thinks as much as you do. Don’t you ever just let things be without questioning them?”

Nancy thought over his question. Chibs grinning as he watched her think. Chuckling as she took her time, Tig shaking his head as he took in her silent thought process to his question.

“No. I’ve always questioned things. Didn’t always talk about them, but I was thinking about them. There’s just so much to learn. Feel like I’m racing to catch up to everyone else. And I never had anyone who listened to me before now. I’ll stop. Sorry.” She shrugged.

“Thank God.” Tig muttered.

“No. Don’t stop.” Chibs interjected quickly. “I like listening to you, learning how your mind works. Seeing different angles. Keeps me sharp and thinking, instead of just letting things happen. Tig, you’re just going to have to get used to it. The club, too. Think its been far too long that the club has been challenged and it’s time to get off its ass.”

“What are you talking about, we’re challenged all the time?” Tig said exasperatingly.

“Challenged with outside forces, the Feds, ATF. That’s one thing. I’m talking about the future of the club. Where the hell are we going? Would we have made the same choices as we did before?”

“You’re talking about shit that’s in the past. It’s done and over, brother. Why do you need to go over it all over again? Why can’t you just let things go?”

“Because history repeats itself. Lessons not learned the first time around, they always come back and challenge you again. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve read someone, tell them what they need to do to avert disaster, only to watch them ignore me and go and fail again. It’s incredibly frustrating. I mean there must be things that you regret doing or saying in your past, that carries with you. Colors current or future challenges.”

“I need a smoke.” Tig said as he got up and left.

Nancy looked to Chibs in concern. “Sorry, did I say something I shouldn’t have?”

“No. He’s just not used to this kind of conversation. He acts before he thinks. You’re making him think. And he hasn’t done much of that. He’s Sgt at Arms, Clay’s right hand. A soldier that follows orders. Part of the military group think. He’s getting confused and pissed at himself. And he’s done
shit that he regrets, he’s being reminded of it when he’d love to just forget that he went rogue.”

“I should apologize, I didn’t mean to make him feel bad.” She worried.

“Don’t. Tig’s fine. He knows you didn’t mean nothing by it.” Chibs shrugged. “You done?”

“Hmm, yeah.” She pushed her plate to him. Chibs taking the other half of her sandwich.

“How do you guys eat so much? You have a hollow leg or something?” She joked.

Chibs winked at her. “Gotta keep fueled to keep up with you, darling.”

She grinned at him with a shake of her head. “Let me up, gotta go to the bathroom before we take off again.”

Chibs got up and let her out, sinking back into the booth to wait for her, eating the rest of her food. When she got back, Chibs pulled out cash to pay for their food. Standing up, he took her hand. “Ready to go?”

“Yep.” She replied with a sigh.

Tig waiting for them at his bike, laying across it, smoking a cigarette. At the sight of them, he heaved himself upright and swung around on his bike, strapping his helmet on.

The three of them getting back on the road for the next leg of their journey.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Happy Holidays, again.

Really wanted to get this chapter out to you.

Enjoy and have a safe holiday.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It wasn’t long that things took a turn on their ride. Tig was in contact with Clay and Jax, updating them on their progress home. The club was having to vote on the cartel. Tig explaining that part of the deal with the guns, they would be muling coke back. Chibs stared at Tig like he’d lost his mind.

“What the fuck? Since when are we in the coke business.” He demanded of Tig as they ate some pizza for dinner in their room. “We voted the guns only. Nothing was ever said about any muling.” He said angrily, as if it were all Tig’s fault.

“Hey, I’m just passing the info over. Clay will fill us in when we get back.”

“The fuck this muling will pass.” He retorted. “It’s bad enough we’re constantly under the ATF and Feds half the time, now the fucking DEA will set up shop, too! I’ve half a mind to ditch your ass and head east.” Chibs argued.

“Chibs! I don’t know what is going on. We won’t know until we get there. Clay already asked for my proxy, I told him no. I’m not happy about this either. But Clay says we need this.”

“Fuck, Tig! When the hell are you going to get your head out of Clay’s ass! When was the last time you voted against Clay, on anything! If it weren’t for Jax, you’d all still be in Stockton for that stunt in Morada.”

“Fuck you. Clay is our president. And by the way, Jax is pushing for the mule vote to pass.”

“What!? After the shite with Wendy and his boy!”

Tig shrugged. “It’s what Clay said on the phone.”

Chibs glared at Tig, like Tig was possibly the stupidest person on the planet for what he just said.

“Take your dinner and get out. I can’t look at ye’. I need to think.”

Tig sighed, but gathered his food, adding a slice. “I’m just telling you what I was told.” He walked out the connecting door slamming shut behind him.

Nancy kept silent and held Chibs hand as they rested for the night. He grumbling over the fight and the idea of muling drugs for a cartel.

“We have to go back. It’s important.” She said to him when they settled back into bed.
“You are more important. I’ll leave the club if you are at risk. The muling, the cartel, we’re already in deep with the fucking IRA. You do not mess with these people.”

“I know. But if you don’t go back and tell them, to try and convince them that muling is a bad idea for everyone. You can’t do that if you don’t go back.”

“If it was just me, I’d go back. No question. But I have you to worry about. If this mule passes, fuck, it could be bad. I can’t believe Jax is pushing for this. Drugs nearly killed his first born.”

Chibs vented with himself and her. Stressing out over the issue.

“It would haunt you if you didn’t go back. To find out what is really going on. To try and fix things. The question of ‘what if’ would hang over your head. That guilt would eat at you. Maybe blame me for pushing you to not go back for fear of what it would mean for my...our safety.”

“I’d never blame you, m’anan. Never.” He argued with her.

“Maybe. But what I’ve seen from the dreams, babe, you fight. You don’t slink off because things got hard. You fight. If things are as bad as you think and talking with Jax and the club to get them off this mule idea, then we can cross that bridge. I don’t know. You don’t know. We won’t know until we go and try. Trying means going back.”

Chibs sighed with a groan, as he thought about what she was saying. “You may have a point there.” He shifted closer to her, arms and legs winding around her body. He slid his eyes to her.

She shrugged, “Besides, if we turned around now, I wouldn’t have the chance to see the Grand Canyon.”

Chibs slapped his hand to his face with a groan. “Seriously?” He whined her.

She grinned in the dark, as she poked fun at him. His anger waning with her reason and change of topic. “Hey, I’ve lived in Naperville my whole life. It’s flat. The few hills that are there, they’re flat. Did you know that there are people who believe that the Grand Canyon was created during the forty days and nights of rain? That Noah’s arc truly existed and sailed where the Grand Canyon is now? How crazy is that.”

Chibs glared at her for trying to distract him. “You are incorrigible.” He complained.

“I’m just curious.” She corrected lightly. Her hand going to his cheek, their eyes locked in the dim. “It’ll work out. We’ll figure it out.”

He curled around her. Tucking her into him. “Hmph, knock some heads together, the rate things are going.” He grumbled.

“And even to do that, you’d have to go back.” She said.

Chibs grunted as he realized he was simply arguing with himself. No matter, they had to continue on to Charming. Nancy fell asleep in his arms, he promised to himself that if shit was going sideways on the club, he was leaving and taking her with him. Club be damned.

Despite the hurry to get back, the two of them had fun learning more about each other. Exploring the sights that they passed. He loved listening to her. She poured over whatever newspaper was lying around wherever they went. Surprised she didn’t go for the entertainment section, but rather preferring the business and front page sections. Talking his ear off about interest rates and Fed meetings.
Chibs would point out items of interest for her. She would rub her thumb across his stomach, making him clench as he forced himself to keep his mind on his riding rather than what his body wanted to do. It was getting increasingly hard to keep from pressing her for more.

Waking up in the early morning his cock rock hard. Her soft breaths wafting over his neck, her hand settled down over his heart. Their legs tangled. Their hands and lips gently exploring each other but keeping things G-rated. Shite, PG...Fuck...definitely R in his head.

Now wasn’t the time to press for more, she was still healing and they were trapped with their babysitter popping in at the most inopportune times. And not until she was ready.

Even though his body cried out for her. The most innocent touch shot through him like a fiery bullet.

Tig was growing more amused at his constant state of readiness. “Jesus, just fuck her already. Your balls are going to explode if you don’t handle that shit.” Chibs gave him a death stare as Nancy had come back from a bathroom break.

“What’s wrong?” She asked noting the tension between Chibs and Tig.

“Nothin’, m ‘anam. Finish your plate.” Chibs ordered, sliding his hand to the small of her back. Tig rolling his eyes.

Tig thunked his head to the table. Listening to Chibs and Nancy go on about some current event that had their attention for the day.

He’d never seen this side of Chibs before. The nerd. Words failed him as he stared at the two of them. Falling into their shared communion. Their bodies turning into each other, heads bowed, hands linked at their laps. They practically swayed together as they zoned into each other. As if they were in their own little bubble. Chibs grinning and kissing her. She smiling back. Making him smile wider and press for more kisses. The two of them teasing each other.

Chibs pulled back and gave him a look. Sliding out of the booth and heading quickly to the back towards the bathrooms. She sighed, holding her head in her hands, elbows on the table. The relaxed look in her face gone replaced with tension and pain. Looking out the table as he watched the thoughts flood through her mind.

An uncomfortable silence fell over the table with Chibs gone. Tig staring at her.

“Did you know you can cut glass underwater with just a pair of regular scissors?”

“What?”

She shrugged. “The molecular structure of glass, isn’t actually a solid but it isn’t a liquid either. Sort of in between. Cool, huh?”

Tig slapped a hand to his forehead. ‘Why…’ he dragged out, “would I need to know that? And what prompted you to start talking science shit now?”

“Sorry. Just nervous.”

Tig looked confused, “What do you have to be nervous about?”

She shot him an annoyed look. “You and Chibs have both been telling me about the rules and how
things are run in the club. And I don’t think I’ll be able to do it. The violence, the cliques. Feels like highschool all over again.”

Tig frowned. “You’re Chibs old lady. Nobody will touch you.”

“It’s not that. Well, kind of. If you think the women in the club won’t try and test me, you’re an idiot. Gemma especially. Chibs told me she tried to keep him from coming out to find me. From leaving. He told me about the cat fights that go on. I can’t do that, Tig. Not to mention what Chibs and I are going to do in regards to the business of the club. Me, knowing everything. Dreaming about your church. Our headaches.” She sighed in frustration. “What happens when we get to Charming. How we’re going to make all this work.”

“What’s Chibs saying?”

“That it’ll work out. But the more he says it, the less I believe it. And I can tell, he doesn’t know what we’re going to do either.”

She sighed and pushed her plate towards Tig.

“Do you have any ideas?”

“No. I don’t.” He picked the tomato and lettuce off her BLT sandwich.

“Yeah, that’s what I suspected.” She said dejectedly. “Tig, tomato and lettuce won’t kill you, you know.” Rolling her eyes as Tig took a bite of the leftover sandwich, now denuded of the offensive food group.

“What else has he told you? And leave me alone about what I eat or don’t eat. Jesus, you’re almost as bad as Gemma.” He complained around his chewing.

“Anyway, Chibs and I have a full disclosure agreement. I’ve been dreaming about his life, been in your meetings, even with him on runs for months now. Think I’ve seen more of his life than he saw of mine. Whatever, there’s not much I don’t know just from those. And he’s really pissed about this upcoming vote. He’s been venting.” She warned.

“Fuck.” Tig said.

“Yeah,” she gave Tig a hard look. “He really didn’t want to keep going to Charming. Pushing the guns is one thing, the club has always dealt in that. But adding in the drugs. He’s not happy. I’m not liking it either.”

“Fuck.” Tig repeated

“Told him that he had to get back to Charming, if nothing else, then to tell all of you off about it.” She clarified. Easing Tig that Chibs wasn’t going to just disappear on him and the club.

Tig sat back and ran a hand through his unruly hair. “That could be a problem.”

Nancy shrugged. “What problem? He has a vote at the table. You don’t think everyone is going to fall in line with this deal, do you?” She asked him rhetorically. Tig leaning back as he listened and chewed.

“If Chibs decides to stay in Charming, in the club. There is no way he could go on runs without me. Not with the headaches. Might be able to be apart during your meetings. I don’t know. If they run long, the worse he’ll...we’ll be.”
She paused, glancing off out the window a moment. Only to turn back to Tig.

“What do you think if...I were in your church? With Chibs on your runs? Hypothetically.” She waved her hand as Tig raised his eyebrows in surprise at her question.

“I don’t know. Jesus. Women have never been part of the table, ever. Not even in other clubs. It’d be a first. Old ladies stay at home. Not even Gemma is allowed in.”

She took a deep breath of annoyance. “Tig, I can’t. Chibs can’t. I feel like my head is going to explode just sitting here waiting for him to come back from the bathroom!” She glanced at the table next to their booth, the elderly couple were looking at her as her voice rose in her frustration. Tig giving their neighbor table diners a glare to mind their own business, as she took a calming breath.

“We’re fucking trying everything we can think of. Nothing is working. You make fun of us, but Christ, we don’t have a choice. If we didn’t have this overpowering need...this wouldn’t be a problem. The closer we get to Charming, the more nervous I’m getting.” She swiped at her teary eyes. Mad at herself for getting so emotional, knowing that it wouldn’t help her case.

“Shit. Well, okay. Personally, I don’t think it would be a bad thing if you were in the room. Riding with us. You’ve handled this trip with flying colors. You aren’t whining or complaining about the pace or where we’ve bedded down at night. You don’t haul suitcases of makeup and shit with you. You claim to have been in church, you know how we talk. Don’t expect the guys to suddenly take your delicate sensibilities into account.”

Nancy gave him a glare for stereotyping her with all the other bimbo women he and the guys hang around.

“I guess the main worry is your safety and how you would hold up if you were hauled in by the cops. And what would happen if we got caught in a shootout. You’re being there will be a liability.”

“Chib’s protectiveness, I doubt I’d get a scratch on me.” She said wryly.

Tig snorted. “Fuck, you get a hangnail and he’d be calling Tara to do surgery on it for you.”

She stiffened at the thought of someone else other than Chibs touching her. She didn’t like that idea at all. Never did like being touched. At least until Chibs. She couldn’t seem to keep her hands off of him. Which, at times, embarrassed her at how clingy she seemed. Chibs though was just as clingy with her. And god it felt good when they were holding each other. She felt like they were on the brink of something huge. But then, she had so little experience she didn’t know if it was like that for everyone else in a relationship or not.

She’d never read anyone that had the kind of relationship she and Chibs seemed to be falling into. Reading Claire, the other students, none of them had any sense of peace with their relationships. They were constantly fraught with questions if their partners loved them like they thought they loved, or should. The constant edge of questions laced with vanity, pride, and lies. It was as if all of them are meant to flail around forever. Never being at peace with what they had. Always thinking things or someone else would be better around the corner.

“Look, its the guys you need to convince.” Tig drew her back from her thoughts.

“All they know is that you’ve been haunting Chibs in his dreams. I’ve talked with Jax and Clay, they have no idea what its really like between you and Chibs. This deal going on with the club, it’s
huge. It’s playing with people that could kill this club without a second thought. But the money is good and the club needs the money. Half of us in Stockton for over a year didn’t help the finances at all.”

“Chibs has some very valid reasons for not doing this deal. The added heat of the cops.”

“The reward outweighs the risk, to my mind. And Clay told me of what Chibs was to the IRA. The history he has with them. I know that without him, this deal falls apart. The club would be cut out from their supply. Without him, the club dies.”

Nancy stared at Tig. Tig’s words making her see Tig in a different light. And the possibilities were making her nervous again.

“What?” Tig asked her.

“I...I thought you came with Chibs to find me out concern for his safety. He thinks you’re here to help him. Didn’t think you were here to make sure he dragged his ass back home just so the club can sell illegal guns.”

Tig reared back. His eyes blazing. “Chibs is my brother. It was Jax’s idea that I go with him.” But his tone was threaded with worry and confusion. Tig himself wasn’t sure why it was him that was chosen for this venture, now that she was directly asking him for a reason.

“Yes, but why you specifically?” She honed in on him, ignoring the anger in Tig’s tone. “What doesn’t Clay or Jax want you to know? Or do if Chibs decides to take off on his own? Sergeant at Arms, running on what you and everyone thought at the time as a wild goose chase with Chibs.”

She knew she hit on a sore spot by how incensed Tig looked.

“You can’t know about that.” Tig said anxiously, pointing a finger at her.

“Know about what?” She followed up, tilting her head at him as she kept watching him. She was on the edge of knowing what memory or deed that scared the shit out of him.

Tig was looking at her like he’d seen a ghost. She held Tig’s eyes, searching his for answers but only saw questions and fear.

“What’s going on?” They both jumped when Chibs dropped into his seat. Confused he looked from her to Tig, noticing their stare-off.

She nor Tig said anything.

Tig glared at her, huffed and left the table. Going outside to smoke.

“What the fuck happened? Was only gone a couple of minutes.”

She slumped and leaned into Chibs. His hand wrapping around her easily. “We were talking. Trying to feel him out on what he thought of us. What we’re going to do once we get to Charming. How to handle the club. I don’t know...we got into it.”

“Okay, but we’ve all talked about this before. Why is he pissed now?”

She looked at Chibs. “He’s not angry, he’s afraid.”

“What happened?” He demanded.
“Don’t get mad, it’s probably nothing.” Chibs raised a brow at her. “I pointedly asked Tig why it was him that was with us. Why he was chosen to go with you to find me.”

“Jackie had him come. Clay backed him up.” Chibs recalled with some confusion.

“Yeah...the Sergeant at Arms. Third in line to the President’s chair, being ordered to leave with you on a potential wild goose chase across the country. Why him specifically? Why not Opie or Happy? This deal going on...what is it that Clay or Jax don’t want him to know? Or make sure that he does if you go completely off the rails. Maybe decide to not come home to Charming.”

“That asshole.” Chibs hissed. His head swiveling to Tig outside leaning against his bike.

She gripped Chibs arm hard, forcing his attention back to her. “He told me that he knows about what you’ve done for the IRA, your ties with them.” She said quietly, leaning into him.

Chibs eyes darkened, body tight with anger at what she was telling him.

“That if you left the club, the supply line would dry up and the club would die off because of it.” She leaned back, thinking to herself the line of reasoning. “There’s more going on with this deal that we know about. Tig might be on the outs with Clay or Jax. Or there’s something more sinister for their reasoning.”

She loosened her grip as she saw Chibs thinking. Tense still, but thinking over what she was inferring.

Chibs ran a hand through his hair in frustration. “Should ditch his ass here. Fucker. You finished, m ‘anam?”

“Yeah.” She said softly. Regretful of the strained tension now with Chibs. Who was pulling out cash to pay for their food. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologize for something that’s not your fault. Come on. This isn’t the first time Tig’s been tasked behind the club’s back. Fucker, if Clay....” Chibs eyes turned hard. “Stay at my back.”

He got up, pulling her with her.

“Chibs, really...I could be wrong.” She said nervously.

Chibs just pulled her behind him as they left the diner. Chibs muttering in gaelic under his breath.

Tig straightening up as they approached. Nancy huddled nervously behind Chibs, gasping in surprise, as Chibs pulled his gun on Tig, pressing the barrel of the gun into Tig’s forehead.

“Were you tasked?” Chibs questioned Tig directly. His voice harsh. Tig going still. The anger in Chibs eyes.

“No. I wasn’t. Only was told to go with you. Make sure you didn’t fucking kill yourself. I love you, brother. You know that.”

“Then what the fuck are you doing here? She has a point. Why were you chosen? Could have just as been Ope or Hap. Or any of the other guys, why you? You’re the one calling Clay and Jax this whole time. What did you do?”

“I didn’t fucking do anything. I don’t know why! Clay and Jax have been holed up together over this deal. Since we stepped out of Stockton. Even Bobby is picking up on it. Worried about the
balance of the table. I fucking don’t know what is going on. God damn it! Fucking, put the gun away. You’re scaring the locals.” Tig waved his arms in helplessness.

Chibs kept his eyes locked on Tig regardless of the histrionics that the two of them were having at the moment. This was too important to let go. Memory of Tig gunning down Donna thinking it was Opie. All of it behind the club’s back.

“Chibs…” Nancy hugged him from behind. Using her body and voice to pull him back from the place where he went when he killed someone.

“I wasn’t tasked. I’ll swear it on whatever you want.” Tig said gravely.

Tig’s conviction made him back down. Holstering his gun. His eyes holding Tig's.

“Then let’s get moving. Find out what the fuck is going on.” Chibs said. Tig relaxed that Chibs wasn’t going to shoot him dead. Chibs leaning into Tig. “I ever find out you’d been tasked on me or Nancy, I’ll fucking end you. You understand, boyo?”

“Fuck, yeah. I get it. I’m not out here for that. I swear. Jesus, chill.”

Chibs didn’t reply, simply grabbed his helmet and swung on. “And we’re stopping at the Grand Canyon.”

“What?!” Tig jerked up short, sending the two of them a glare. “That place is full of fucking tourists and shit!” Tig complained loudly, practically stomping his feet in frustration like a two year old having a temper tantrum.

“M ‘anam, I promised her she would get to see the some of the sights.” Chibs said with an evil grin.

She barely had time to give Tig an apologetic look before Chibs fired up his bike leaving Tig to catch up with them. She saw Tig kicking at the dirt in frustration only to mount up and follow after them.

Nancy flat palmed her hands to Chib’s stomach. Keeping their headaches at bay as he rode them down the road. Heading for the Grand Canyon.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

More adventure on the road.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Things were still strained as they pulled in for the night at some 'blink and you miss it' town. Tig escaping into his room with a bang of his door. She was getting stronger that she could help unpack the bike. After taking a shower to wash the road grime off, she set their hand-washed underwear, from the other day, out to dry on the room heater. The fight between Chibs and Tig made the silences fraught with tension.

“So, this afternoon at lunch, what was that about?” She broached.

“What?” Chibs asked absently as he was going through his own gear, setting his toiletry bag in the bathroom.

“Pulling on Tig? Seemed a bit extreme. Worried you really might have shot Tig.”

Chibs looked to her again. “Ah. No. It’s not extreme.”

“How so?”

“You never saw what happened with Opie’s first wife from any of your dreams?” He asked.

“No.” She shook her head.

Chibs pulled her into his arms. “It’s not known outside of the charter of what went down with Opie and Donna. So don’t be letting on you know, or tell anyone in any of the other charters.” He warned.

“Okay.” She drawled in concern.

“Few years back, the ATF was in town looking for Irish guns. Opie and Donna with their kids were scooped up to a government facility, place where people are process into witness protection. They paid off Ope’s bills. Clay and Tig found out Opie’s truck and phone were wire tapped. The two of them decided that Opie had turned. It wasn’t a club call what Clay and Tig did. If Opie had turned rat, it should have been brought to the table and voted on. Opie had just explained to us what Stahl was doing, setting him up to be a rat. Clay gave him grace. Everything was fine to all of us. Even I thought the matter was all settled.”

“But Clay tasked Tig to take out Opie behind the club’s back. They decided to make it look like a gangland hit. Tig killed Donna by mistake. It wasn’t until later that the club found out that Stahl played Opie. He never knew about the wiretaps or was ever working for the feds. By the time Clay and Tig realized their mistake, Donna was dead.”

“Oh God. That’s what you were referring to as being tasked. Wasn’t it?”

“Aye. Tig has been Clay’s right hand for a long time. He more often than not votes with Clay on
shit. He’s not much for thinking for himself. Letting others decide for him.”

She frowned, “I remember a dream. Everyone was in a meeting and it was pretty intense. It was about Oswald and his little girl.”

“Tristan. She was attacked by a carney.” He nodded.

“Tristan, that’s right. I just remember listening to Tig. Questioning why he should be sticking his neck out for an outsider like Oswald. Strident about it, really opposed to the idea of helping Oswald. Only to enthusiastically vote to help track down Tristan’s attacker. I thought it odd that he switched his mind so quickly like that.”

“Huh, didn’t think of that. But you’re right. He did do that. Doesn’t matter. He would have done whatever Clay tells him to. He tends to shoot first and think after. Like with Donna. If he and Clay had only waited another day...a few hours even. Donna would still be alive.”

“How is it that he’s still the sergeant at arms? I would think Jax would have forced a change after what happened.”

“Tig is Clay’s pick as SA. And for the most part, Tig does his job. He’ll never back off from a fight. I could have fought harder to keep Tig from coming with me to find you. But I knew he would be a good man at my back no matter what happened. Plus, if Tig was forced out, most likely, it would have been me in that spot. And I’m not looking for a promotion.”

She looked up at him with a teasing grin. “No aspirations to becoming President yourself someday?”

“God, no.” He snorted. “I’ve done my time running things back in Belfast. I like living my life without all the bullshit. Now, I’ve got you. I don’t want to spend any time away from you because of a gavel. Besides, Jackie is next after Clay. He’s been groomed for the presidency. Anyway, that’s what Tig and I were fighting over.”

“Okay. Sorry. I didn’t mean to bring up some bad history.”

“You would have found out anyway sooner or later. Just glad I was the one that told ye’. God knows what kind of spin Tig or Clay would put on it. If ye’ asked Tig right now, he’ll tell ye’ it was Stahl’s fault for what happened with Donna.”

She looked sharply up at his dark eyes. “But it was Clay and Tig that actually put the hit on Opie. The ATF just created the environment, they didn’t pull the trigger.”

“I know. I never liked how the club handled what happened. But a lot of shit was going on at the time. Most of us didn’t know what really happened to Donna for a long time after. So what I did to Tig earlier...I won’t stand to have Tig and Clay relive that history with us. Anyway, you ready to try and find some dinner?”

“Yeah. Not feeling hungry, though.” She admitted, letting Chibs change the subject.

Chibs looked her over, “You’re getting better. It’ll take time, but pretty soon, you’ll be able to eat without depending on the pot. And when we get home, I’ll cook for you. Get a better diet than all these burgers and fries.” He grimaced at the thought of all the fried foods they’d been eating.

She huffed. “Did you see what Tig did to my BLT earlier?”

“No. Missed that.” His eyes asking her to explain.
“He picked off the lettuce and tomato. Leaving just the bread, bacon and mayonnaise.”

“Jesus Christ. What an idiot.” He huffed.

She bit her lip in thought, “I...uhm...I asked Tig his thoughts on me being in church and with you on runs. Hypothetically.”

“Oh? What did he say?” Chibs raised a brow curiously.

“Well, once he got over the shock of the idea, he wasn’t opposed to it. Said that I was doing good on this ride back. Not packing tons of clothes and makeup, or complaining about the motels we crash at. He said that we’d have to convince the rest of the guys.”

“Aye, I figured that. Soon as we get back, I’ll have to do a debrief of my trip finding you. And we’ll figure all this shite out. Somehow.” He gave her a kiss, shutting down the conversation.

He checked his watch, “Come on, Tig’s probably waiting for us.”

They stepped outside and while waiting for Tig, Chibs lit a joint for her and handed it to her.

“The clerk said there’s a bar that serves food til midnight.” Tig said as he joined them.

The bar was a little run down and was packed with locals. There was a small live band off to the side, a small dance floor that a few people were dancing to the music. Nobody really dressed up for this place except for a few women who, she imagined, were on the hunt for a good time with one of the men in the bar before going home to their real lives again.

Chibs ordering a burger and beer for each of them. The bartender hesitated, looking at her and him.

"I don't want any trouble.” The bartender said to Chibs. Eyes flicking to Tig and back again, taking in their kuttes.

Chibs leaned over the bar. "I don't either. We're just passing through. Now, if you don't mind, please, get us our beers and dinners." Glaring at the bartender who eventually backed off and got them their beers, taking the cash Chibs laid out on the bar.

Tig had already been on a bathroom run and was back. Staring at a couple of girls who looked to be barely out of high school. Skimpy clothes, teased hair and heavy with their makeup. Tig’s eyes taking in their buxom chests and tight fitting dresses that didn’t leave much to the imagination.

Chibs kissed her. “Stay here with Tig.”

Chibs flicked at Tig’s ear to get his attention. “Oy, I’ll be right back. Keep an eye on her.” He ordered.

“Fuck! Yeah, I got it. Jesus.” Tig complained, rubbing at his abused ear.

Chibs got up and went to the back of the bar. She shrugged and nibbled at her fries. Tig sent her an annoyed look at having to watch her. “I’m fine.” She told him, hoping he’d quit blaming her for getting Chibs riled up earlier.

Tig didn’t say anything, glancing at her and then back to the girls he’d been ogling. After a minute, Tig was focussed on them completely. Sending come hither looks. The girls giggling and whispering to each other. Twirling their hair and licking their lips at Tig.

She rolled her eyes and focussed on her food and drink. The beer making her body feel warm and
relaxed. Her brain pounding.

“Hey there, little girl.” A large man heaved at her side. She flinched and winced as she saw and smelled just how drunk he was.

“Can I buy you another?” He waved a meaty hand indicating her half-empty beer.

“No, thank you.” She declined politely.

But the man wasn’t hearing her or thought she was ignoring his gracious offer.

“Oh, come on. Jake, another round.” The man waved to the bartender.

The bartender frowned at the man. “Don, you’ve had enough.”

Nancy shook her head at the bartender that she didn’t want another beer, didn't want Don's attention.

“Fuck you, Jake. I was just trying to get to know the little lady here. You don’t have to be such a dick.”

“Don, go home, sleep it off. She’s not alone.”

Don eyed her, “I don’t see anyone with her. Sitting here all by herself. Just not right. You want to party with me don’t you, little girl?” His large body leaning into her, his thick lips slobbering just a little bit as his beady eyes were fixed on her hungrily. She felt overwhelmed and nervous by how close he was getting.

“No. I don’t. I’m with someone. I suggest you go home and sleep it off, before my boyfriend sees you here hassling me.” She warned.

“Well, that’s just un-polite. I don’t see no man around here laying claim on you. Far as I can see is you flirting with me, sending signals. Being all rude and shit. Least you could do is be nice to me and gimme a kiss.” Don growing more agitated and grabby towards her. Pressing further into her personal space.

“Don’t. I wasn’t flirting with you, at all. I’m not interested.” She ordered sharply, using her voice to cut through Don’s drunken haze. Getting ready to slip off the barstool if he didn’t back off. Her eyes searching to where Chibs disappeared and Tig who was now chatting up the girls further down the bar. To far away to help. The bartender passing Tig and the girls another round. Shit.

“You’re a fucking tease. You get off on that? Rile men up only to shoot them down? Or maybe you’re one of those lezbo’s. That it? You need a real man to show you what it means to be a woman?” Don was ranting now.

“No. I was simply eating my dinner and minding my own business. Back off.”

Don’s hand whipped out and grabbed at her arm. Nancy slipped off her stool, but was blocked by the bar behind her and Don in front of her, stools on either side of her. His hands on her. Face leering down at her. She fell into him. Her breath hitched, the foul sour smell of his breath made her stomach turn. Her mind reeling and drowning in Don. She stared up at him in horror, screaming before she passed out.

Chibs, head pummeling at him, halted abruptly as he heard Nancy scream. A confused man asking, “What the fuck?”
Moving again, he saw Nancy passed out on the sticky floor of the bar. Her stool knocked over. A large man standing over her in confusion.

His vision tunneled in on the man. Striding right to the asshole who hurt Nancy. The back of his mind, he saw the man was clearly drunk, but his rage filled him and he didn’t fucking care if he was drunk or not. Dared to touch his girl. His fist was flying and felt the satisfying crack of bone under his forceful punch.

The man dropped like a rock.

He was about to grab the moron up and deliver some more punishment when Tig tackled him.

“Chibs! Fuck man. He’s down!” He yelled at him, ducking the punch Chibs was throwing.

“Where the fuck were you!” Chibs redirected his rage at Tig. Pushing himself away from Tig’s hold. “Fucking told you to keep an eye on her!”

Tig didn’t answer fast enough and looked to the bartender. “What the fuck happened?” He demanded.

“He was hitting on her. Told Don she wasn’t alone. Jesus. Does she need an ambulance?” The bartender tossed his towel down as he reached for the phone.

“No. She’ll be fine. Him, I don’t know and I don’t fucking care.” He calmed down enough to get a picture of what transpired. Sending Tig a death glare for falling down on the job.

He gathered up Nancy into his arms. “You...” His eyes glared at Tig, "...pay for the damages. Fucking asshole.”

He strode down the block with Nancy limp in his arms. Tig running to catch up with him.

“I’m sorry, Chibs. She said she was fine. Next thing I knew she was screaming and passing out.”

“I fucking told you to keep an eye on her. Jesus, can’t leave you to do one fucking thing for two goddamn minutes. Rather get your dick wet with some rank pussy in this town. And, by the way, I doubt those gashes are legal. Fucker. Last fucking thing we need is for you to get picked up for breaking your parole. Remember that, asshole?!”

Tig huffed as he half-jogged to keep up with Chibs as he ranted at him. “I said sorry.”

“Fuck, the key is in my pocket.” He swore as he met their motel door, giving it an angry kick. Debating on how to get the key out of his pocket without losing his grip on Nancy. Before he could come up with a solution, Tig went for his left pocket to get the key out. “Other side, asshole.”

“Jesus, here.” Tig huffed and quickly grabbed the key and unlocked the door for Chibs. Chibs moving quickly and putting Nancy down on the bed. Going to the bath and wetting a small towel to wipe at her face and hands. “Anything I can do?”

“Get out.” He ordered.

“Chibs...” Tig pleaded.

He glared up at Tig. “Get out, before I knock your fucking teeth out.”

Tig shook his head and walked out. Going to his own room.
Chibs locked his door and went back to Nancy. Pulling off her boots and socks. Stripping her of her jeans and coat, leaving her t-shirt on. Carefully, pulling the covers over her. Going to the bath again to brush his teeth and stripped down himself, climbing into bed with her. Pulling her into his arms. Watching over her as his heart learned how to beat normally. Mentally, yelling at Tig some more. Eventually, falling asleep himself.

He felt her stir as the early light of the sun filtered into the room. He ran a hand along her spine soothingly.

She froze and shot upright in the bed. Eyes wide, breathing hard.

“M ‘anam? You okay?” He asked sleepily.

She scrambled off the bed and ran to the toilet. Heaving what little she still had in her stomach.

Chibs got up and grabbed up a towel, rinsing it in the sink, to kneel by her. Wiping her face up. She shivering.

“Talk to me, m ‘anam.”

“You knocked him out, right?” She questioned Chibs.

“The guy that tried to force himself on ye’? Damn right I did. Deserved it and more. Reamed Tig out, too.”

She looked at him. “Did Jake call the cops on him?”

“Jake?”

“The bartender.”

“I don’t know. Grabbed ye’ up and came back here with you. Tig paid up the damages. Why?”

She got to her feet and stalked to the connecting door. Banging on the door before barging in. Grabbing up the covers from Tig, swiftly yanking them off, with one hand. The other grabbing the ice bucket from the nightstand, sloshing with melted ice. Pouring the liquid on Tig’s head to wake him up.

“Hey? What the fuck?” He sputtered.

“Get up, get dressed.” She demanded. Chibs watching from the doorway, confused as to what had her all spun up.

“We have to go to his place. Now.” She spun around Tig’s room and grabbed the first set of clothes her eyes landed on, throwing them at Tig. “Hopefully, he’s at the police station. Get dressed. Now!” She yelled at Tig.

Turning she went back to their room, rushing past Chibs. Grabbing up clothes. Throwing his jeans at him. While pulling on her own set of jeans and t-shirt.

“Nancy, what is going on?” He demanded as he swiftly put on his jeans and shirt. A thump and a swear came from Tig’s room and she knew he was at least up.

“We have to help someone at his place. Hurry up.” She pulled on her boots and grabbed her jacket. “It’s important. God damn it."

Tig walking in from the connecting door. “What the fuck is going on?”
“Fucking asshole..." She muttered.

"What? I said sorry..." Tig reacted to her comment.

"Not you, him..." She glared at Tig with a frustrated shake of her head. "...if she’s...Let’s go!” She ordered, storming out the door. Yelling at Chibs and Tig behind her. Grabbing her helmet up, throwing Chibs helmet at him as he and Tig followed her out to the bikes.

Chibs and Tig shared a concerned look at how riled up she was. Not knowing what she was talking about. But her conviction that they had to do what she said was clear. They pulled out of the parking lot. She, pointing the way to where they needed to go.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Not sure what to say about this section. Had a hard time writing this, it's not perfect. A lot is going on. Emotions running high. Chibs and Nancy are still learning how to be with each other.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They pulled into a trashy trailer park. The rumble of the Harley's breaking the silence of the early morning quiet. Nancy hopping off the bike before they could even come to a stop. Tossing her helmet off as she ran. Searching around the door, among the struggling plants that tried to survive from lack of care.

“Jesus, Mary of Christ! Nancy! Fucking wait!” He yelled at her.

Tig sent a horrified look to him as Nancy unlocked the door. Rushing inside, her hair flying out behind her as she disappeared inside the trailer.

“Fucking hell. Nancy! God damn it.” Chibs swore as he swiftly shut the Harley off, climbing off and running after her, gun drawn. Tig right behind him, swearing along with him.

He and Tig entered after her. He went high, Tig low. The inside was a complete pigsty, smelled to high heaven. The windows newspapered over. He and Tig fell into their training sweeping the trailer clear of any threats. The back of his mind, swearing a storm up that Nancy didn’t wait for him to clear the trailer for her safety.

Thankfully, the trailer was clear. Don didn’t make it home last night.

He could hear Nancy in the back, talking to someone. Someone crying. He and Tig holstered their guns and moved towards the voices. Looking in through the doorway and froze at the sight before him. He felt Tig go still next to him. He only had a brief look before Nancy covered the naked girl over with a ratty blanket.

The dark-haired girl looked their way and gave a muffled scream around the gag stuffed in her mouth, her brown eyes wide in absolute fear at the sight of them staring at her. A corner edge of the red bandana gag wafted as the girl breathed erratically.

“It’s okay. They’re with me. We’re here to help.” She said to the girl tied to the bed. Hands and feet spread to the four corners. Red welts digging into the girl’s skin as she struggled. Nancy hushing at the girl.

“You’re going to be okay. No one’s going to hurt you anymore. Calm down for me. Think you can do that?” The girl nodded after a moment, her eyes back on Nancy.

He came up to the side of the bed as Nancy talked the girl down. “Just breath, in and out. Chibs, here, he’s going to take that gag out, okay?”

The girl nodded again, her dark brown eyes moving to him. Slowly, he raised his hands to work the gag off of her. Careful not to make any sudden moves. “You’re doing good, lass.” He
The girl gasped and worked her jaw. “Tig, go see if there’s any bottled water around here. Something sealed.” Nancy giving Tig a hard look.

“Sure thing.” Tig said and he turned around and went to the kitchen area.

Nancy turned back to the girl. “Just breath. In and out. In and out. Nice and easy. You’re okay now.” The girl heaving in gasps of air, but fighting to do as Nancy was instructing.

Tig came back. “This was the only thing sealed.” Handing Chibs the bottle of blue Gatorade.

He twisted the cap apart. The girl watching him with wide eyes and looked like she might spook again. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

“Hey, it’s okay. Chibs used to be a medic in the army.” Nancy said to the girl.

Chibs watched the girl relax a little and he took that as his cue to help her drink some of the Gatorade. Slipping a hand under her head and tilting the bottle at her lips. “Careful, there darlin’. Can’t go too fast.” The girl swallowed quickly and Chibs pulled the bottle away to give the girl a chance to breathe. Taking his hand back from behind her head. The girl gasping as she worked her jaw and breathing.

“Better?” Chibs asked.

“Yeah.” She said hoarsely.

“What’s your name?” Nancy asked. She didn’t have to ask her that, she knew it from reading Don. But the girl looked like she needed something to focus on.

The girl shivered and cried. “Lily.” She managed to say.

“Hi, Lily. I’m Nancy. And as you’ve met, this is Chibs and Tig.”

Lily cried harder, shivering as she eyed the two men. “Don’t hurt me.” She pleaded.

“Jesus Christ.” Tig muttered.

“They won’t hurt you. I promise.” She explained.

He took in the bruises on the girl’s face and neck. He’d only had a fleeting look before Nancy had covered the girl, but he’d seen the bruises and marks on her body. Knew what they meant. He swallowed hard and schooled his eyes and face to remain calm. To keep his rage tamped down.

“Lily, girl. Tig and I, we’re going to untie ye’. Okay?”

Lily gave him wide eyes, but nodded. He and Tig moved, Nancy moved out of the way.

“How long have you been here, doll?” Tig asked as he worked at the ropes.

“I don’t know. A while. Where is he?”

“Knocked the asshole out cold. Probably sleeping it off in the drunk tank. Shite. These knots aren’t coming loose. Tig? Any luck on yours?”

“Fuck, no.” Tig picked at the knot without success.
Chibs gently held Lily’s hand as she cried. Panic hitting her eyes as they couldn’t undo the knots. “Lily, need you to calm down. We gotta cut the ropes off. Ye’ can’t move or we might cut you by accident. Okay. You think you can do that?”

“Yeah. Just hurry up.” Lily nodded emphatically.

Chibs and Tig took out their knives and swiftly cut the ropes off of her. Lily curled into a ball, burrowing deeper into the blanket. Crying full out now.

“Fuck.” Tig said.

Chibs crouching down next to the side of the bed.

“Lily, you got family?”

“Yeah, in Texas. Was walking home from school. He just came out of nowhere. Knocked me out. Woke up and was tied up here. I don’t even know where I am.”

Chibs, Tig, and she looked to each other. What they were going to do with her. How to keep themselves out of the narrative.

“Neighbor.” Nancy said.

Nancy moved closer to Lily. “Lily, I want you to listen to me, okay?”

“Uh huh.” Lily managed to say, nodding her head a little.

“You can’t tell anyone that we were here. When the police get here, tell them that you yelled out and woke the neighbor next door. She found you and cut you loose. Okay?”

“But why? Are you leaving me here?!” Lily started to panic again.

“Listen to me, Don is an evil man. He deserves to be in jail. You won’t be alone anymore. He won’t come near you ever again. The cops will come and they will get you to the hospital. They’ll take your statement. They’ll call your family. Your mom and dad must be so worried for you.”

“Okay. Just don’t let him near me.”

“He won’t touch you again. But you have to keep our involvement to yourself. It’s important.”

“But why? You saved me...”

“We aren’t supposed to be here. Having the cops question us, will only complicate things. Focus on getting the help that you need. Telling them what he did to you. What he promised to do to you. Call your family and let them help you. You are a survivor. I know you can do this.”

“How did you know I was here?”

Nancy shook her head slightly, a small grim smile. “It doesn’t matter. What matters is making sure Don doesn’t do this to another girl. And your statement will make that happen.”

Lily gave her a suspicious look but the fact that they cut her loose and was helping her made her decide to go along with the plan of hers. “Okay. I won’t tell.” Lily started weeping again.

“Okay, we’re going to get the neighbor.”
“Tig. Stay with her.” He ordered as he followed Nancy out of the trailer. Nancy leading the way to the trailer next door.

“M’anam...are you sure this will work?” Chibs asked her.

“Yes. Trust me.” She replied before giving the door a knock. This trailer was kept up nicer than Don’s for sure.

They heard footsteps and the barking of a Yorkie inside. “Tinkerbell, shush.”

The door opened and an older woman stood in the doorway, blinking down at them. “Yes? Can I help you?”


“Yes. That’s me. I’m sorry, I don’t recognize you. Course I don’t have my contacts in.”

“That’s okay. We need your help. Your neighbor, Don...” The lady frowned, glancing at the horrid state of the trailer next to hers. “He’s not home right now. But there’s a girl inside that needs your help. Her name is Lily. She’s been held captive.”

“What?! There’s someone in there?” Mrs. Gunderson said in alarm.

“Yes, please, we told her you’d help. Lily, she’s hurt and needs your help.”

Mrs. Gunderson stumbled down the steps, her kitten heels slapping against the stone pavement. Her housecoat fluttering as she moved purposefully. Chibs moved aside as the woman barrelled her way through.

They all piled back into Don’s trailer.

“Oh my God. Look at the mess in here.” Mrs. Gunderson gasped.

“She’s just back here. We cut her loose, but she’s shaky.” She informed.

Mrs. Gunderson moved towards the bedroom that Tig was guarding. Tig shifting out of the way, her body filling the tight hallway and was sitting down on the edge of the bed.

“Oh my poor girl. What did that awful man do to you?”

Lily cried and was soon swept up into Mrs. Gunderson’s arms, for a deep hug.

“There, there. Everything will be all right now. We’ll get you out of this nasty place.” She comforted Lily.

“Mrs. Gunderson. I’m sorry, but we need to leave.”

Mrs Gunderson blinked at her. “Aren’t you going to stay and talk to the police?”

“I’m sorry, we can’t. We’re just passing through and we have to get to where we’re going. We would if we could. It’d be simpler to just tell them that Lily screamed out and you found her.”

“Where is the bastard?” Mrs. Gunderson asked, her eyes watching Chibs as he grabbed a kitchen knife.

“Most likely in jail, sleeping it off. He tried to hit on me last night. He was very drunk.”
“I punched him out cold.” Chibs said. “Here, take hold of this.” Holding the knife to her, handle first.

Mrs. Gunderson eyed Chibs and the knife, but wrapped her manicured hand around the handle. Releasing it right away. Chibs setting the knife down on the beat up nightstand, pushing the overflowing ashtray out of the way.

Chibs looked back at Mrs. Gunderson. “Ye’ just saved that girls life. And we...were never here. Understand?”

Tig walked back into the bedroom. “I already put a call in to the cops. They’re on their way.”

“Yes, yes. All right. I’ve got it. You weren’t here.” Mrs. Gunderson said.

“Thank you.” She said to Mrs. Gunderson. “Lily, remember to let people help you.” She reminded the shaking girl.

“Come on, m ‘anam. We gotta go.” Chibs held his hand out to her. Leaving Mrs. Gunderson to comfort Lily.

Chibs led her towards the door. But she forced him to stop. Staring at the refrigerator. Wiping at her eyes gearing herself up to do one final thing before leaving this cesspool behind.

Pulling on her leather gloves, she opened the freezer. Bypassing the frozen dinners, she yanked out a Ziploc baggie. Quickly dumping the bag onto the small kitchenette table. Tossing everything else off the table. Leaving the Ziploc in the center, a final gift to the cops.

“What are you doing?” Tig asked, peering at the bag. Chibs following suit.

“You don’t need to know. Let’s go. I can hear the sirens.”

She escaped out of the trailer, picking up her helmet.

Tig and Chibs quickly exited the trailer after her. The sound of the police sirens growing louder as they pulled out of the trailer park. The three of them passing the cops who were turning into the trailer park behind them.

They parked and Chibs had to help her off the bike and into their motel room. Her body shivering as she fought to keep from crying. Chibs gathered her into a deep hug. Crooning to her in gaelic.

“We….we need to get out of here.” She said, swiping at her eyes. Forcing herself to move and pack.

“Sit. I got it.” Chibs took over. “Tig, pack. We’re leaving.”

“No shit, Sherlock.” Tig retorted back, he packing his own belongings up.

Five minutes later, they were back on the road, heading west. Chibs, pressed his hand to hers as they cruised the highway. Nancy absently noted the scenery, doing everything she could to keep her mind occupied and not dwell on the horror show from this morning.

They stopped for lunch at a roadside diner. None of them talking much. Just eating and sending silent looks to each other. Chibs trailing her to the bathroom, waiting for her outside the door. She pulling him in with her, when she saw that it was empty. Tig waiting for them when they came back out. The three of them back on the bikes.
Late afternoon, they stopped at the Grand Canyon. She looked out over the vastness of the canyon. The sun starting to set, bringing out the rich reds, yellows, and oranges of the worn strata of earth, down below.

“Oh my God. Look at that.” She said in an awed voice. “Centuries of time. Worn away, with wind, water, and time...into something so beautiful.”

Chibs hugged her as she stared out over the landscape. She looked to him. Shifting in his arms, her hands gripped at his jacket. “Thank you.”

He shrugged. “Not a problem, m ‘anam.”

“No, thank you for helping today. Earlier. You’re a good man. And to stop here. No matter what people do to each other, this...will always be eternal. Here long after we’re gone. Just amazing.”

“You’re amazing.” He said softly. His eyes darkening. They fell into a kiss and she sighed into him. Her body pressing and gripping at him. His hands at her neck, supporting her head as they swayed together. Breaking for air, pressing their foreheads to each others. “Graim thu, mo ghaol. Graim thu.”

“What does that mean?” She asked.

He held her close, looking into her eyes, to only duck his eyes. “I’ll tell ye’ later.”

Giving him a soft smile and gave him a deep kiss. Looking back out over the canyon, the shadows deepening as the sun settled over the horizon.

“Hey, we need to start heading out again. Park’s closing soon.” Tig said.

They turned and followed Tig.

“Oy, let’s check into the Best Western for the night. It’s been a day.” Chibs said.

“Yeah. Get a good night’s sleep.” Tig agreed.

Nancy felt tired yet energized at the same time. Her mind a million miles away as she fixed the image of the Grand Canyon into her brain. Her love for Chibs filling her heart and soul. Her hand tightened around his as they walked. His answering squeeze. He leading her back to the bike, knowing that she was unaware of the remaining tourists. Trusting him to lead her where it was that they needed to be. She’d never had a successful day like today. To actually help someone in need and it worked. It worked because Chibs and Tig helped her. She wanted to cry and laugh at the same time. And Chibs was with her every step of the way.

Chibs led the way out back to the main road and headed south to the hotel. The night sky felt vast overhead.

Tig went inside to get the rooms as she and Chibs grabbed up their bags for the night.

“I’m in dire need of a shower.” She sighed.

“Aye, decent food, too.”

Tig took his bag from Chibs. A strange tension came over the two men as they walked towards the elevator.
She shook her head, when they entered the elevator. Tig punching at the button for the floor. “Come on. Hug it out. I told Tig I was fine. If the drunk-ass moron didn’t grab me, I wouldn’t have known about Lily. She would have been trapped in the shitty trailer, still. We saved her life. Got to see the Grand Canyon in all its splendor.” She said.

Chibs glanced at Tig. Tig dumbfounded. Chibs shifted on his feet. Tig looking at Chibs.

“Mo ghaol….“ Chibs groaned.

“Chibs.” She drawled with a brow lift.

“Wow. Really? Really?” Tig said, surprised at how Chibs was still angry at him. And surprised to see Nancy work Chibs to let it go, to be in his corner on his fuck-up.

Chibs sighed. “You’re not going to let this go are ye’?” He groaned at her.

“Nope.”

“Fuck. If I find out you were tasked, we’ll be having words.” Chibs warned Tig before grabbing Tig into a hug.

“No shit. And no, by the way, I wasn’t tasked, asshole.” Tig wheezed as Chibs bear hugged him. Letting Tig go abruptly, smacking him upside the head.

“Ow! Asshole.” Tig complained rubbing the back of his head.

Nancy grinned, fighting back her laugh at their antics. “Better now?”

Tig and Chibs dropped their heads, the tension earlier gone. “Good. Let’s go. I want a freaking shower. Feel like I’ve got dirt and dust in places that I didn’t know I had places.” She complained.

Chibs pulled her into his arms, and they walked out onto their floor.

“Don’t even say it.” Chibs warned Tig before he could mouth off.

They got to their rooms without any further bloodshed and Nancy chalked it up as a win. She opened up her bag and started stripping off her jacket and boots. “Dibs on the shower.” She said as she disappeared through the door.

“Chibs, you gotta talk to her. That shit running into the trailer like that…” Tig said, rounding on him in the hallway.

“I know.”

Another silent look and Tig turned to his door next to his.

Chibs rifled through his bag for a clean set of clothes. “Hurry up. I’m starving.” He said as he caught her escaping to the bathroom.

Sighing in relief as the water pounded over her, grabbing the soap and scrubbed down. Washing her hair. Her head pounding as she put on a robe and stepped out of the bathroom. Chibs waiting for her smoking a joint.

Taking a few minutes to seek refuge in each other and Chibs took his turn in the shower. She smoking the joint he’d handed her. Pulling on fresh clothes. Combing out her hair.
Chibs stepped out and took the joint again. Sitting down on the bed, finishing off the joint.

“We need to talk, darling.” He started.

She looked up at him confused. “Okay? About what?”

“What ye’ did at that trailer. Ye’ can’t do that again.”

She stiffened and took a step back, confused what he was talking about. “Do what?”

“For one, running off the bike before it’s come to a stop. Two, running into that trailer blind. Without waiting for me and Tig.”

“But…Lily….she was…”

“I know what ye’ thought. And it wouldn’t have mattered if you had waited another two goddamn minutes for Tig and me to make sure that that asshole wasn’t waiting for you.”

“But you knocked him out...” She countered confusedly.

“You’re not understanding what I’m telling you.” He hissed at her as he got up to pace the room.

Her eyes widened at the anger in his eyes and voice. Mentally, thinking over the events of the day. Of what it was that she did that made him so angry at her. She did do the things that Chibs was leveling at her. But she knew that they were right behind her. She trusted them to be there, right behind her. Looking at Chibs now, she realized that he didn’t have the same level of trust as she did him. Saw the absolute fear driving his anger.

“Then explain it to me, please.” She asked calmly.

“You should have waited for Tig and I to check the trailer to make sure that that asshole wasn’t in there. Or any of his asshole buddies. You ran right into that trailer. You could have gotten killed doing that!”

She stilled as Chibs lit into her. No longer listening to his words, but letting the fear and anger bleed out of Chibs and wash over her. Acknowledging his fear, seeing how her actions scared him. But even with him so angry with her, she was right in going into that trailer. Remembering that she hadn’t told Chibs what she saw in Don. It was dragging them out of bed early and racing against time to get to the trailer, then back to the motel to pack, and back on the road. No time to explain. And she should have told him.

Twisting her lips and a sad shake of her head, “You don’t know…”

“Know what?” He bit out. “Know that you could have been killed? Aye, I’m all too aware. Did you ever stop to think what would have happened if you’d gotten hurt?!” Chibs breathing hitching as he tried to draw air, but only ended up more upset.

“Whatever this thing that we’re going through, ye’ can’t just run off like that! Not when it’s my job to make sure that you’re safe! You had no idea who might have been in there, ready to shoot you dead!”

She let him vent all over her. She scared him and she didn’t mean to do it. But she knew that Lily wouldn’t have held up if Chibs and Tig had burst into that trailer guns drawn. She knew what Don was capable of, what he threatened Lily with. They were lucky to find her alive.
Silence fell in the room. The clock ticked the minute over as the two of them stared at each other. Chibs working to calm down. Glaring at her, waiting for her apology.

“You don’t know what it’s like to be trapped like that. Locked up...waiting for the violence that is coming for you when that door is unlocked. You don’t know...what it...what it does to your mind...your soul. One second can be an eternity...One second is all it takes to break someone.” She said softly, not letting herself get worked up to feed into Chibs anger and fear.

Chibs paced. “I know some of it. Been in prison here in the states and in Ireland. Been shut up in the hole. So don’t be telling me I don’t know!”

She shook her head. “You are a grown man, affiliated with outlaws, with the IRA. There is always a risk of being put into jail. You agreed to that risk by doing business the way you do...by living the life. You are mentally and emotionally prepared for that. Lily is not like that. She’s innocent. You don’t know…”

“Tig and I are military trained. One of the first things we learn is clearing a building. You have to let us do our jobs.”

“And you have to let me do mine.” She brought him up short. He finally listening to what she was saying.

“There is a reason why I’m the way I am. I couldn’t let Lily be there alone for any longer. I couldn’t. I’m sorry I scared you. But I couldn’t let her be there a second longer. While you and Tig would have gone to save Lily if you’d known about it without me around. Having the two of you barge into that trailer guns drawn, it would have freaked Lily out. Freaked her out to the point that she would have gone catatonic on you. Even though you meant to save her. She needed a person as non-threatening as possible. You don’t know...”

“Know what?” He asked.

“It’s not the first time he’s taken a girl. And its not the first time he’s killed a girl.” She breathed.

He eyes narrowed. “What was in that Ziploc from the freezer?”

“Don made the mistake of grabbing me. He’ll spend the rest of his life in jail...on death row for what he’s done.”

“Lily wasn’t killed.”

“No, she wasn’t. Others weren’t as lucky. He kept souvenirs. I wanted to make sure the cops didn’t miss it in that pigsty.”

“Jesus Christ.” He breathed.

She shook her head. “Don reminded me of Claire. Claire wanted me alive for as long as possible, just so she could torture me for as long as possible. I’ve grown up with that threat, it prepared me. I know that if you hadn’t shown up when you did...I was close to giving up. Just like Lily.”

The silence between them heavy and thick.

Chibs gave a harsh cry as he grabbed her and pulled her tight into a hug. His body shaking. She hugging him back. His anger stripped from him and all he had left was fear and had him clutching at her. Making sure she was in his arms.
“I’m sorry.” She murmured. “I didn’t mean to scare you.”

Chibs held her tighter at her apology. She leaned her head back to look up at him. Tears fell down his cheeks. She freed her hands and grabbed at his face, her thumbs sweeping away his tears.

“I won’t let anything happen to ye’.” He said harshly.

“I know. Just like I won’t let anything happen to you, either.” She turned his promise around on him.

He huffed. “Just next time, wait for me and the guys to make sure things are safe first. Okay? Practically gave me a heart attack.”

“Okay. I’ll try.” Chibs gave her an annoyed look for not just outright promising.

“Hey, I’m trying here. I’ve only had myself for practically my entire life. I’m used to taking the hits all by myself.”

“That’s not helping, darling.” He growled at her.

“Sorry. Guess we both need to learn how to trust each other better. Bound to be some hiccups here and there.”

He sighed heavily, looking at her hard. “Old lady rule. You do what I tell you to do.”

She glared at him for pulling that card on her.

“You expecting me to stay at home in the kitchen, too? Gotta tell you, I don’t know how to cook.”

“Gods above. No. That’s not what I meant. But when we’re around the guys, if we ever run into trouble, you do not go rushing off into the thick of things. You show them shit like you did at the trailer, they won’t trust you to keep from getting yourself and them hurt.”

She thought over what he was saying and knew that there was truth in that. “Okay. I’ll try.”

He heaved another aggrieved sigh at her. “Can’t you just promise that you’ll hang back and let me protect you?”

She shook her head. “I won’t lie to you. If you want me to do that, it’d be a lie.”

Chibs growled at her but his hot rush of anger was cooled and his fear lessened the longer he held onto her.

“I don’t want there to be lies between us.” He agreed with her, begrudgingly.

“I don’t either.”

“Good. Just talk to me next time. Let me know what’s going on, okay?”

“You’ve told me from day one to trust you. And I do. I trust you. I knew you and Tig were right behind me. But you need to trust me, too. Half the time, I still think I’m wrong about what I see in people. You don’t know how much I wanted to be wrong about Lily. I should have told you what I saw this morning. I realize that now. I’m sorry, I’ll try and do better if there’s a next time.”

Chibs drew her into a bear hug, hushing at her. She was surprised to realize she was shaking in his arms.
“It’s okay. You’re okay.” He repeated to her. “I won’t let nothing happen to you.”

They held onto each other, taking refuge in each other's arms after their blow up.

She looked into his dark eyes. “Does this qualify as our first fight?” She asked curiously.

He chuckled, rolling his eyes that he couldn’t believe her question. “Hardly, Fiona would throw things at me.”

She reared back, looking at him questioningly. “What did you do to have her throw things at you? That’s not a very healthy way of working problems out.”

He shook his head at her. “M’anam, Fi and I were young and stupid. Fi’s got a stubborn streak a mile wide. I’ve got a stubborn streak another mile wide, along with a hard head.” He said by way of explanation.

She shook her head. “I believe in talking things out. I’ll admit, I failed at that today. It’s been such a whirlwind since we’ve found each other...barely a week. These dreams, they only gave us a glimpse of what we are to each other. You’ve been married, had a kid. I’ve never had a boyfriend. Never been in a romantic relationship.”

“I know. We may not know all our secrets yet, and it’ll probably take the rest of our lives. But what I feel for you, God, I know it. I’ve fallen for you. Graim thu...it means I love you. Felt it the moment you were in my arms and looked at me. Think you were sent to me by God himself. Everyday, I learn something about you that just thrills me to no end. And I can’t wait to learn the next thing.”

She sighed and he pulled her into a deep kiss. Tears slid from her eyes at the emotional upheaval going on inside her. Grabbing him tight to her.

Their kiss was interrupted by Tig barging in. “You guys ready for dinner?” He asked without looking up as he finished buckling his belt. “Ah, Christ. You two doing your mind meld again?”

He complained as he caught a look at the two of them.

She sighed as she and Chibs were pulled from their intimate moment again by Tig.

“Jesus, don’t you know how to knock?” Chibs asked Tig crossly. He knew Tig interrupted them on purpose, given the shit-eating grin on his face. Fucking Tig. He couldn’t wait to get home. Where he could finally be alone with Nancy, without interruption.

“What? I’m starving.” Tig shrugged at them.

Running a hand across his forehead. “God, let’s go.” He gave in.

Taking Nancy’s hand, they went down to the motel restaurant. Perusing the menu she zoned out. It’d been a long day. She yawned and wanted to sleep more than eat. But Chibs wouldn’t let her sleep without eating something first.

“Mo leanabh? Club sandwich good for you?” Chibs asked.

“Hmmm?”

Tig giggled looking at her. “Jesus. You look like you’ll slide under the table.”

“Tired.” She yawned and shifted in the booth. Pressing her back to the wall, her legs swung over
Chibs lap. His hands going to her legs, holding them in place.

“Aye. Figure tomorrow we can start fresh, should be able to get to Barstow tomorrow. Next day, Monteray for the beach. Then just a few more hours and we’ll be getting into Charming, probably early evening or later. Depends on traffic.”

“What? Monterey?” Tig whined. “Jesus, you know I hate the beach.”

Chibs slid Tig a hard look. “I made a promise. You want to go on without us, by all means, go.”

“Been quite a trip. The harsh winter of Naperville, through the Rockies, Grand Canyon, through the desert and then to the edge of the continent. The Pacific Ocean.” She said dreamily, ignoring the tension between Tig and Chibs as the two of them slid their eyes to her in her wistful recitation.

Tig sighed and gave up fighting Chibs on their trip to the beach. The waitress setting down their dinners.

Conversation halted as the three of them tucked into their food. She sliding her mostly full plate over to Chibs and Tig to finish.

Chibs sent her a questioning look. She shook her head. “I’m full.”

A TV was on behind the bar, as they waited for Chibs to pay the bill at the register. Tig raided the mints, stuffing handfuls into his jacket pockets. Giving the hostess a wolfish grin.

The news was on and a shot of the trailer park caught her attention.

Chibs looked back at her and noted her interest. He swatted Tig and gave a chin nod to the TV. “Shit.” She heard Tig mutter. Chibs took her into his arms as they all watched the news report.

Police were called early in the morning to the trailer park off of Estes Road. Where a neighbor called the police when she heard screams of a girl. Found her beaten and tied to a bed.

News footage overlaid the voice of the reporter. Showed Lily taken out of the trailer on a stretcher and into an ambulance. Mrs. Gunderson waving her arms and talking with the cops. The trailer swarming with cops and people wearing white lab overalls. Bags of evidence being taken out of the trailer.

Investigators have already placed the owner of the trailer under arrest. A shot moved to the press conference with the lead investigator. Relaying that the owner of the trailer had been admitted to the local hospital with a broken jaw and was under the influence. “How did he get the broken jaw?” a reporter asked the police representative in the news conference.

“The person of interest was severely intoxicated. He fell in a local bar and cracked his jaw against a bar stool as he tried to leave the bar to drive home. The bartender had called the cops where he was assessed to need medical attention.”

“Shit.” Tig said. “You fucking broke his jaw. One punch.”

“Asshole deserved worse.”

“We did good.” She said with a soft smile.

Tig and Chibs mutually sighed and led the way back up to their rooms for the night.
Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
I love you = Graim thu
My love = mo ghaol
My baby = mo leanabh
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Final leg of their journey home.

It's not perfect, was pushing myself to get this out. Mistakes are mine. I'd spend another week nitpicking at this chapter if I let myself.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They rode out the next morning and made the next leg to Barstow for lunch and refueling, then continuing on to Monterey.

The smell of the ocean replaced the dry sandy dusted air of the desert. It was a beautiful day and the roads were thick with traffic.

It was late afternoon by the time they parked, Tig scowled at the sand before them.

He caught her eye with a laugh, his head nodding at Tig.

“'It’s just sand, Tiggy.” He teased.

“Fuck you. Do we really have to be here? You’ve seen it. Ocean, beach. There you go. Looks exactly like any other beach.” Tig tried to get her to concede on leaving right away.

“Sorry, Tig. I haven’t been to any beach, so I want to explore a little.” Tig rolled his eyes at her in defeat. “I won’t be long.” She mollified to him.

“Hey, take as much time as you want.” Chibs demanded.

She shrugged and quickly took her chaps off, bending down to take her boots and socks off. Rolling her jean legs up to her knees. Chibs was following suit with her, egging on Tig.

“Come on Tig, don’t be such a pussy. We fucking rode over four thousand miles in less than two weeks.”

Tig sighed heavily but got off his bike at least. Pulling out a cigarette and lighting it.

Taking each other’s hand, they stepped out onto the warm sand. They were seriously overdressed for the beach but she didn’t care. Heading right to the shoreline. The water rushing up towards them, over their toes, and ankles to back off just as quickly only to rush back. Her feet and toes sank into the wet sand.

She giggled at the sensation. Looking up to Chibs to see if he was feeling the same thing. He grinned down at her. She bent down and ran her hand through the water and rinsed her face. Today was a gift she acknowledged, as she stood back up.

Running her hands through her hair, pushing it back from her face. The wind played along her face
and lifted up the ends of her hair. Standing here, a small part of her protective wall broke off and she
couldn’t help the tears. Realizing that she could have still back in Naperville if it weren’t for
Chibs.

She felt herself tear up, hearing Chibs tell Tig about all the miles they rode...it just caught up with
her. She was home. She was safe. And it was all due to Chibs for having the gut instinct to know
he had to find her. God, she was a mess. Here she was at the edge of the country that she never
thought she’d ever be or see, and she was crying about it.

“Oy, what’s this then?” He asked with a worried note as he took in her tears.

“Sorry, I just never thought I’d ever live to see this.” She looked to Chibs, “Thank you for coming
for me.” She said, her voice hitching thick with emotions. “For saving me.”

Chibs pulled her into a hug. “We save each other, mo ghaol. Graim thu...graim thu.” He said
gruffly into her ear, fighting his own tears. The thought that he might have been too late hitting him
all over again.

“Christ, you got me going.” He wiped at his teary eyes.

“Sorry.” She raised up a hand, helping him dry his face. Her own emotional upheaval passing as
she focussed on the here and now.

Leaning into him, he crashed his lips to hers. Her arms locking around his neck as they swayed
together. A moment later, breaking for air, his hands lifted her up against him. Her legs wrapping
around his hips, her ankles crossed. Their kiss broke as they stared into each others eyes. Fingers
tracing along his cheek as she smiled softly into his gaze.

The setting sun made the red in Nancy’s hair flair like it was on fire. Her eye color shifted to a gold
and dark purple. Fucking beautiful. He kissed her, letting himself merge with her. That’s how he’d
been thinking of their kisses. A merging of their souls. God, he loved her. Never thought he’d love
anyone like this ever again. Fucking luckiest man on the planet.

He heard a click and looked, seeing Tig with his stupid camera phone again. He groaned. “I think
Tig is developing some sick obsession of catching us kissing.” Chibs raised a brow at her with a
humorous glint in his eye. Her brow raised to match his. He pressed a quick kiss again, before
setting her back on her feet.

Faster than she could blink, Chibs grabbed hold of Tig. Tossed the phone to her and dragged Tig
into the ocean for a good soaking dunk.

“Ah, fuck! Chibs! You fucking asshole! Don’t!” Tig sputtered and swore as he was tossed into the
ocean. Soaked from head to toe. Tig hadn’t even taken his boots off before wandering out into the
sand with his phone.

Chibs laughed, tripping and dunking Tig into the water.

Tig wrestling under Chibs strong hands. Tig swearing up a blue streak. His flailing only making
himself even more soaked.

She giggled as she looked at Tig and Chibs through the viewfinder of the phone. Pressing the
button to take a few pictures.

Tig’s ice blue eyes glared at Chibs while the water was streaming from his hair.
Chibs ran back to Nancy, the glee in his eyes made her smile more. Taking his picture. Chibs swung around behind her, his breathing rapid as he laughed at Tig. “Save me, m’anam.”

She guffed, she was hardly a good place to hide from Tig’s ire.

Tig stalking out of the water, towards them. Soaked from head to toe. “I am so going to kick your ass when we get home. Motherfucker.”

Tig’s pronouncement was met with Chibs laughing at him.

She took another picture of Tig shaking his body out. Capturing the golden lab, further down the beach at the dog section, who was shaking its fur out of the water.

Chibs laughed as he saw what she was doing. “God, that is so fucking perfect. Gimme that. I gotta save this one.”

She handed him the phone, his fingers flying across the keypad to finally snap it closed when he was done. Preserving the photos of their day at the beach.

Tig gave them a dirty look, grumbling threats for bodily harm, which just set Chibs off again.

“Come on, brother, let’s go home.” Chibs holding her hand, his other arm across Tigs shoulders. Locking Tig’s head and neck in the bend of his elbow. Moving them back up the beach and to their bikes again. Tig wrestled his way out of Chibs hold.

“God damn it. Hate the fucking beach. Fucker.” Tig complained as he shrugged out of his wet leather coat and boots. Turning his boots upside down a mix of water and sand sluicing out. Tig sending Chibs another glare.

“Jesus Christ. Relax would ye’? The way you’re going on...ye’d think I’d murder’d ye’...” He rolled his eyes at Tig’s glare.

She took up a bandana, running it over his hair and dried at the wet spots where she could reach. He kissed her and took the cloth from her, crouching down he wiped her feet dry so she could put her socks and boots back on.

Soon as they were both back in their boots, they looked back towards the setting sun over the ocean, leaning against the bike.

He felt peaceful and holding Nancy in his arms was just right. How he managed to not have her in his arms before was simply unimaginable to him now. She was in her rightful place in his arms, at his side. He wanted to savor this moment, it’ll be the last before they get home to Charming and the potential drama awaiting them there.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake, let’s go.” Tig whined, breaking their tranquil moment.

He sighed heavily at Tig’s interruption. Nancy just gave him a small shrug and smile. He stood up to check his bike for the final leg of their journey.

Nancy bit her lip, looking at Tig with a pensive eye. She came to some decision, and approached Tig.

“What?” Tig asked sharply.

“Thank you, Tig. I know I was a burden you never expected to deal with. But thank you for
coming, for helping Chibs, for helping us. For even coming with us to the beach. You’re a good friend.”

Tig stunned by her gratitude, not sure what to do with her earnest gratitude, somewhat ashamed for his complaining earlier. “Anything for you, doll.” Tig said, his voice breaking a little.

“All right, now. We gotta get moving. We’re only a few more hours from home.” Chibs announced.

They pulled out back onto the road. Nancy watched the ocean as it turned black with the moon replacing the sun in the sky. Her hand sneaking to Chibs stomach, the other at his belt.

As they rode into Charming proper, he was able to bring his hand to hers at his waist when they had to wait for stoplight changes. Nancy’s head swiveled back and forth behind him, as they passed through the downtown and its small shops.

It was dark and a lot of the shops were closed down for the night, but she was able to point out shops that she recognized. He chuckled back at her. His hand patting on hers.

Riding into the Teller-Morrow lot, by the lack of bikes, it was a quiet house. Only Happy’s and Rat’s bikes were lined up. Both of whom walked out of the clubhouse at the sound of their bikes.

Soon as Chibs and Tig got off their bikes, a round of backslapping hugs from Happy and Rat greeted the men. She hung back as she watched as they got reacquainted with each other.

“Where is everyone?” Tig asked.

“Clay and Jax weren’t sure when you’d turn up. Church is set for tomorrow morning.” Happy informed them.

“Fuck, it’s good to be home.” Tig said in relief as he disappeared into the clubhouse with Happy.

Chibs took her hand, threaded their fingers together. “Rat, unpack my bike, put everything in the apartment.” He ordered.

“Ok, good to have you back.” Rat said with a careful eye on her. She huddled into Chibs.

“Come on, m ‘anam, I need a drink and a shower.”

Nancy nodded and moved with Chibs as he led her into the clubhouse she’d seen in her dreams. She picked out the people that she’d recognized. It was crowded with croweaters and some of the lesser members of the club. Eyes watched her and Chibs as they moved through the crowd.

She stepped a little behind Chibs as she tried to avoid brushing up against people. Chibs sensed her nervousness and kept his hand hard on hers. Using his free hand to greet people as they passed through.

Tig peeled off at the hallway, they went in the opposite direction. Rat stepped out of a door they were approaching.

“I’ll have a croweater swing by and grab your laundry.”

“Don’t bother, we’re only here for the night.” Chibs instructed and Rat nodding and disappearing into the throng.
“I thought you had a house?” She asked confused.

“I do, and we’ll go there in the morning. But I thought it best that we crash here tonight. I’ve got church first thing in the morning. And...I don’t have any food at the house. Grocery is closed up til tomorrow. You’re safe here.”

“Okay. Whatever you think best.”

“Come on, let’s get cleaned up and we can get something to eat from the kitchen.”

Nancy nodded and gathered up some clothes and went to the attached bathroom. It was small but still a step up from the shower she had at home. She sighed as she felt her head start to ache again. She hurried with her shower, washing her hair. Throwing on some fresh clothes, opened the door to find Chibs leaning against the wall by the door. His hand reached for hers, and she gratefully tucked herself to his side.

“Christ, we need to find a solution to this. Not that I don’t love having you near me, but it’s going to get old fast. Just wait til the guys find out. Tig’s going to have a field day with all this.”

“Sorry.”

Chibs gave her a look. “Don’t be sorry. You didn’t do anything wrong. No matter what, don’t apologize for anything.”

Nancy gave him a small smile acknowledging his words, but guilt still plagued her over their situation. “I’ll try. But I still feel bad for upsetting your life like this. And well, I’m nervous. We’re actually here. It’s so surreal.”

Chibs pulled her deeper into his arms. “M’anam, we’re meant to be. If it wasn’t now, it would have been later. So no more doubting, or any of that shite. Okay? And you got nothing to be worried about. So long as I’m with you, no one would dare hurt you.”

She pressed her lips together, not sure that Chibs was right, but willing to give him the benefit of the doubt.

“Give me a minute to clean up and we’ll grab some dinner.”

“Okay.”

He worked fast on his shower and putting on fresh clothes. He was really getting a system down, sadly. Maybe if they were having sex, they could share their showers. He groaned, his cock was loving the idea of him and Nancy in the shower together.

Jesus, he didn’t know if he was coming or going. He finished his ablutions, his head pounding. He opened the door and found Nancy sitting on the edge of the bed, rocking as she waited for him.

“Come here.” He helped her up into his lap as he sat down next to her. She curled into him and he gently brushed her hair back from her face. They both sighed in relief as the headache eased off again.

“I’ve been wondering what our blood pressures are like when we’re together and apart. I’m kind of worried we’ll end up stroking out one of these days.” She lamented dramatically.

Chibs grinned at her. “I highly doubt we’d go from a stroke. The bp is an interesting idea though. We can easily test it out. But let’s wait a day or so, I’m really tired. And hungry. You up for some
food?”

She shrugged, her stomach still on a vacation. Chibs pulled out a joint and lit it for her. Handing it to her as he stole a kiss. She relaxed in his arms even more and wanted to simply hole up here and never set foot out that door. But it was wishful thinking, there was no way she could hide forever.

Chibs led her back out into the main part of the clubhouse. Tig was already at the leather sofa, Happy next to him. Rat behind the bar. A couple of croweaters sitting on Tig’s either side.

He led her into a small commercial kitchen, opening the fridge and pulled out some deli meat and mustard. Reaching up to the top shelf where the individual bags of chips were kept, grabbing a couple of those for their sides.

The vegetables were looking slightly blue and he tossed them quickly. Swearing mentally, for all the time that Gemma and Bobby were in here cooking or setting up leftovers, they couldn’t manage to toss the spoiled food if their life depended on it. Nancy helped by getting out the plates as Chibs put their sandwiches together.

Leading her over to a table back in the main area of the club. A croweater plopped a beer in front of him. Nancy watched as the woman leaned on Chibs. The scant clothing, heavy makeup and giving him prime view of her cleavage.

He sent the croweater a hard glare. “Are you fuckin’ blind? Bring her a beer. And don’t forget her again.”

The croweater gave her a critical look, but left to do his bidding. Chibs kept hold of her hand under the table. She ate a few bites of her sandwich and some of the chips.

The croweater came back, plunking a beer in front of her. “Thank you.” She said politely.

The croweater rolled her eyes and walked away. Taking sips of the ice-cold beer. She watched the other people in the clubhouse. She caught varying levels of curiosity to animosity thrown her way.

“Chibs, you’re back, finally.” Gemma interrupted their dinner, her voice disapproving that he’d left at all. “Does Clay and Jax know you’re back yet? The guys thought you’d be back this afternoon…”

Gemma tall with her high-heel boots, brown hair with blonde, chunky highlights framed her tanned face. Dressed in tight-fitting black shirt and jeans. Dumping her black-studded bag on the table. Gemma leaned over to Chibs and kissed his cheek.

She reeled back watching Gemma, her familiarity with Chibs. She didn’t like it. Having a woman be so familiar with her Chibs.

He held her hand tighter until Gemma straightened up from the kiss she planted on him. Chibs sighed and leaned back in his chair, his free hand wiping at his mouth and cheek with his napkin.

“We stopped at Monterey.”

“Monterey? You went to the beach when the club has business to handle? Everyone was waiting for you to get back, Chibs.” Gemma took Chibs to task.

Chibs turned to look dead on at Gemma. “Aye, we went to the beach for an hour. M ‘anam, she’s never been to the beach or seen the ocean. So yes. We went to the beach. It was on the way home, and I don’t have to explain myself to you.”
Gemma reeled back at Chib’s harsh voice. Her eyes narrowed as she stared at Chibs. Surprise and angry that Chibs was challenging her.

“This is Nancy. Nancy, this is Gemma.”

“Hi. Nice to meet you.” She said politely as Gemma looked her over with a hard look, blaming her for all the woes of the world it seemed.

“So, you’re the one that twisted up Chibs to hell and back. Jesus, you’re young. Chibs, how old is this gash?” Gemma demanded. Nancy felt her stomach turn under the verbal attack. She couldn’t get a word in edgewise with Gemma talking about her to Chibs as if she weren’t right there next to him.

“Gemma! Her name is Nancy. Be nice. And we don’t need you digging into her or me where you don’t belong.” He told Gemma with a sharp voice. “What are you doing here so late anyway?” Chibs asked abruptly, changing the conversation away from her.

“Catching up on some paperwork in the office. Dear God, what did you do, just snatch her up off the street?” Gemma wasn’t deterred by Chibs attempt at a topic change.

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We just got back from across the fucking country. We’re tired so leave it be. Go harangue Tig. Come on, mo ghaol.” Chibs stood and led her back to the apartment.

“Sorry about that. Gemma can have the tact of a pitbull.”

“It’s okay. I guess it was naive to think I’d be welcomed with open arms.” She said. She fought to keep her feelings from showing how crushed she felt from Gemma’s immediate dislike of her.

The past few days of her escape from Naperville she’d been hoping that she could maybe have a fresh start, make some friends. But with how everyone was staring at her and now with Gemma’s disapproval, Nancy felt like a bug under a boot about to crush her. From the way Chibs and Tig spoke of Gemma, from what she saw in the dreams, not much gets by Gemma. Or gets done without her two cents added to the guy’s opinions.

But still, she held hope that someone would give her the benefit of the doubt and felt bad that her presence would make life difficult for Chibs whom she couldn’t stop touching or holding his hand. To be trapped with someone who was so hated by society.

Chibs sighed. “Don’t worry, things will settle down. Tomorrow, I’ll meet with the guys and we’ll go to the house. Gemma’s not usually this worked up. I don’t know what bug got up her ass. Soon as I explain things to Jax and Clay, she should settle down.”

She frowned at Chibs answer to Gemma’s behavior. The way Gemma spoke to Chibs, that too, rankled at her. But she could be wrong, and Chibs right, that Gemma will settle down now that he and Tig were back. Sighing, deciding it was too late and she was too tired to figure out the latest drama brewing.

Chibs stripped his t-shirt and jeans off, leaving his boxers on, collapsing into the bed. Nancy took up Chib’s t-shirt, escaping into the bath to change. Slipping his t-shirt on to sleep in. His scent lingered on the shirt as she brushed her teeth and went to join Chibs in bed. They immediately curled into each other.

“I like you wearing my shirt.” He muffled in her ear, half asleep.

“It smells like you.” She said, their hands finding each other in the dark, fingers twining. “Thanks
again for taking me to the beach. It was amazing. I’ll never forget it.”

“I made you a promise. I’ll try to never break a promise to you. And you were so fucking gorgeous. I’ll never regret it. Making you happy is my new goal in life.”

“Just so long I can return the favor.” She breathed. Falling asleep from their long day, cocooned in his arms.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

The debrief begins....

Thank you for sticking with this story. It's massive. I'm writing and editing as quickly as possible.

If I don't get a chance, have a safe New Year and stay warm.

“Chibs, church.” Opie’s deep voice sounded through the bedroom door. Waking him up, with a corresponding knock on the door.

“Aye, be there in ten.” He replied roughly. Listening to Opie clomp down the hall in his heavy boots.

Disentangling himself carefully out of bed, trying to let Nancy sleep a little bit longer. Maybe if one of them was still asleep, the headaches won’t be as bad. They’d tried this on the road, it didn’t work. But you gotta keep trying as the saying goes. Staring at himself in the mirror, he shook his head. This was going to be painful. Fuck.

Soon as he was dressed, he dropped a kiss to Nancy’s temple as she curled deeper into the sheets. He forced himself to stay out of the bed. Watching her sleep, he wanted nothing more than to climb back in and wrap himself around her. But he heard the guys voices in the main part of the clubhouse.

Blearily, stumbling a little down the hall and out to the bar where coffee was calling his name. Rat sliding a cup towards him at the bar. Leaning his back against the bar he did his best to ignore the growing ache in his head as his eyes couldn’t manage to open all the way. Peering at the guys as they strolled into the clubhouse.

Bobby and Piney were the first to drag him into a hug. Jax and Opie taking their turn. Jax backslapping him, glad that he made it back in one piece.

Tig rolled up next to him, looking rough as well. His hair looking like he’d been dragged through a hedge. Tig raised a brow, seeing he was alone. “Where is she?”

“Hopefully, still asleep.” He grunted. Mildly wondering if he should ask Tig if he'd combed his hair. Taking another sip of the coffee, he decided to forgo debating Tig’s hair.

Jax wandered off into church when he saw Opie head inside as well.

“Yeah, how's the head?” Tig asked.

“Manageable, at the moment. We’ll see.”

“Ready for this?”

“No, but let’s get this over with. I need another twelve hours of sleep before I think I’m human.”
Tig laughed, but followed Chibs as they entered into church. Chibs collapsing into his chair with a groan. Clay and all the guys giving him looks, ranging the full gamut of amusement to outright curiosity. Fuck.

“What?” He bit out roughly. Hoping his tone of voice would put them off on questioning him too much.

“So she’s real then.” Jax started with a sly grin.

“Aye.” Chibs figured if he kept to simple yes or no answers they might let him out faster.

The guys all leaned in, eyes staring at him, their silent expectation pressed at him to say more. He sipped at his coffee and cracked his neck.

The silence stretched over the table, everyone waiting for him to speak up. His eyes glancing back at the doors shut behind him with a yawn.

Tig snorting next to him. Ass. Chibs looked to Clay and Jax, looking for any guilt in their eyes of why they sent Tig with him rather than someone else. His annoyance rising inside him, waking him up further.

“So how did you find her? What happened?” Bobby broke, asking for elaboration. Fuck.

Sighing heavily, realizing he wouldn’t get out of filling them in. Tig giggled next to him.

Lighting a cigarette to buy himself some time. Formulating a plan of what to say.

“I knew from the dreams where she went to school. We rolled into town…” He began.

“Hale would piss himself to have Charming like Naperville. They've got two Starbucks only three blocks from each other.” Tig interjected. The guys looked to Tig like he was cracked. He shook his head at Tig angrily for interrupting him with his personal commentary.

“Will you fucking quit it with the fucking Starbucks? Jesus.” He glared at Tig to shut the fuck up. Tig shrugging off his warning. Taking a breath, he continued. "I was floored that the school was actually there. Looked exactly like how I’d seen it in my dreams. Half expected it to not be there, that all this was in my head. I couldn’t believe it. We found her in the cafeteria.”

“Place was a fucking zoo.” Tig said. “Had to be two...three hundred people just in the cafeteria alone.”

He turned a dark glare on Tig, oblivious to his rising anger for interrupting him. God knows what Tig will blurt out next.

“Shit, how’d you find her out of that many people?” Kozik asked.

Tig shrugged. “Chibs...he knew the layout of the school. Like he'd been there before. Found her like he had a GPS tracker on her. Spooky shit.”

Hissing in frustration as Tig kept talking over him. He needed to move. And knew if he stayed at Tig’s side, he’d knock the shit out of the idiot. Standing he started pacing, the pain in his head ramping up. Flicking the ash off his cigarette, he felt worried and anxious the longer that he was apart from Nancy. Worried that someone would give her a hard time without him there.

Tig shrugged as the guys all sent him questioning looks.
“I took one look at her and knew I couldn’t leave her there. She’s so fucking thin, still is. When you meet her...just know she was worse a week ago. If I’d waited another day or two, don’t think she would be alive.” He looked gravely at everyone at the table.

“I took hold of her. Soon as she laid her hands on me...fuck, I don’t know what is happening, but our headaches eased back. Like drawing breath for the first time. We’re linked or bonded somehow.” He waved frustratingly with his cigarette. “Never felt so in tune with someone before. Not even with Fi.”

Tig jumped in. “It was intense, the two of them. Don’t think I could have separated them when they met up. Thought you two were going to fuck right there in the cafeteria.” Tig joked.

“Fuck you. Jesus. It’s a...state of grace. Like there’s nothing I can do wrong so long as she’s with me. All the shite I’ve done...none of it matters so long as I’m with her. She’s…”

He broke off in a fit of frustration, searching for the words to describe what it’s like to be with her. “....home.” He voiced thickly.

Tig rolled his eyes, “I get it, she completes you. You’re all Jerry Maguire’d over her.” The guy’s eyes lit up, chuckling at the analogy.

He went utterly still, staring down Tig. His fingers itched for his gun. The air in the room went deathly still around him. The guys at the table, he sensed were staring at him as if they’d never seen him before. And he was a hair's’ breadth away from doing some violence to Tig for his dismissive attitude.

“Watch your fucking mouth….” He growled at Tig warningly. “Or we’ll be going ten rounds. If you manage to live that long.”

Tig sighed heavily, rolling his eyes. “I’m getting tired of you threatening my life every five minutes. You need to chill, brother. I’m just filling in your story for them.” He complained with a pout.

“Don’t be putting words in my mouth.” He countered, eyes narrowing in on Tig.

“Jesus Christ. As entertaining it would be to see you and Tig go at it, we’ll be here all day if you two keep nitpicking at each other.” Piney growled.

He sent Piney a harsh look, Piney raised his brows in surprise.

He took a breath and ran his hands over his hair, trying to soothe at his raging headache.

“Anyway, we fucking left that shithole behind. Of course, the bastard who threatened to rape her was sitting on my bike, bunch of gash cheerleaders with ‘em.” The guys groaned all of them having experienced the slight at one time or not.

“Shit, thought he was going to pee his pants when you had your gun on him.” Tig said with a smirk.

“You pulled a gun on a teenager?” Jax asked horrified.

Chibs hissing as he shifted his glare at Jax. “Aye, I did. Put the fear of me in the shithead. If it was Tara, you’d’ve done the same. So don’t be passing judgement you know nothin’ about.” Chibs shut down Jax’s judgement.
“All the while, you were griping about not getting any cheerleader ass.” Chibs accused pointedly to Tig. “Fucking one-track mind…” He said annoyingly.

The guys all looking at Tig, who merely shrugged. “What? Who wouldn’t want to get off on some tight pussy.” Tig explained himself.

“Jesus Christ...You forgetting what she told us about those fucking whores?” Tig shrugged it off. Rolling his eyes, he continued to the rest of the room. “Nancy...she warns the shithead not to go drinking and driving as we’re about to pull out.”

“What? Why?” Jax and Opie asked in unison. He paced, trying to think of a coherent way of telling the boys what she was without sounding like he was off his rocker.

He glanced at Tig. Apprehensive of telling the guys about her being psychic.

Tig gave him a nod. “I’m a believer, what happened with the two of you. The Harley shop...that asshole at the bar...the trailer. You don’t have to convince me, brother.” Tig lit a cigarette himself.

“Believe what?” Jax asked.

“She’s psychic.” Tig blurted out.

"Asshole." Chibs throwing his arms up in the air at Tig for being so blunt.

“Oh, like you were going to find some fancy way of saying it.” Tig said.

“What?” Clay asked pointedly. The disbelief lacing his voice.

The guys shifting corresponding looks among themselves. He was sure they wondered if he’d lost it for real. Shaking his head in annoyance at trying to explain and convince them. No wonder Nancy didn’t bother naming it or defending her abilities. Was fighting an uphill battle every fucking time.

He paced as his head hammered at him. “Nancy was thrown through the windshield of the car that killed her mother. It’s how she got the scar on her cheek. She was in a coma for a week. When she woke up, anyone who touches her...as she describes it...she ‘falls’ into them. Told me that she thought it was just the meds the docs had her on. But when those ran out, she kept reading people. She’s been doing it since she was eight years old. She can’t control it at all.”

“Nancy was warning the asshole that his father wouldn’t be able to help him in a few months. That he’ll get drunk and kill a couple people. End up in prison and becoming someone’s bitch.”

“Who was the kid’s father?” Kozik asked in the weighted silence.

“The mayor’s.”

Clay scoffed, “You can’t be serious. This is a joke, right?”

Chibs hissed in anger at Clay’s disbelief. Tig shifted uneasily in his chair, sending a warning glance at Clay.

“Nancy told me later, it was good we left as soon as we did. Cause the kid’s father was tied up in a city council meeting that night. The cops would have been on our ass if it was any other day of the week.” He informed.

Giving Tig a pointed look. “And that gash’s phone you broke, she just went and bought a new one.
If you laid a hand on her, she and her parents would have called the cops on us.”

Tig reeled back in his chair, hand to his forehead and running down his goatee.

“What gash? What’s this about a phone?” Bobby asked.

“Cheerleader with the rapist on Chibs bike. She was filming us dealing with the fucktard. Nancy told me what she was doing. I broke her phone to destroy the evidence of what Chibs was doing to the kid. Real piece of work that gash was.” Tig filled in. “Gash made some rude comments about Nancy, wanted to teach her some manners but Nancy waved me off on it. I was pissed about it.”

“Jesus Christ.” Jax groaned as he and the rest of the guys figured out what was going on.

“Aye, with you being on release, you’d been cooling your heels in lockup and shipped back to California. Spent the next decade back in the clink for breaking your parole.”

“Fuck, why didn’t you tell me!” Tig jerked upright in his chair.

Chibs waved a hand at him. “We were already heading out, not much point in telling ye’. Ye’ think it was just teenage rebellion she telling her bastard father to not bother calling the cops. That she’s no longer a minor.”

“I just thought she was finally able to get shit off her chest with the dickhead.” Tig said in bewilderment.

Chibs noted the rest of the guys swivelling their heads back and forth between him and Tig as they talked about things that they weren’t around for.

Chibs shook his head. “The Chief of Police in that shit town is in her father’s pocket. The mayor, the principal, her teachers, practically the entire town is in his pocket. She’s tried to get help before. They all just landed her back with her bastard father and his bitch. I was griping to her about going back to her father’s house and seek out retribution when I saw the fucking scars on her back.”

“When was this?” Tig questioned in latent worry.

“At the Harley shop. Barged in on her in the dressing room...and fuck...seeing it in the dreams was one thing. But to see it right in front of ye’. Fuck, I was pissed.”

“She fucking begged me not to do it. Reminded me I’d come out there to find her. We did that, got her out of there. But she was protecting us while we were there. Telling me that we weren’t in Charming. We weren’t safe. Wouldn’t be safe til we got out of Naperville...out of the state.”

“She...Fuck! Why didn’t she say anything?” Tig exploded.

“She did. To me.” He said pointedly to Tig with a dark look. “And like I said, wasn’t much point since we were on the road early the next morning anyway.”

“Jesus Christ. There were cops at the donut place that morning. I had no idea. Fuck, we should have hit the road out of there that night.” Tig groaned, rubbing at his eyes.

The guys all swivelled their heads back and forth as he and Tig were talking and arguing.

“Asshole.” Chibs flicked the last of his cigarette in Tig’s direction. Happy leaning out of the way of the cigarette.
Tig knocking the cigarette to the floor with a flash of annoyance to Chibs abuse. “Watch it, fucker.”

“Chibs, calm the fuck down.” Clay ordered.

Chibs glared at Clay and set his eyes back on Tig angrily.

“We couldn’t ride out that night. She was in such bad fucking shape, she barely made it back to the motel without falling off the damn bike. I wanted to get her to the fucking hospital, but she was freaking out on me over it. She needed time to rest. Get some real goddamn food in her.”

Tig gave another deep sigh as he let go of the fight. Realizing there was nothing to be done, they were home and out of harm’s way now.

“It’s a different town than here.” Chibs repeated, his eyes getting the guys attention and bringing them into the conversation. “The people there, they’re all stuck up assholes. Entitled. Walk around thinking they’re untouchable. And Nancy was their target to make her life a veritable hell just for their entertainment.”

“I can’t believe that she had no one who cared.” Jax said.

“Well, that’s the way it was. If they did care, there was nothing they could do about it. She had to pick her battles. Sometimes, I’d pop up with her while she was in class. She fucking lit into her history teacher once. He had his facts wrong. And according to Nancy, he was piss drunk. She wouldn’t let him teach anyone the facts wrong. Made him look bad in front of the class. Sent her to the principal. Where they yelled at her and called her step-mother. She got home and was beat on for making a fuss at school. Every time she stands up for herself, its a risk for her to do so.”

He worried the longer he was in the room without her. Her in the apartment by herself. Hoping that none of the croweaters went barging into the room and give her a hard time.

He started talking faster, his heart racing as he needed to get back to her.

“I wanted to have her pack her stuff up right away. There was no way I was lettin’ her go, not after feeling better than I’ve ever felt for months. She directed us to her house. Before we could even get through the door, her step-mother is there, throwing a punch. The principal of the school called her that we’d shown up and Nancy left with us during the school day. The bitch was more worried about her reputation than what Nancy was ever going through. Soon as she saw Tig and me, thought Nancy hired us.” Chibs broke off, the anger filling him.

“Hold on, was this before or after the Harley shop?” Opie asked.

“Right before. After lunch.” Tig supplied.

He caught the guys looking at him and to Tig, he couldn’t finish that train of thought. The horror of what might have happened.

Tig looking just as furious over the situation as he felt.

He couldn’t imagine how she managed to survive for as long as she did in that pit of hell. He lit another cigarette, cooling off for a moment. The guys all looking at him intently.

“Nancy,” he paused, rubbing a hand over his brow. “She’s not like the old ladies here, she’s not physically aggressive like Gemma or the other women who hang around here. She’s fucking smart and Christ, got a wicked sense of humor. She’s been shut down and beat on whatever she says for
most her life. She won’t believe it, but she’s fucking steel inside. She’s fucking stronger than any of us. What she endured, would have broken most people. But she’s scared about speaking up, for fear of being beat on. I’ve been encouraging her to voice her opinion. Get her to trust me to tell me some of the shite that’s running through her head. How she managed to keep her sanity intact all these years I’ll never know.”

“I’ll say. Jesus, has an opinion on everything.” Tig grumbled.

“Anyway, we pushed the gash off to the side so we could get in the house. Nancy takes us down to the basement where she’d been living.”

He looked to Tig. “We should have put a bullet in that bitch.” He said with angry regret.

“Coulda, woulda, shoulda. It was her decision to let that gash live.” Tig said with a shrug.

Chibs flicked ashes to the floor as he paced. His body tense and shaking as his headache ramped up again. Trying to will himself to ignore the pain as he was telling the boys their story. “Aye, it was.”

“I told you what I saw in the dreams, how she was living. It was worse seein’ it in person, being there. Stockton is a luxury hotel to that fucking basement. Heavy duty lock on the door to the basement. The fucking windows were painted over and welded shut. Couldn’t wait to get out of there. All I could think of was her trapped in there. That what if the house caught on fire and she was locked in there. Nobody would think to look for her. To break down the fucking basement door.” His breathing hitched as his imagination ran away on him. “She has nightmares of being trapped in there.”

The guys looking to Tig for confirmation, Tig nodding that Chibs was telling truth of the situation.

He forced himself to continue with the story. “The only time she got to be in the main part of the house was when she had school, parties her father threw, or when he and the gash wanted a go at her. She didn’t have much in the way of clothes. No good boots or outerwear for a ride back. Shit, what she did have is all threadbare and falling apart. We were already going to go to Harley to get her her own helmet, got her some new clothes there, too. We locked the bitch in the basement. Caterwauling and banging behind the locked door.”

“Fucking sent chills down my spine.” Tig said.

Chibs nodded gravely. “Hearing the bitch yelling and banging on the door, thinking that it was Nancy for ten years. Since she was a little kid.”

“God. I can’t imagine it if it was my kids.” Opie said rhetorically.

“Nancy leads us upstairs, the master bedroom door was locked. The papers she needs, birth certificate, shit like that was in the safe there. Tig and I shot out the lock on the door, she punches in the code for the safe and grabs the stuff that’s hers.”

“Hold it, how did she know the code?” Bobby asked.

“Every time Claire beat her, she was reading the bitch. She knew what Claire knew. But she didn’t have a key to get into the bedroom. Didn’t even have a key to the house.” His voice rose bitterly.

“Come back down the stairs to leave, and her father shows up. Perfect fucking timing. He’s just ripping her to shreds. Screaming at her for leaving after all the work and sacrifice he’s made for her and the bitch, that this is how she repays him.” Chibs huffed.
“It was brutal.” Tig said. “Her dick father claiming he was going to call the cops on her. She fucking turns on him. Telling him no. Reminding him she wasn’t a minor. Telling him what his friend the Chief of Police would tell him the same thing. That he couldn’t stop her from leaving. Fuck that was her protecting us…” Tig finally made the connection.

“One of the times.” Chibs waved a hand at him. “I didn’t want to head out the next morning...she insisted we go. Barely able to eat and we had to start riding back here.”

“Jesus.” Jax muttered.

Pacing and smoking as he tried to get through the meeting without Nancy. Fuck, this was so not working. And honestly, he didn’t want it to work. He wanted her close, next to him. He felt like he was missing his right arm or something when she wasn’t near him. The longer he was away from her, the worse the feeling got.

“She’s fucking nervous being here. Finding her place here. Figuring out what is going on with the two of us with these headaches. I’m telling her to talk to me. To trust me to help her.” He sent the guys a hard look.

“I’m warning you. None of you ever lays a finger on her. I made her a promise that no one is going to hurt her here. I find out one of you pressed up on her, I’ll fucking end you. Brother or not.”

“Chibs, chill.” Tig warned. The guys all looking between Tig and Chibs in concern.

“Fuck you. I know what the club does to test potential old ladies here. Cherry and the prospect? I don’t care who any of ye’ are. Anyone who touches her will regret making any moves on her.” He said darkly. Bobby shifting in his chair at the reminder of Clay's order regarding Cherry.

He stared down Clay, but his threat was cut short with a fresh wave of pain in his head.

“Fuck!” He swore as he bent over as he fought to keep his feet, hands trying to keep his skull from breaking apart. The pain flared and pulsed as he tried to breathe around through it.

“You okay, brother?” Opie asked worriedly.

He ran a shaking hand through his hair, massaging his temples and the crown of his head, his body shaking from the pain. He started pacing again. Gave the temporary plywood door a kick in frustration as he crossed back and forth across the room. Idly wondering what the fuck happened to the door. But his head was trying to crack open. Worried over Nancy alone. If he was feeling this, he knew she would be. And most likely, she’d suffer through it rather than come find him. Not wanting to bother him. He hated the looks of worry and concern everyone was sending him. The weight of their watchful concern amplifying his pain and worry.

“Fuck man, just go get her, you’re making me dizzy watching you.” Tig complained with a roll of his eyes.

He didn’t hesitate, just barely keeping himself from running out the door.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Tig's turn to explain things....

The guys all turned and looked at him in confusion.

“Jesus, what the hell is going on with him?” Jax asked.

“I thought you said he was better.” Clay accused.

“He is. Just watch them together, you won’t believe it.” He said in a sigh, as he lit a cigarette.

“We can’t have a non-member in church, can we?” Happy asked.

“I don’t think we’ll have a choice.” He replied, setting his lighter down on the table.

“Why? Because Chibs needs to get laid in the worst way?” Clay scoffed.

“They can’t stay apart for long. Every time they try, their headaches come back. Seriously. It’s like watching some epic love connection going on. It’s soulmate shit. I’d’ve never believed it unless I saw it for myself. I wasn’t kidding before, thought they were going to do the deed right there in the lunchroom in front of all those shitheads.”

He narrowed his eyes at the guys around the table. “And I’m warning you now, Chibs is amped up over her. Anytime someone gets too close to her, or says something about her, he’ll go off on you.”

“You can’t be serious.” Bobby said.

He shrugged his shoulders, “First morning, went in to wake him up...fucking pulled on me from dead of sleep. Got the picture on my phone. Did you tell them about the ride out?” He asked of Jax.

“No, just where you guys were. Couldn’t believe the pace you were making.” Jax said.

He shook his head, taking another draw on his cigarette. “That was the hardest fucking ride I’ve ever done. I had to fucking beg to stop for the night. And it was only for three...four hours tops. We were lucky the weather held out. He was determined to get to her asap. Had to force him to eat and drink whenever we stopped for gas. Even had to steal his keys a couple of times. If I wasn’t there, he would have ridden straight through.” He sighed heavily.

“Are they fucking?” Clay asked.

“Jesus, Clay.” Jax admonished exasperatingly.

“No. Not yet, anyway” He replied. “They’re sort of...getting to know each other. Like they’ve one-side dated for months, but never actually met until now. With her health, the ride back...although, no doubt, Chibs has some serious blue balls going on.”

The guys chuckled darkly.
He huffed as he thought more on it, “It’s not even dating how they have to hang onto each other, but he’s...Jesus...he’s courting her. He’s seriously worried over her health. Now that we’re home, she should be able to put some real weight back on. And Chibs wasn’t telling you everything that went on. It was completely fucked up at her school and that house.”

“Christ, just what we need, some pussy stirring up shit.” Clay griped. His tone indicating he was expecting everyone to match his sentiment.

“Clay!” Jax admonished. “Fucking hell, if that was any of our kids...What the fuck is the matter with you?”

“What? This is exactly the kind of distraction we don’t need right now. Having Chibs go off the deep end over some gash. Some pathetic story she made up to get Chibs twisted up over? We don’t know shit about this gash and already she’s causing trouble.”

He glared at Clay. “You thinking Chibs and me are lying about what happened? Chibs is in real fucking pain. I’ve never seen Chibs so bad before. He’s always been the most loyal and steadfast of everyone here. But lately, he’s completely unhinged. It wasn’t until he found Nancy that he’s gotten somewhat better.” Sitting up in his chair as he defended Chibs to Clay.

“And don’t even think about insulting her in front of Chibs. Fuck.” He swiped at his eyes at the thought of what that would look like. Nothing good he was sure. Clay and the guys looking at him in surprise.

“Chibs is hyper-protective over her.” He tried to explain. But his words came short by the expressions sent his way.

Ignoring the looks, “That first day, at lunch, he couldn’t let her sit in her own chair at first. And Christ, I thought she’d start bawling like a little kid when that food was put in front of her. She could barely get through a few bites of it. She’s better now, but it seriously was touch and go. We stopped for lunch in Davenport, she had a fucking melt-down over the menu.”

“What?” Juice asked confusedly.

“It was one of those diners that served everything under the sun, the menu was thick as a phone book. She kept flipping through the thing, getting more frustrated the longer she took. I told her to pick what she liked, it was just lunch and we didn’t have all freaking day. We planned to stop at Des Moines for the night. Chibs and I already put our orders in, waiting on her to decide. Chibs had the waitress leave for a minute. Turns to Nancy, asking her what was wrong. She couldn’t figure out what to order.”

“What do you mean, couldn’t figure it out. Chibs said she was smart.” Happy said.

“She is. But all she had to eat was peanut butter sandwiches for ten years. It’s what she survived on. Chibs dictating to her that he’ll never let her eat that ever again. She doesn’t know what she likes to eat. I didn’t get it right away, just telling her to pick out what she likes. How could she if she doesn’t know what she likes?”

“Oh my God.” Jax groaned in understanding.

Tig flicks a hand at him. “Exactly. Chibs is helping her through it. Talking her through how to order and shit. Fuck, first time she had a chocolate shake she literally swooned. That and bacon. It’s hilarious watching her try out food. Chibs won’t eat until she starts to eat. Thought I was in some Twilight Zone watching the two of them.”
“I’ll say.” Opie agreed.

“She apologizes all the time. When she found out we rode out to find her, that Chibs was seeing her life in the dreams. Fuck, like she somehow made him witness it or some shit. She was crying and apologizing to him. Chibs was just fucking relieved that she was real and alive. That he could finally help her. But she feels guilty over the whole thing. Not that she was trapped in that hell, no. The fact that Chibs had to witness it, like she forced him to somehow. She still apologizes for it and for us having to come out and save her. Chibs and me both telling her to quit apologizing for something she had no control of. But she won’t let it go.”

“Jesus.” Jax muttered.

“You aren’t serious? Over some teenage pussy?” Clay asked in shock.

Tig slammed his hand down on the table. Pointing an angry finger at him. “Clay...I’m warning you, do not call her that. Chibs is a fucking raw nerve right now. The littlest thing will set him off. He’s pulled on me at least twice just on the ride back. Nearly got my teeth knocked out...I’ve been slapped and glared at for daring to tease the shit out of him or her more times than I could count. I’m surprised that he even tried to get through church without her. You saw us arguing just now. Chibs is fucking worried. He knows that women aren’t allowed in here, at the table, going on runs. But he literally can’t be without her. And she him. Both of us telling her about the rules of the club. She knew most of them already just from the dreams.”

“What?” Clay and the rest of them asked, alert at that last bit.

The guys all shifted and looked hard at him. Debating with himself but felt he needed to prepare the guys before Chibs and Nancy come back in.

“Fuck it, she knows us.” He’d rubbed on his goatee. “She’s been dreaming about Chibs and his life here for months, maybe longer. Said stuff that she could never have known.”

“Like what?” Clay menaced with a heavy look. The guys looking at him sharply.

“She mostly hung out with Chibs in the garage, his home. Even here in this room.” He glanced at the guys and saw them become more unnerved by an outsider knowing their club shit. “She knew I was on release. She doesn’t say much about what she’s dreamed. Not to me at least, maybe Chibs. But from him telling her to talk to him, even now, I doubt she’s said much else.”

“That could be a problem.” Jax said carefully.

Shaking his head. “She didn’t think we were real. Like we were some characters in a book or TV show. And what Chibs said about that house, her parents, the people at school. Her life was a living hell, I’m with Chibs...I’d fucking take Stockton solitary over what she had to live and deal with. We couldn’t leave her there and none of you would have either.” He paused again.

“When we first walked into that school, Chibs laid eyes on her. She saw us coming towards her, I thought she was going to pass out. I barely kept up with Chibs as he ran towards her. Jack-off kids were laughing at her calling her Concentration Camp. The things said about her.... Especially when she and Chibs were kissing and rolling around on the floor.” He paused as he got a grip on himself, pushing the memory of that back a little. “I doubt Chibs even heard them he was so zoned into her.”

“When you see her, how thin she is. She was worse a week ago. Much worse. She was dying. Right in front of everyone. And those assholes made jokes about it. I knew as soon as I saw her. We had
“to get her out of there.”

“She didn’t know that Chibs was dreaming about her life and suffering the headaches like she was. She truly didn’t know.”

“If she’s psychic, why didn’t she know? Or find out? Searched Chibs out like he did?” Jax questioned.

“I asked her that. Said she was scared. Scared to find out if we weren’t real, that her mind really was cracking up or that maybe she had a brain tumor or something. And scared that if we were real, that the dreams would stop. We were her escape. Watching Chibs and us...probably kept her sane.”

Tig paused again as the guys stared at him in wonderment. But he knew, Chibs and Nancy they were part and parcel now. “They’re together now. If we don’t accept her...Chibs will walk.”

“What you’re saying?...Are you saying that she’ll be at the table?” Kozik chimed in.

Clay dropped a heavy hand to the table. “That’s not going to happen.”

“How do we know she’s not going to go off to the cops?” Juice asked.

“I don’t know what we’re going to do. But I do know that if Chibs leaves, our relationship with the Irish will fall apart. It’s his contacts that helped build and keep that supply line.” He directed to Clay.

Clay glaring at him over what he was saying. Clay could lie to the other guys about their relationship with the Irish. But he knew the truth. He was there when Clay took over the club. Helped put him in that chair. Knew how integral Chibs was to their gun source.

“She never complained once on the trip home, kept apologizing for not being able to help more. Physically...she’s weak. By the time we stopped for the night, Chibs had to carry her. But Jesus, if we had to go through ten years what she did, we’d be just as weak. She tried. The last couple of days, she helped unpack the bikes. And I don’t think she’ll ever go to the cops. From the way she talks sounds like the cops didn’t help her at all before. Why trust them now.”

But she’ll use them. Make sure they do their jobs, he thought. Recalling the incident with Lily. Making he and Chibs go to the trailer first, then the neighbor, then finally allowing the cops to come in and do their job. Chibs told him about that Ziploc bag she pulled from the freezer. At the time, he didn’t think anything of it. But looking back on it, fuck, she was still protecting them. Jesus Christ. He took another pull on his cigarette, focusing back on the here and now.

“Chibs didn’t want to ride some days just to give her time to rest up. But with the vote coming up, we had to keep moving. Chibs and I fought over him coming back or not. He’s not thrilled with this mule vote.” He warned Clay pointedly. “Especially, when I told him you were pushing for it.” He directed his statement to Jax.

“Yet, you’re both back. You must have said something to him to make sure he’s come home.” Jax said.

He grinned, “Wasn’t me. It was her. I asked Chibs the next day on the road, what made him change his mind. She convinced him he had to come back. Fucking smirked at me that if he turned around, she’d never get to see the Grand Canyon. Told him about some religious nuts believe that Noah’s Ark sailed where the Grand Canyon is, from the forty days and forty nights of rain and flooding. She wanted to see it for herself.” He grinned to the guys. “And from the route we took, it was on
The guys all stared at him in varying degrees of amusement to disbelief. He shook his head, the boys had no idea who they were about to meet, chuckling to himself at the upcoming hilarity the boys were about to experience.

“We made some sightseeing stops along the way, but didn’t spend any real time at any one place. She knew we had to keep moving. She’s fucking curious about everything. I had to stop looking at her as we rode, her head swivelling back and forth as we went through the Rockies. Scared that we’d be killed by a rockslide. Chibs joked and called her a Flatlander when she admitted it. Fucking cried when we stopped at the beach.” He paused, annoyed for getting tackled into the ocean, but seeing the joy and happiness on her face, he’d do it all over again. “She never thought she’d live to see the ocean. Hell, she didn’t think she’d survive the next week.”

“I say, give her a chance. She knows things already and she’s never shown any inclination of going to the cops. And honestly, she makes him happy. I’d never seen Chibs so fucking happy. Given the shit that went down with Jimmy, Fiona and his kid...he deserves a bit of happiness.”

“What the hell happened to you? Think this is the first time you’ve spoken about anything this seriously before.” Jax joked. The guys all smirked at him as the tension broke.

He sighed in defeat. “Jesus, you should hear the two of them talk and debate. It’s not fighting, it’s debating. Christ, it’s like foreplay for the two of them. God help you if you try and break them up in the middle of it. Don’t mention global warming and the rate of sea vs. land ice melting and how it will impact global migration and the economic ramifications of that happening. Fucking hell. I’d never heard Chibs talk about shit like that before, but with her, she’s fucking smart. Smarter than all of us put together I’m sure.”

He caught Jax grinning at him in amusement. “Really? Couldn’t keep up with Chibs and a teenager? Thought you had more stamina than that.” Jax teased. The rest of the guys laughing.

He took the challenge up from Jax’s teasing. “Okay, smartass. Try this...I had the Roadrunner cartoon on the TV as we were packing up out of Denver. Chibs and I going over the route and the weather. Next minute, we’re watching her watch the cartoon and she’s got this confused look on her face. She asks us if the coyote ever catches or kills the roadrunner. She has no clue what cartoons are. We’re looking at her and tell her no. That its just a fucking cartoon. She shakes her head, frowning at the TV again, says its a lesson about futility.”

“What?” Jax breaths out a laugh, his eyes dancing in amusement. The rest of the guys following Jax’s shock and amusement.

“I thought I’d fallen and hit my head. Chibs is laughing his ass off, while I’m trying to explain to her its just a fucking cartoon for fun. She just looks at me like I’m an idiot. Even saying that they could teach the math for whatever plan the coyote has going. She didn’t get it. That it was for fun.”

“More like you didn’t know what the Roadrunner is really about.” Piney grinned at him.

“Fuck you. It’s a fucking cartoon. Not some shit that you have to theorize the meaning of life from.” He complained.

Which only seemed to make the guys laugh harder at him.

Rolling his eyes. “She didn’t know who Bugs Bunny or any other cartoon was.”

“Jesus.” Opie said with a shake of his head.
“But ask her about math, science, books and she’s all over it. Comes up with the most random
factoids whenever she’s nervous.” He threw his hands up exasperatingly.

“Like what?” Jax pressed.

He sat back and rubbed his eyes thinking. “She turned to me and asked me, out of the blue, if I
knew that you can cut glass underwater with a pair of regular scissors. That the molecular structure
of glass isn’t completely solid, it’s partly liquid.”

Jax burst out laughing at Tig’s frustration.

“Why did she bring that up?” Kozik asked.

Is it true?” Juice asked.

“I don’t know! The whole time it was like that. And Chibs is just fucking ‘all in’ with her. I’d
never seen him be so flipped for a girl. He looks to her as if she was going to disappear on him if he
looks away for too long. The two of them together, its a whole new level. Not even Jax and Tara’s
teenage drama can compare.” He snarked back at Jax.

Jax flips him the finger.

“You’ll see when they get back in here. Like I said before, don’t mouth off or threaten her. Chibs is
seriously hyper-protective over her.”

Silence fell over the table. “I’m fucking exhausted. Chibs made me go with them to Monterey so
she could see the fucking ocean. Have to fucking clean everything to get all the fucking sand out of
my shit. I know I’m going to find sand weeks from now. What the hell is with sand?” he griped.

Kozik barked out a laugh. Tig flashing a finger at his former best friend.

Jax and Clay sent each other worried looks, the rest of the guys shifted and slid curious looks to
each other.

“They had some fine-ass cheerleaders, in that prissy high school of hers. It was too bad we didn’t
have more time to hang around and play with them a bit, even though they were complete shits.”
He added brightly.

They guys laughing at him.

“There’s the Tiggy we know and love…” Clay teased.

He gave Clay a mild glare. “Fuck you. Fuck all of you.” His pouting only sent the guys laughing at
him even more. Jesus, there was just no winning, he lamented.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Much bigger chapter...

Enjoy...And have a good New Year, stay warm.

I'll just go hide under this rock....

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She woke to a pounding headache. Looking around the apartment she didn’t see Chibs anywhere.
Vaguely recalling a gruff voice calling for Chibs, something about church. That’s right, Chibs told her he had to debrief the guys about their trip.

She got up and went to the bathroom and cleaned up, putting on some fresh clothes. Combing out her hair, she looked around the apartment. God it was a mess.

The desk ‘area’ was littered with manuals, scrap papers and receipts, a sad microwave looked like it’d seen better days. A box of PopTarts stashed among the various books. Looking at the half-filled box, she noted the expiration date was overdue, by eight months.

She automatically started organizing the mess after she made the bed. She made neat piles for the papers, and stuffed the books and manuals in the shelves above it. Tossing whatever trash and expired food that was unsurfaced.

She laid back down on the bed, focusing on her breathing. She couldn’t help but hear the increasing movement going on in the main part of the clubhouse. She felt shaky as her headache pulsed and squeezed. Wincing, her eyes tearing up. Wondering if she should go out there, track down Chibs. She didn’t want to bother him in his meeting.

A moment passed and she was about to go track down Chibs, when the door crashed open and she saw Chibs coming to her. Sliding his sunglasses off, hooking them around his neck. The pain in his eyes reflected her own. Her hand reached out to him automatically. Her body gathered into his arms as he sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Fuck, sorry, love. Thought I could get through church with you still sleeping. Damn it. Sorry.” He apologized as they both held each other, their headaches cooling slightly.

“It’s okay, I guessed that that’s where you were. Didn’t want to interrupt.” She said shakily.

“Aye, well, knock that idea off the list.” He groaned. Looking around he noticed that the desk area seemed to be cleaned up.

“Did you clean the apartment?” He asked looking around more.

“Just straightened things up.” She said with a strangled sigh.

“You didn’t have to do that. Cleaning the clubhouse is a job for prospects. Not you. Gemma will make a round through all the dorms and in here at least once a week. More if Jax is crashing here.”
She shrugged. “I didn’t do much. It was just so disorganized it was driving me nuts.”

“Okay, well, come on. The guys are waiting.” He stood up and kept hold of her hand. Helping her up off the bed.

“What? But I thought I wouldn’t be allowed in your super-secret, boys club?” She asked confused as he led her towards the door. “You know the one where the door has a sign saying ‘No girls allowed.’”

He gave a laugh and rolled his eyes at her description of their church. “Well, that’s going to have to change, cause I’m not putting the two of us through this again. Come on, I’ve been filling them in on what happened. God only knows what Tig’s telling them right now.”

She leaned into his arms looking up at his warm brown eyes and grinned at his ire. He gave her a kiss.

“Christ, I really just want to take you home and sleep for another week. But we gotta take care of this meeting.” He groaned.

“Faster we get through the meeting, the faster we get home.” She offered.

He leaned his forehead to hers. His body lighting up with her talking of his home as hers. “Damn right. Let’s go.”

He led her out of the apartment. Gemma had a couple of croweaters and prospects, including Rat, straightening up the clubhouse under her watchful eye. The sound of them walking out of the apartment and turning towards the conference room, Gemma saw them. Her hip popped out as she shifted her weight, her eyes narrowed on them, mouth turning into a frown.

“Chibs? What the hell do you think you’re doing? You know she’s not allowed in church.” Gemma’s harsh voice questioning him. Setting his teeth on edge. His spine stiffened as he felt Nancy press closer to him, hiding from Gemma’s assault. Nancy’s eyes widened in fear as Gemma barked at Chibs.

“Gemma, you don’t know shite. And you don’t have the right to dictate to me or to her.” He said, ignoring Gemma’s dark glare and kept walking to church. Gemma’s dark eyes falling on her. She saw the anger and blame pointed at her for Chibs defiance. She was confused as to why Gemma took such a dislike to her when she barely did anything to warrant such a reaction. But from her dreams she knew Gemma was hyper-vigilant over the guys. Jax and Clay, especially.

Before she could continue the thought, Chibs dragged her into the conference room, her eyes on Chibs as she stumbled to keep up with his hurried strides.

She froze a moment at the sight of the men she’d been dreaming about and had a massive sense of déjà vu. Everyone looking in their direction. Her eyes widened at the sight of all of them. Holy shit. Chibs closed the door behind them.

She pressed close to Chibs, still trying to wrap her head around the fact that her dreams were real. And by the looks they were giving her and Chibs, Tig has been talking. Hell. She groaned as her head was still pounding and she simply wanted to go back to bed and curl up with a good book with Chibs next to her. But no, they had to go over every detail of who she was and somehow convince these men that she wasn’t a threat. Perfect.
Chibs pulled on her hand, dragging her into his lap as they focus on each other and the slow pull back of their pain. His low voice lulling at her as she relaxed under his hands and melted at the sound of his gaelic. Mentally making a note to ask him what the hell he was saying to her.

He barrels back into church, mentally bitching out Gemma some more but he didn't have the time to dwell on that bullshit. He pulls Nancy with him to his chair, sits and settles her in his lap. Holding onto her as the pain in his head was working its way down. Seems the longer they try and go apart, the worse the headaches get and the longer it takes to cool down. Fuck. Feeling her shaking in his arms, running his hands down her back soothingly and pressing tiny kisses to her lips and cheek. Her hand automatically going to his temple and his eyes flutter closed. The two of them ignoring the eyes that are staring at the two of them.

“Fucking hell, thought it was bad before, but fuck.” He groans and tilts his head to Nancy’s. Resting his forehead to hers. He purrs softly to her in gaelic, feeling her sigh and relax in his hold.

“Uh, Chibs? Want to introduce us?” Jax asked with a humor-laced voice.

“Give us a minute. Christ. I’d hoped that I could get through the meeting with her sleeping yet. Fuck.” Chibs pressed a kiss to her lips, she sighed in relief at the deeper intensity of their merging.

“Is this some Stockholm syndrome thing going on?” He heard Bobby ask the table.

“No, that’s when the kidnapped victim develops affection for their abductor over a period of time. This is something else.” Happy pointed out. She mentally rolled her eyes, as the guys talked about her and Chibs as if they weren’t in the room.

“It’s been like this since they laid eyes on each other. They’ve been inseparable ever since. It’s all disgustingly sweet, I’m getting cavities watching them.” Tig teased.

He was getting exasperated with the guys talking about them, but he couldn’t stop delving deeper into Nancy, nor she him. He felt himself purr into her as his lips teased at hers.

Her soft gasp shot pings of pleasure through his body. His head was pain-free again. But his cock sprang to attention, pressing hard against his tight jeans. Fuck.

“Are they going to fuck?” Juice crudely asked with a snarking laugh.

Chibs heard him and felt Nancy stiffen in his arms, so he knew she heard Juice’s shitty question. As if he was going to bring his queen in here to entertain these shithheads, like she was some kind of skank he found on the side of the road. How dare he... He hissed in reaction, Nancy tensing up or Juice’s laugh set something off inside him. Rage filled inside him with a hot rush.

Before he even thought about it, he’d pulled his gun and had the safety off and sighted on Juice. His eyes feral, his body tense as he leaned over the table. Nancy on her feet, his free hand pressing her behind him.

Juice’s eyes wide in shock as he rolled his chair back from the menace in Chib’s eyes. Hands up in supplication.

The guys jerked and swore as they realized Chibs had pulled on Juice so swiftly that they were taken aback by the vehemence in Chibs eye as he held Juice in his sights.

“Christ. I told you, you assholes.” Tig whined amid the medley of shock from the other guys.
He stayed on point, his focus entirely on Juice, waiting to see if he was going to make any more threats or not. The room was heavy with stillness, waiting to see what was going to happen.

“Chibs, fuck man, stand down, its cool.” Jax said carefully. Chibs flicked a look at Jax and saw the shock in his friend’s face.

Jax paled under Chibs quick look, and breathed in sudden relief as Chibs returned his murderous look back to Juice. Who looked completely confused as to how he ended up being on the rock-steady, business-end of Chibs gun.

“How about you speak about her or us that way ever again.” He hissed at Juice, his hand tightened around the trigger of his weapon.

His mind falling into the place where he killed. Most times, people think that you’d have to be angry or out of control with passion to kill. For him, it was quiet. The static void. He thought he’d be more apprehensive about killing Jimmy when that came up, but no, it was the same. Staring down at Jimmy’s lifeless body, he felt nothing at first. Then satisfaction that the job was done finally.

The table tense as everyone waited to see what would happen next.

Juice swallowed nervously. “Sorry, I didn’t mean anything by it. Sorry, brother.” He stuttered. Another moment of tense silence as Chibs weighed Juice’s apology, his body strung tight waiting for Juice to renege his words.

“Put the goddamn gun away! Jesus Christ. This is why we don’t allow gashes in here. Nothing but fucking trouble.” Clay yelled in annoyance. His strident tone setting him on high alert, again.

Swiveling and pulling a second gun, pointing it at Clay. His body pushing Nancy further behind him. His aim true still on Juice and now Clay. Clay glared at him that he dared to draw on him.

“Oh, shit.” He heard Jax swear. “Chibs, he didn’t mean it.” Jax stood up, his hand out to him.

“Chibs...fuck. They didn’t mean it.” Tig said, pushing his body in front of Chibs line of sight at Clay.

“Aye, they did. They thought it and said it. Threatening and insulting her. Insulting me. Back off, Tig.” Chibs growled. “Ye’ forget who I am, old man.”

Goosebumps raised up at the sound of it. Tig looked from Chibs to Clay, confused at what Chibs was saying. Looking to Clay for the answer to what Chibs was talking about. In his confusion, he took a step back from between Chibs and Clay.

Clay’s eyes went from anger to surprise.

“You aren’t that anymore! Not since you became a Son!” Clay yelled, pointing at him.

“Anointed by blood, by our former good priest. Til the day I die, I am the Rí Cláfomh. Claidheimh nam Banrígh now.” Chibs hissed.

Clay went pale as he glared at him. “You are a Son!” He reminded Chibs again. “A member of this club. I am President, not you. Don’t threaten me unless you’re challenging me for leadership.”

A moment passed and he thought how easy it would be to take Clay out like this. To take the gavel from Clay. Leadership changed through votes or by blood. And taking Clay out by blood was
sounding better and better with every second.

“Chibs!” Jax yelled as the tension in the room skyrocketed.

He shifted his eyes to Jax, guns still steady on their targets. “Don’t, please.” Jax begged.

Even Happy was smart enough to stay out of this shitstorm. The shock in Jax’s eyes made him pull back from what he was about to do. Allowed him to take a breath and think.

He felt Nancy behind him. Her hand at his back, her thumb circling a knob of his vertebrae that pulled him back from the rage. Slightly. He was able to think more clearly, his rage not as intense. But brimming just at the surface. He took a breath and leveled everyone a look. A message to not fuck with him. Or her. His eyes back on Clay.

“Aye, I’m a member. You are President. I’ve done my job. But I’m hearing things that make me question the direction of this club. Maybe it is time for fresh blood. But no matter who holds that fucking gavel, I will not allow anyone to disrespect her. Or lay a hand on her. Am I understood?” He demanded.

“Chibs, he’s sorry, put the guns away.” Jax said in the tense silence, his voice careful and calm.

He looked to Jax and saw the hesitation in Jackie’s eyes that he’d surprised everyone. They all took him for granted. They knew some of the things he’s done in the past, but not all of it.

Realizing that he’d been slacking off spurred his anger. At his brothers...but, he mentally admitted, mostly at himself. That thought alone doused his rage back further.

Things are changing. He has a responsibility beyond the club now. And its her. The conviction thumped his entire body. He never thought he’d ever leave the club before all this started happening to him with Nancy, that he’d die an old man or bloody, wearing the reaper. But with Nancy in his life, he’d leave it in a heartbeat. He felt it in his bones, his life became more than just the bullshit the club was involved in.

Jax’s eyes widened as he watched the resolve fill his eyes.

He set the safety on the guns easily. Tucking one back in it’s holster, the other he kept hold of. Nancy pressed harder into his side, his arm pulling her against him automatically. Putting his weapons down, the tension in the room dropped.

Drawing his attention back from sighting down on Tig and Clay. His eyes shuddering at her calming touch and his heart rate dropped back down. He caught her worry for him.

He came back to himself and sat back down with Nancy in his arms. She pressed her lips to his cheek and he turned to her again. Their lips meeting, his eyes still slanted to the other guys as if watching for threats.

Tig dropped back into his chair again and lit a cigarette. His hands shaking slightly as he realized how close shit just got. Setting the lighter down with a snap on the table, he glanced to Jax, he too, lighting a cigarette. The two of them shared a rattled look.

“Fucking hell.” Tig said. “And that’s been happening, too.” Tig gestured at the kissing couple. The guys relaxed a notch once Chibs had set his guns down.

“What, Chibs decided to go all Rambo on your ass?” Bobby asked.
“Fuck, I don’t know, I’m just telling you what’s been going on. They need to be physically touching or their headaches come back. And he’s hyper-protective of her. If he feels her being threatened, he’s like what you just saw.”

“No shit.” Opie uttered at the obviousness of the situation.

The guys all looked at Chibs and back at Tig with questions, but not sure how to verbalize it. Not wanting to believe it.

“What’s a right clam?” Juice asked.

Piney slapped the back of Juice’s head for his idiot question.

“Ow! What the fuck? I was just asking a question.” He complained.

“Having a gun pointed at you wasn’t enough for you to keep your mouth shut?” Piney instructed harshly.

“Fuck. What the hell is going on with them?” Jax asked in astonishment.

He pulled back from the kiss, leaning his forehead to hers, taking a breath and studied her making sure she was okay. He felt so much better. He wanted to just hold her like this forever, as if nothing could ever hurt them so long as they had each other. He took another deep breath, Nancy running a hand along his jaw. Smiling gently at him. Fuck, he fell for her all over again with that soft look in her eyes. Finally, he sat up and looked around the table.

Assured that Chibs wasn’t going to inflict bodily harm to anyone at the moment, she took a look around. Her eyes landing on Tig. Seeing him rattled as he smoked his cigarette like his life depended on it. But her eyes went up to his hair.

“What the hell happened to your hair?” She asked doing a double take.

“What?” Tig asked dumbfounded. Chibs started laughing. She relaxed at the sound of his laugh. It was a cleansing laugh after the heavy drama of pulling on Juice and Clay.

“It looks like a tornado hit it.”

Chibs snickered. “I was thinking dragged through a hedge, but that works.” He commented.

“I’m out of conditioner.” Tig admitted with a roll of his eyes.

Bobby barked out a laugh. Opie, Piney, Kozik and Jax all joined in the jab at Tig’s hair care routine. “Fuck you...fuck all of you....” Tig glared at the guys for picking on him. His eyes sending her a glare for starting this shit.

She just gave him one of her mysterious smiles and a slight head tilt towards Chibs. Who was wiping at his eyes from the tears of laughter as he and they guys kept finding the hilarity of Tig’s hair. With the laughter, the tension around the table dissipated even more. Tig heaved a sigh and leaned back in his chair. Annoyed being made the butt of a joke, yet glad it helped keep Chibs relaxed.

Nancy looked around the men at the heavy hand-carved table. She felt a little better that she recognized them from her visits. Even taking in the various decorations around the room. Smiling at the ‘brains before bullets’ sign. Recognizing it from Jax pointing it out when they were figuring out how to deal with the Bluebird situation.
“I’m Jax.” Jax introduced himself when her eyes fell on him.

“Yes, I know. Its good to finally meet you.” She said shyly with a small smile.

“Wait, what?” Jax looked to Chibs.

“While I’d been dreaming of Nancy and her life. She’s been dreaming of mine.” Chibs elaborated.

Tig groaned and rolled his eyes at the guys. He warned them.

“And what parts has she seen?” Clay asked with a deep rumble the threat in his tone and the sharpness of his eyes on her. Nancy shivered at the menacing tone, Chibs clenched his hand tighter around his gun. Jax and the guys watching Chibs reaction warily, nervous that Chibs might pull on their president again.

“I told you that already.” Chibs growled.

Clay glared back. “I want to hear it from her.”

She looked nervously from Clay to Chibs and back to the rest of the table. “Um, mostly I was with Chibs when he works in the garage. At his home, here in this conference room a few times.

“Church.” Chibs and Tig corrected her in tandem.

“Sorry, church.” She shrugged. “I thought it was bigger than this?” She observed to Chibs. The guys raised their brows in surprise that she had an opinion on their most sacred space.

“M ‘anam.” Chibs groaned. As Tig slapped a hand to his head at her critique.

“Right, sorry.” She looked to Opie, seeing his eyes focus on her at her look, “Congratulations on your nuptials.” She said, her eyes saddened as Opie’s eyes flashed with shock.

“Thanks.” He said with a squirm, shrugging a surprised look to the rest of the guys.

Piney was almost smiling as he watched her. As if she was entertaining him. She looked to Happy, his face closed off and grouchy. “How’s your mother?” She asked him.

Happy jerked, eyes widening in surprise. “Fine. Hanging in.” He said to her question.

She nodded with a sad smile.

Looking back at a frowning Clay and then down to her hands held by Chibs, her eyes focusing on his rings as they twisted their fingers together.

“I was here for a party for Bobby, and one at Caracara.” She blushed.

The guys were all looking surprised and amused by her reaction.

“Don’t worry boys, she averted her eyes.” Tig giggled to the guys.

It took a moment for the guys to figure out what they were referring to. Bobby and Jax breaking in a low laugh.

Chibs swatted Tig upside the head for his comment.

“Ow, fuck.” Tig jerked out of Chibs reach.
Tig heaved an annoyed sigh, while Clay glowered at her. Kozik was grinning as Chibs hit Tig. Piney and Bobby looked like they wanted to laugh their asses off. Happy was stoic, Juice confused. Jax thinking.

“I don’t know why or how I’ve dreamed of this place...of Chibs. I don’t know why he dreamed of me. I’m still not sure if I’m awake even now.” She admitted with a sheepish shrug.

Chibs growled into her and pressed another kiss to her lips.

“You’re very awake and we are very real.” He reminded her. Nancy leaned into him and sighed as the last of their headaches finally eased off.

“God, this is just so surreal.” She sighed.

“Shit.” Bobby said.

“Aye, and its more complicated.”

“As if it weren’t complicated already. How?” Clay demanded.

“Well, I seem to be the only one that can touch her that doesn’t make her pass out. And our headaches come back if we’re not touching each other.”

“How is that possible?” Kozik asked.

“We don’t know.” Chibs answered shortly. Annoyed being questioned and not having an answer.

“When the headaches started for me, I thought it was just another symptom of the abuse. I was already dreaming of Chibs. I read every medical book I could get my hands on to try and figure out what was going on with me. I had no idea that Chibs was suffering. That he or all of you were real. I thought it was all just in my head. I’m sorry for making all of you worry and pulling him and Tig away for the last couple of weeks. I just...I didn’t know.”

“You didn’t try and search for Chibs?” Happy asked.

She ducked her head. “I thought about it. Almost did a couple of times. I couldn’t bring myself to do it. I just...the dreams were so real and so outside of what my life was. I didn’t want them to end. I didn’t want to know the implications if I couldn’t find him. That my brain...my body...it was...I couldn’t do it. It was selfish of me. The dreams, they made me feel special. Like I had this great secret that nobody else knew about. I couldn’t bring myself to destroy that hope. I should have searched for him. Maybe things wouldn’t have gotten so bad for him if I had. I don’t know.”

“If you’re psychic, how come you didn’t see Chibs or Tig finding you?” Opie asked.

“I don’t see myself in the readings. I never have. God, the thought of that...I wouldn’t be able to function. Constantly, thinking and debating what to do every minute of the day. And to my way of thinking, there are just some things that aren’t meant to be known until you experience it for yourself. Even me. Knowing the future, just seems like it’s...cheating the system.”

She glanced up around the table, silence fell as the guys all studied her. Chibs was grinning pridefully at her answer.

“If you’re psychic, how come you didn’t see Chibs or Tig finding you?” Opie asked.

“I don’t see myself in the readings. I never have. God, the thought of that...I wouldn’t be able to function. Constantly, thinking and debating what to do every minute of the day. And to my way of thinking, there are just some things that aren’t meant to be known until you experience it for yourself. Even me. Knowing the future, just seems like it’s...cheating the system.”

She glanced up around the table, silence fell as the guys all studied her. Chibs was grinning pridefully at her answer.

“For me, I’d love to know what the winning lottery numbers were.” Kozik said amusedly.

“Hell, we'd all go for that.” Bobby agreed to Kozik.
She looked hard at Kozik. “You don’t understand.” She shook her head. “I get everything. Your example is just the surface. When I read someone, I get every conversation, every emotion, every act and decision you’ve ever made, going to make. Patterns of behavior, repeated over and over throughout your life. Thrusts forward in time. The smallest detail can have such devastating consequences.”

“Details that you don’t think twice about. The constant shifting of decisions and consequences. Are you understanding what I’m saying? That’s me reading someone else. For myself, if that was going on, like I said, there is no functioning. I wouldn’t know what to do. The constant weighing of decisions in relation to consequences. Add in people around me, affecting the situations. Even reading someone else, seeing their future. Do I tell them? What if I tell them and it only makes things worse? There’s a phrase in finance, analysis paralysis. When analyzing a company for investment, you can comb through its reports to other analyst opinions, charts the stock movement for months, comparing it to historical moves. Yet still, you can’t decide what to do about all the data you’ve collected. Literally paralyzed by your own analysis. Never able to put a trade in because of it.”

“Like I said before, there are some things that you have to learn on your own. But I’m human and sometimes I can’t help but try and help others. Back home, I wasn’t very successful at it. I was beaten and ridiculed. Yet when proven true, I was feared. And most people when faced with something that they fear, especially when its about themselves, they strike out in anger. That is my life for the past ten years. I know what happened to me was a lesson for me. I had to suffer through that for my own growth as a person. I know it intellectually. Emotionally, I’m not there yet. If I knew that Chibs would find me...I might not have fought so hard to live. The fear of death...of pain at the hands of my step-mother and my peers at school...it wouldn’t have taught me anything.”

“That’s a very wise thing you said, for someone so young.” Piney said.

Her eyes went to Piney’s. “It’s not wise. It’s just truth.” She looked into Piney’s shining blue eyes and saw a kindred spirit.

“God, my head hurts with all this philosophical talk this early in the morning.” Tig complained.

“I’m sorry, but what about the teachers...the staff? Didn’t they help you? Weren’t CPS contacted regarding the abuse? That is their job.” Jax asked, confusion and the plaintive hope that what happened to her wasn’t going to happen to his kids or anyone else.

Chibs scoffed deep in his throat, his hands tightened around her.

She sent Jax a confused look, sharing it with Tig and Chibs. “Didn’t you tell them?”

“Aye, we did.”

Tig sighed. “They need to hear it from you, kid.”

“No, they didn’t help.” She shook her head. “At first, some of my teachers tried to help, but soon as they touched me... Others they tried to shuffle me off to a different school, but my grades were too good. It was just easier for them to look the other way. And well, my father and Claire pretty early on started telling everyone who asked after me that I had emotional problems with the loss of my mother, the coma, even telling people I had anorexia. By the time, I got my feet under me with all the changes going on...it was too late. Nobody believed me. Good grief, my father had these parties at the house for his investors, my teachers, the principal, neighbors, cops, city councilmen, even the mayor...all were investors in my father’s investment firm. Their pensions, their savings were tied up in what my father was doing. Nobody wanted to go up against him. Fear of losing all their
money if they stood up for me. My father and Claire really enjoyed playing up the suffering parent in dealing with such a troubled daughter.”

“How come you’re so thin, you’re practically skin and bones.” Bobby asked. “I’d think your doctor would have stepped up.”

She frowned at Bobby’s question. “I never saw a doctor after I was released from the hospital. I don’t ever want to see a doctor again. Luckily, I’ve been pretty healthy despite the small amount of food I was allowed.”

Opie leaned forward, “If you were in school, you’d have to have all your shots and medical checkups before the school year started?”

“I don’t know what my father did. But I never saw a doctor after my coma. And given the attitude of the school principal and his staff...they didn’t press my father over that technicality.”

Chibs pulled her closer into his arms. “Shit, m ‘anam. I should have been there sooner. Fuck.” Chibs swore and berated himself again, burying his face into the curve of her neck.

She turned his face to hers. “It’s not your fault. You came when it mattered. I can’t thank you enough for coming for me when you did.”

Chibs kissed her, the thought of him being too late to save her, knowing he’d come close to losing her forever. “Never again. I swear it to you. That life is over now.”

She nodded into his promise. Because there wasn’t anything else she could do to negate his conviction.

“Bullshit. There’s no such thing as psychics. Its nothing but a scam.” Clay challenged.

Nancy stiffened at Clay’s tone...Chibs sending a heated glare at Clay.

“Clay, I’ve seen it happen. At the Harley shop, a sales guy touched her hand and she completely lost it.” Tig said before Chibs could climb over the table and teach Clay some manners.

The guys all looked a little uncomfortable, not sure if they should believe that she could read their minds. And if she could, what would she find.

Nancy sighed in defeat. Shoulders slumping. “They won’t believe me unless they see for themselves.” She said to Chibs.

“No! I don’t like it.” He glared at Clay again for doubting their word.

“I know, but if they saw. I don’t want to be a burden. If they can’t trust or believe me, it’ll create problems with them. It’ll hurt you. I couldn’t stand to let that happen.”

“You’re not some freak entertainment. And you shouldn’t have to prove shite to them.”

“I never said I was. And I’m forever proving what I am. Make peace with that. If Happy dragged me in here like you are, you’d be questioning his sanity and mine, too.” She shrugged as she watched Chibs fight the truth of her words.

“Fine. I don’t like it. You’re right, they won’t believe it unless they see it.” Chibs agreed reluctantly. “And I didn’t drag you in here.” He added arguing his treatment to her when they came into the room.
Nancy rolled her eyes at him, he heaved a sigh realizing he did drag her in here. She grinned at him as saw her point upon reflection. Giving him a quick kiss to soothe his ruffled feathers.

“Who do you want read?” He asked Clay.

Clay shrugged. “Read Happy.”

“Fuck no! Not him.” He objected violently. “I know some of the shit you’ve done and I won’t have her in that twisted head of yours.” Happy shrugged not caring one way or not.

Clay rolled his eyes. “Fine, Tig then.”

He didn’t like that idea either and was about to protest again. But Nancy was out of his lap and moving. “Oy!” He protested to her.

She waved her hand at him. “At the rate you’re going, you’d find fault with everyone.”

“Aye, well I don’t like this one bit.” He complained.

“And you think I do? We’ll be here all day if you keep arguing over this. If we’re going to make this work, they need to know. Once they do, then we can get on figuring all this out.”

The guys all watched Chibs and her fight over her reading Tig. Eyebrows raised, Tig just shrugging at them.

Chibs seethed. “I don’t want ye’ reading him. Sick bastard, he’s not right in the head.”

“Hey!” Tig protested, but she and Chibs ignored him. Tig huffing between them.

“Really? Well, let’s find out. He can’t be worse than some of the people I’ve been forced to read. Claire alone, I wanted to wash my brain in bleach from being in her head. Or Chris, the rapist. And those were tame to some I’ve had to read. And, by the way, there’s protecting and then there’s overreacting.”

She sighed in frustration as she and Chibs stared each other down. Her headache rising again.

“I don’t like doing this anymore than you do. But they won’t believe us unless they see it for themselves.” She repeated, taking a breath to calm down. Chibs shaking his head at her, annoyed by the whole thing.

“Don’t be angry at me. I’m just trying to help move this along. And the longer you fight me on this, the worse the pain will be.” She pointed out to him.

“Fine. Don’t say I didn’t warn ye.’” He admitted, conceding the fight to her win. “And I’m not overreacting. I’m setting ground rules for them. You think you know them, know what was done in the past, but not all of it. Reading him, you’ll get the fucking ugly sins. Things you shouldn’t have to know.”

Nancy looked at Chibs and his dejected eyes. The need in him to protect her. It floored her how deeply he felt just after a week together. She sighed and looked apologetically at him. “I’m built this way. There is no way around it. I can’t shut this off. I would have, if I could. There’s a reason for that, there has to be. And there are some things you can’t protect me from. I’m sorry.”

Chibs rubbed his eyes in frustration and pain. But when he looked back at her, she saw the acceptance of what she was saying.
“And this is why chicks aren’t part of the club. Talking about feelings and shit.” Clay joked to the rest of the table.

She swiveled abruptly to face Clay head-on at his trite comment. Chibs half out of his chair, hand starting to raise up his weapon. Tig swearing as things were falling apart. Clay rearing back as she got into his personal space. Her eyes holding his calculating ones.

“And do not think for one moment that I didn’t notice you not apologizing to Chibs for your offensive comments earlier. You let Jax and Tig apologize for you. Risk their lives for you. Just how much have they been covering for you?” She asked rhetorically.

“Nor, have I missed that you failed to offer yourself to be victim in this demonstration. Something you don’t want me to know, perhaps?” She zeroed in at Clay.

“It’s sooo easy to throw someone else under the bus. Isn’t it, President?” She saw the anger and fear flare in Clay's blue eyes. Face stern and hands clenching and she knew he wanted to hit her for speaking out of turn.

Chibs was leaning forward, his hand still on his weapon. His anger and the guys attention drawn to Clay realizing that Clay wasn’t willing to be read himself. Keeping whatever secrets he had locked up, unwilling to sacrifice himself for them.

She glared harder at Clay, “This was your decision. Your choice. Reap the consequences.”

“Jesus.” Piney muttered from his chair. The tension around the table skyrocketed as she and Clay glared at each other. The guys all sharing looks back and forth as they bore witness to the debate. Watching to see who backed down first.

Clay’s eyes shuttered when he caught Chibs deadly ones and the fact he had his hand on his weapon already made him back down. But smirking amusedly at her. Mockingly, waving a hand at Tig as if he’s waiting for a show.

“You haven’t proven shit, yet.” Clay said with a raised mocking brow.

Chibs taking a firmer hold of his weapon and glared at Clay.

She gave Clay a small smirk, his comment telling her that she scored. That Clay was grasping at straws to end the fight with her and salvage his authority with the guys. Little did he know...

Jax leaned in. “Clay.” He said warningly, head tilting to where Chibs was.

Nancy looked to Jax, nodding slightly at his attempt to help.

Nancy looked at Clay gravely, ignoring his derisiveness, knowing that she won this little scuffle with Clay. She looked at Jax and the rest of the table. They all regarded her more carefully now, as they saw Clay back down. Back down to a girl who’d be blown over by a stiff wind. Still not sure what to think but the unease was there with her challenging Clay. She ignored them, her eyes going to Tig. Turning her back to Clay as if he weren’t a threat.

“You okay with this?” She asked him.

“Will it hurt?” He asked, his eyes checking Clay and back to her.

“To you, no.” She said grimly. “But I’ll know you.” She warned.
“I don’t have anything to hide. Go ahead, doll.” He said cheekily with a shrug, his response toned down the tension in the room, providing comic relief.

She simply shook her head at how easily Tig gave his consent. Even though she told him the first day they met. “I’ll know everything, Tig. Your past, your present, your thoughts, emotions, motivations, even your most probabilistic future. Don’t take this lightly.”

“Maybe Tig isn’t the right one for your demonstration.” Jax suggested warily.

Nancy saw the uneasy tension and the tight looks Jax flicked to Opie and Piney.

“And who here would you rather I read?” She countered. “Everyone has their dark secrets locked away. Some buried so deep they don’t even know its there. It’s just being human. Tig, I think, is open to his mistakes. And your President chose him. Reason or not.”

She saw Jax still hesitate, taken aback by her response. “And please, I know you aren’t a bunch of Boy Scouts.” Rolling her eyes at Jax.

Bobby and Kozik gave a choked laugh. Chibs sighing heavily, hand on his forehead, but sending her an amused glare.

Jax looked uncertainly to Opie who merely gave him a stoic look. Waiting to see if Opie would stop her from reading Tig. But she could see the careful curiosity in his eyes.

“It’s okay. Everyone here knows what I’ve done for the club. Most of what I’ve done outside of the club. I got nothing to be ashamed about. Go ahead, I’m curious to see what you can do.” Tig said again to take the tension down.

She wondered if anyone recognized what Tig was doing. Not just in this, but with Chibs going off the rails earlier. Putting himself in harm’s way. Willing to put his life on the line for Clay’s. She wondered if Clay ever properly thanked Tig for his effort. Looking at Clay before, she didn’t see a shred of that.

“Very well.”

“Anything you need me to do?” He asked.

“Just try not to let me hit my head when I pass out.” She requested.

“I think Chibs would rip me a new asshole if I let you get hurt.” Tig joked as Chibs growled behind him.

She took a breath and took hold of Tig’s hands.

The depth of the emotions ripped at her, drowning her. She fought to keep in control, but it was a fight she couldn’t win. More memories and emotions hit her as she fell into Tig’s mind.

She felt herself hitch in a breath as she fell deeper into Tig. Her eyes pinned onto Tig, forcing him to look her in the eye. Vaguely aware of the guys swearing. Her whole being consumed with all that was Tig.

“Dawn and Fawn, come into the world as one, but leave as two. Fire and blood before the venus fly trap captures you.” She said absently, as her mind delved ever deeper into Tigs. She felt the blood on Tig’s hands and the heat of the flames licking at her hands and arms. “Daaaaddyyyy!”
Chibs skin wanted to crawl off when Nancy spoke, he saw her body tense as she held onto Tig, her head thrown back letting loose a bloodcurdling scream. Setting the hairs up on the back of his neck.

“ Fucking hell.” Piney said from his end of the table.

“ Shit.” Bobby swore.

“ Holy shit.” Came from Juice.

As they all stood up except for Clay, as Nancy passed out abruptly. Their eyes watching her and Tig.

Tig automatically catching her in his arms. " Fuck. Chibs?"

He was already moving to her, his heart pounding as he watched Nancy pass out, her body completely limp.

Tig pale as Chibs pulled her into his arms. The guys crowding around him as he huddled over her. Checking her pulse and respiration, he gently took her hands. They looked red as if they’d been put too close to a fire or sunburnt somehow.

“ Fuck, is she okay?” Jax asked in shock.

“ Shite. I hope you’re satisfied.” He bit at Clay for forcing her to do this.

“ This is what happens when anyone touches her?” Kozik asked.

“ Aye. They’d beat her, leave her lying on the fucking floor.”

He’d never seen her do this in person, he had to force himself to stay in his seat. The guy at the Harley shop was fast, they lost connection pretty quick that she didn’t pass out. This time, she held onto Tig. Cursing to himself, for allowing her to read anyone. Just so the guys would believe them, believe her. Putting herself through this just so that he’d have good standing with the guys. He knew some of the shit Tig has done and he didn’t like that Clay made her fall into Tig’s mind. God knows what she saw in his head.

“ You all right, Tig?” Bobby asked.

“ Fuck, yeah. Felt weird. Almost like having someone passing a hand through you. Didn’t hurt.” Tig breathed carefully, easing back from Chibs and Nancy, giving them room.

He was freaked out by what she’d said, even more with how she sounded and stared down at him. What she said, screaming at him. Her eyes staring at him, the whites disappearing as her irises bloomed that eery purple. The gold and blue flashing and flaring under the light of the room.

“ Call your kids, Tig. Make sure they’re okay.” Bobby ordered.

“ Yeah. Fuck, yeah.” Tig couldn’t stop looking at Nancy, lying in Chibs arms.

Chibs ignored the guys hovering. He picked her up and stood up.

“ Move.” He ordered. A path was quickly opened for him as he carried Nancy out of the room, Piney holding the door for him.
Chapter End Notes

Translations:
King’s Sword = Rí Claíomh (Irish)
Queen’s Sword = Claidheamh nam Banrigh (Scots Gaelic)
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

Gemma on the case...

Hope everyone had a safe New Year.

Chibs slammed into church with that skinny bitch. The prospects and a few of the croweaters silently paused in their work cleaning up the bar and clubhouse from the night before. Gemma glared back at them for their silent judgement in witnessing Chibs take her to task. Her continued angry stare back at them enforced that they get back to work.

How dare Chibs speak to her that way, she thought. Turning to eye the plywood door that blocked her access to the decisions that went on in that room. She hated that door...plywood or otherwise. Nobody spoke to her that way. Chibs certainly never did before now. Her dark eyes glaring at the wisp of a girl hiding behind him before he pulled her with him into church.

She needed more information.

Beelining right to the apartment. Her eyes taking in the apartment, idly noting that someone had cleaned up in here. One of the prospects probably.

Chibs bags were on the floor at the foot of the bed, she started on the one closest to her first. Finding mostly clothes, some maps and unsealed pack of cigarettes. Moving on she found more clothes. Skipping the clothes she recognized as Chibs. Another bag filled with brand new clothes. The thick and unbroken-in state, she knew they were the girl’s.

Shit...This was bad. Chibs spending money on the skinny bitch.

Unrolling a threadbare green sweatshirt, she found a burnt-up book in a plastic baggie. What the fuck was this? Why haul around a burnt-up book? And why were half the clothes all thin and threadbare. Why keep them when there are new clothes? It didn’t make any sense.

She kept searching and her taloned fingers found a manila envelope, thick and heavy. The contents making the bottom pooch out.

Opening it, she found legal papers and a small velvet bag. Grasping the velvet bag that was making the envelope oddly-shaped she found inside a pair of heavy gold rings. Gasping at the sight of them. Except in magazines, she'd never seen such exquisite jewelry. Never right here in her hands.

Encrusted with diamonds, a large, blood-red ruby held aloft centered over a lower layer of diamonds. The ruby held in place not with the usual prongs, but with gold flower petals swirling on either side of the ruby. The center of the flowers also were set with a smaller ruby. The diamonds, continued around the entire band. Holy shit.

One was larger than the other, wedding rings. Custom job. Fucking expensive. Given the amount of gold and jewels on them, she couldn't imagine what the cost was for these rings.

She twisted the rings towards the dim light of the room. The diamonds reflecting light back up
under the rubies, playing the light as the complex reds inside the stones flared and shifted. Jesus, these must catch fire practically under the sun's light.

The fact that they were matched pair, worried her. Was Chibs so flipped for this girl that he was planning on marrying her? As far as she knew, Chibs barely knew this girl. She had no idea who this bitch was. If she was club material. And how did he come to possess the money for such expensive jewelry?

Reluctantly setting the rings down, she pulled out the papers next. Trying to make sense of the legalese.

Fucking lawyers. Why can’t they just use plain english like normal people? Sighing in annoyance at the tiny print, cursing that she didn’t think to bring her reading glasses.

It looked like it’s some kind of will of some sort. The paper thick with official seals from the State of Illinois, multiple official-looking signatures and except for Nancy's name, she didn't recognize the other names listed. Leafing through the papers she didn’t know what to make of it. She and Clay had their wills done several years ago, those weren’t as thick as this one was.

She was about to dive deeper into reading it, when she heard a bloodcurdling scream coming from church.

Shit. Quickly shoving the papers back into the envelope, swearing when a few pages fought her. Grabbing the rings, looking covetingly at them, debating if she should just take them. But thought not, she didn’t want anyone to know she’d been in here, searching Chibs stuff. And rings like these, they’ll get noticed if they just disappeared. Dropping the rings back into the envelope.

Hearing increased movement in the main part of the clubhouse, she shoved everything back into the bags. No time to worry about putting things back to their original places. She just had to hope that no one noticed if things weren’t in their original place.

Standing up, she swore as she forgot to put the rings back in the velvet bag. Fuck, no time. Rushing, she hid the bag under a pair of jeans.

Hustling to the door and quickly down the hallway, back into the main part of the clubhouse. Waving at the croweaters and prospects to get back to work. They all stared at the room beyond the plywood door where the screams had come from. Sound of the guys voices raised in shock and alarm emanating beyond the doors. Wondering what the fuck was going on.

Tara had arrived, her eyes looking towards church. Another problem she needed to take care of. Despite Clay’s opinion, she still worried over the potential fallout over the letters that John wrote to Maureen.

“What’s going on?” Tara asked next to her.

Piney opened the door to let Chibs swiftly carry out the bitch. Passed out in his arms. Jesus, what the hell is going on around here? His dark eyes furious and didn’t waste any time in heading back into the apartment.

“Nothing good, that much I know.” She replied darkly.

Tara frowned and headed towards the apartment.
Brushing past Gemma and Tara, going right to the apartment he set Nancy down on the bed. Running his hand over her pale face, gently pushing her hair back, he could see the blue veins just under her pale skin.

“Chibs? What happened?” Tara came into the apartment in a concerned rush.

“Can ye’ find some ointment for burns?” He asked her studying her hands. They didn’t look as bad a few moments ago, but he didn’t want to take the risk.

“Uh, yeah...I’ll go get the medical kit.” Tara said. Coming back a minute later, searching through with the bag.

“What happened?” She asked again, handing him the cream. He popped the tube open and slathered the cream over Nancy’s hands. "Jax told me you went to find a girl...is this her?"

“She passed out, is all. She’ll come around. And yes, this is her. Her name's Nancy.” He said shakily.

Tara frowned, the doctor in her studying the girl. “Passed out? How? Here, let me help.” She reached towards Nancy’s wrist to check her pulse.

“No! Don’t.” Chibs rushed over Nancy’s still body throwing a hand up to prevent Tara from getting closer. His body tense as he hovered over Nancy’s still body, heart racing at Tara’s sudden move towards Nancy.

He flashed back to all the times he’d seen her hit when she was down like this. Not again, never again, he promised himself. Back of his head, he knew that Tara didn’t mean her any harm. But the fear overrode his common sense at the moment.

“Chibs? What?...” She asked taken aback with a frown.

“No, she can’t be touched by anyone except me. This happened because she had to read Tig.”

“What? I don’t understand. What does Tig have to do with her passed out like that? Has she been to a doctor?”

He shook his head not wanting to go into it all again. He just wanted to be with Nancy in peace. Have her wake up. “Not now, I know you want to help, but you can’t. Go check on Tig.”

Tara gave him a concerned look and stared down at Nancy a moment longer. He saw the debate going on in her head. He knew the challenge it was for her to both be involved yet not. It's part of her medical training. “Okay...but if you change your mind...”
“Just leave it be. She’ll be fine.”

Tara sighed and left as he asked.

He barely had a moment to take a breath when Gemma interrupted next.

He growled in frustration. They needed to get to his house. Gemma glared back at him, ignoring his silent order to leave them alone. She went into the bathroom, coming back out with a damp cloth. “Here.” She thrust at him.

He took the cloth and gently ran it over Nancy’s forehead, even though he hadn’t asked for it. “Thanks.” He said dismissing Gemma. Hoping she’d take the hint and get the fuck out.

“What happened to Tig, Chibs?” Gemma demanded.

“Jesus, mother of Christ.” He swore. “Nothing that he didn’t agree to. Nothing that Clay didn’t make her do.” Chibs bit out, annoyed that Gemma was more concerned over Tig than Nancy. The one who was currently passed out. What the fuck was the matter with Gemma?

“Yeah, right. We can’t have an unstable teenager in the club. We can’t afford to have you turned inside out like this.”

“Fuck no!” He got up, throwing the damp towel back towards the bathroom. Moving into Gemma’s personal space, keeping between her and Nancy. “She’s not going anywhere, and it isn’t your call. I’m warning you. You don’t know what she’s had to live through. Whatever is going on between the two of us...is not up to you.”

“Sweetheart, it’s my job to protect you, all of you.” Gemma tried to sweet talk to him, like he was an idiot that couldn’t possibly know any better without her input. Taking hold of his cheeks, forcing him to look at her. “I don’t like how obsessed you are over some gash who we barely know.”

“Gemma,” He seethed as he grabbed Gemma’s wrists, ripping her hands off him. Forcing her to trip and stumble back towards the open door in her high-heeled boots, only his grip on her wrists kept her from falling over.

He wanted her off balance, physically telling her that she wasn’t strong enough to take him on. His dark eyes hard on her. She tried to take her hands back from his grip, but he squeezed hard enough to warn her.

The instant dislike Gemma had to Nancy setting him off. He was barely holding his rage inside to not slap or push Gemma out the room. She was Clay’s wife and Jax’s mother, for that alone he held off. But he needed to get her out. He had to protect Nancy.

“Nancy is staying. I don’t know why you are being such a jealous bitch over a girl who didn’t do or say shite to you. Get your head out of your ass and get the fuck out.” He pushed her wrists forcefully from his grip. Gemma ending up in the middle of the hall just outside the doorway. His body blocking Gemma from trying to enter the bedroom again.

“This is a mistake.” She warned pointing a finger at him. He rolled his eyes and slammed the door shut on her.

Scratching at his head, he slid onto the bed, gathering Nancy into his arms. Wondering what shit Gemma’s been smoking.

“Come on, m ‘anam. Wake up for me. You’re scaring me.” He brushed her hair from her face and
pressed soft kisses to her lips. Deciding that she’d wake when she was good and ready. God he hated this, felt so useless right now. He laid back and pulled her deeper into his arms and let himself drift waiting for her to come around.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

Uhmmm, okay, so I know that the discussion the guys are having in this chapter would never happen outside of Church. But I needed a scene location change. So just assume that what is spoken in this chapter is kept between the guys. Not even Rat can hear them.

And I think I broke pov slightly here and there. It's one in the morning...I'm pushing to get this out to you.

Enjoy...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You sure you’re okay Tig?” Jax asked after he hung up the phone with his kids.

Jax’s eyes followed after Tara and Gemma as they disappeared into the kitchen. Chucky following after them.

Gemma glaring at Clay. Clay heaving a sigh and waved Gemma off. Tara and Gemma had both gone off to check on Chibs. By the look of it, he tossed both of them out. Jesus Christ.

“Yeah, I’m fine. A little worried with her passing out like that. Jesus.” He scratched at his goatee as he sat down in one of the leather chairs.

Church ending with Nancy passing out and Chibs carrying her to recover in the apartment.

Everyone was gathered around the leather chairs and sofas. Clay took the chair next to him. Piney had the last free singular chair on his other side. Jax, Opie and Juice grabbed a couple of the regular wood chairs. Jax straddling his, his arms resting across the back. Bobby, Kozik, Happy took over the sofa.

A croweater passed around beers for all of them. Rat behind the bar, wiping it down.

“You mentioned something happening at a bar earlier?” Bobby asked.

He groaned. “Fuck. Yeah. We stopped at some shitty town to rest for the night, the only place to get any food was at this rundown bar. Chibs went to take a piss, told me to keep an eye on her.”

He took out his cigarettes, lighting one. “There were these women that had the most perfect racks. I was kinda tired and pissed to be on babysitting duty. Nancy told me she was fine. So, I went to chat up the women. It was only a couple of minutes.” He defended himself.

“Next thing I know, Nancy’s screaming her head off and passed out on the floor. Some drunk asshole is stupidly, staring down at her.”

“The bartender swearing and yelling at the guy. Before I could do anything, Chibs is back. And fuck...” He winced at the memory. “Except for today at church and at the diner on the road...I’ve never before seen Chibs so fucking angry in my entire life. Shit, not angry, he was beyond
angry...fucking deadly.”

“He punches the guys lights out. K.O’ed the asshole with just one punch. And he was a pretty big guy. I was afraid Chibs was going to kill him. I pull Chibs off the guy. Barely managed to keep him from knocking my head off in the process. He starts yelling at me. The bartender tells him he’s a regular that is always hitting up on the women that come in. Chibs figures out I wasn’t watching her. Jesus, if looks could kill, I’d’ve be dead right then and there. Before I could say anything, Chibs grabs Nancy off the floor. Ordering me to settle up with the bartender and fucking storms out of the bar.”

“I settled up with the bartender and catch up to Chibs. He just fucking lays into me for fucking up. I fucked up. I know it. I was supposed to watch her. Felt like I was back in boot camp being flayed alive for fucking up. Chibs gets back to their room and slams the door shut in my face.”

“Jesus.” Juice breathes, listening to him with wide eyes.

“Early the next morning, like five a.m., Nancy barges into my room. Rips my blanket off, throws a bucket of melted ice over my head to wake me up. She’s telling Chibs and me to get the fuck up and get dressed. That we had to go help someone. Like, right fucking then. Chibs is asking her what was wrong. But she just throws clothes at the both of us. She’s so worked up, we figured it best to humor her and do what she’s telling us. She’s pointing out directions as if she’s lived in that shitty town her entire life.”

“What the hell?” Bobby asks in confusion.

He waves his question off. “End up at a trailer park that’s seen better days. The Streams is a step up from this shithole. Chibs hasn’t even come to stop and she’s off and running into one of the trailers. Finding the key in some dead plants by the door. She’s inside before we could get off the fucking bikes. Chibs and I are yelling at her to stop and wait for us. I’m freaking out because I didn’t know what I’d do if she got shot or killed in there before we could check the place out first. Chibs was fucking freaking out.”

“What happened?” Bobby asks confused.

“We get to the trailer and sweep the place. Fucking pigsty. Thankfully, it’s empty except for the bedroom. Asshole who hit on Nancy at the bar, it was his trailer. He had some teenage girl tied up on the bed that he snatched off the street.”

“Fuck.” Opie said in reaction.

“Oh my God.” Jax swore astonished.

“I could tell right away, she’d been beaten and raped. Had bruises all over, cigarette burns…” He broke off. “Nancy pulls a blanket over the girl as Chibs and I see what the situation is. I’ll never forget the sight of that girl. The girl, Lily, fucking panicking at the sight of us. Nancy just talking to her, calming her down. Nancy gets her calmed down enough so that Chibs and I could cut her loose. Lily was shaking so hard, we had a hard time of cutting the ropes off. Nancy just kept talking to her, telling her everything was going to be okay.”

“Shit. What’d you do with her? The cops know you were there?” Bobby asked alarmed.

“Nancy, she said the neighbor would take care of it. She and Chibs goes to get the neighbor as I’m staying with the girl. The neighbor woman comes in, and she’s just grabs the girl in her arms. Nancy’s telling them that we weren’t there. Lily 'managed' to scream out and the neighbor cut her
loose and called the cops. Nancy’s just telling them that we couldn’t stay. That we were just passing through and were on a schedule.”

“They bought that?” Clay questioned.

“Yeah. Just reiterated that we were simply passing through and we couldn’t stay.” Tig shrugged.

Chibs grabs a kitchen knife, has the neighbor grab the handle for fingerprints. He’s looking at her, telling her she just saved a life. The neighbor just stares at us and finally nods, reiterating the story to tell. We leave.”

He pulls on his cigarette.

“Good timing, too. The cops pulling up the other way on the road as we just got on the road back to the motel. Soon as we got back to the motel, we packed and hit the road. Stopped at the Grand Canyon. Spent the night at the Ramada just south of the park. Having dinner, the TV was on over the bar. The local news flashed on and showed the rescue of a girl who’d been kidnapped a week before out of Texas. Reporter asks the lead investigator in the press conference, why the asshole was arrested at the local hospital. Told them that he got drunk at the bar, fell and hit his head. Hard enough to break his jaw.”

“Holy shit...Chibs broke the guys jaw?” Kozik muttered.

“Yeah, he did. Like I said, one fucking punch.”

The guys all shifted, their eyes going to each other as they listened to his story. Tapping the ash from his cigarette, he continues.

“Before we went down for dinner, Chibs and her had a fight over her just running right into that trailer. He fucking lit into her. I could hear him through the connecting door. Chibs winds down, and she apologizes for scaring him. Then told him that she had to be the first one in that trailer. If it was me and Chibs, guns out...said it would have broken that girl, even though we were there to get her out of there.”

“Jesus, another reason chicks aren’t allowed in the club.” Clay huffs.

He forced himself to keep from shooting Clay a glare for his comment. He knew that it was true what he was saying, but he's got a sense that things are going to be changing. He didn't know how or when, but he felt it. “I was checking in on them. I couldn’t believe it. I’ve never seen a fight like that before.”

“What do you mean?” Opie asked.

“She just goes all quiet. Watching Chibs, letting him yell at her. Chibs winds down, and she apologizes for scaring him. Then told him that she had to be the first one in that trailer. If it was me and Chibs, guns out...said it would have broken that girl, even though we were there to get her out of there.”

“Chibs is still seething over the whole thing. She never raised her voice to him. All the yelling, it was Chibs.”

“Nancy tells him that he didn’t know what it is to be trapped like that. That one second is all it takes to break someone. Chibs tries to fight her on it...telling he knows what it is to be trapped like that...been in prison. She just shakes her head at him, that he wasn’t hearing what she was saying. Tells him that he’s mentally and emotionally prepared for that...living the outlaw life. Told him it reminded her of her growing up with that violence since she was eight. And Lily...she didn’t have the time to be trapped in that trailer anymore.”
“Fuck. Chibs looked like he’d been turned inside out at that. Just fucking grabs her tight into a hug. As we were leaving the trailer, Nancy pulled out a ziploc out of the asshole’s freezer, leaves it on the table. Swept the shit off of the table, the bag right in the middle of it. I didn’t know what she was doing at the time.”

“What...” Bobby leaned forward with his question.

“Chibs told me later, she wanted to make sure that the cops found it. It’s not the first time the asshole kidnapped a girl. Not the first time he killed a girl. The bag had his souvenirs.” He gave the guys a heavy look.

"Oh my God." Kozik uttered in the well of knowing silence.

“Nancy...told Chibs, she hoped that she was wrong about what she read in the asshole. Fucking wanted to be wrong.”

“But then as she points out, that if the asshole hadn’t had grabbed her, she never would have known about Lily tied up in that trailer. Getting Chibs to forgive me over my fuckup. And well, also to give me some slack over some other shit that went down a day earlier.”

“I’m almost afraid to ask. What other shit?” Jax sighed, realizing that his trip with Chibs was more complicated rather than just the simple job of finding Nancy and coming home.

He shifted and took a draw on his cigarette. Unsure if he wanted to broach the subject. But, he thought, he wanted to know. He almost lost his life over it, he deserved to know what the fuck was going on. Coming to his decision he looked pointedly to Jax and Clay. “Why was it exactly you had me go with Chibs on this adventure?”

Clay shrugged while Jax shrugged in confusion. “I don’t know, you were the first one that popped into my head. Why?”

“The day before the shitty bar incident, we were at a diner for lunch. Chibs once again goes off to take a piss. Nancy brings up the cutting glass underwater factoid. I’m looking at her like she’s cracked. Asking her why she felt the need to tell me some science shit right then. She’s just shrugged and huddled in her corner of the booth waiting for Chibs to get back. You could tell by looking at her that her head was killing her. Tells me she’s nervous. What to expect here, what her place was going to be. Telling me that she can’t be like the other old ladies or croweaters.” He waved his hand towards the kitchen.

“She can’t fight for her place like the other women around here. She and Chibs really can’t be separated. We’ve been telling her the rules around the club. Some of it she knew already from the dreams. Like I said before, just fucking worrying over shit. Asking me my opinion. Hypothetically.”

He took a sip of his beer, looking at the guys seriously. “Told her I wouldn’t mind her on the runs. She’s handling the ride home fine, not complaining or demanding better accommodations or having to stop for bathroom breaks every half-hour. I brushed it off that we’d figure things out once we got back. Which is what Chibs has been telling her. But fuck, she just will not stop thinking and worrying over shit. It’s like her brain never shuts off for one second.”

“And the way she thinks and talks...its so completely different that what I’m used to. What we’re used to. She just has this way of looking at you. Like she knows you and is trying to figure out why you’re such an idiot, when she sees exactly what’s wrong with you as if it were plain as day. Wondering why you can’t see it for yourself.”
Kozik starts giggling at his ire. “Man, if she can keep you on point, I’m in her corner.”

“Fuck you.” He throws back at Kozik. Which didn’t seem to offend Kozik any, just sending him into another giggle fit. Fucking idiot, he grumbled.

“Anyway, the conversation takes a turn and she’s questioning me over why it was me with them instead of Opie or Happy. Especially when I’m on release. Staring at me with those freaky eyes of hers. I didn’t think twice about it when it was decided that I go with Chibs, but with her asking me, it just fucking freaked me out. Questioning me what it was I was supposed to do if Chibs decided to never come back…”

“Shit. I didn’t have any ulterior motives in suggesting you. Just didn’t like the idea of Chibs out there on his own, the way he was.” Jax said.

He relaxes at Jax’s answer. “That’s what I thought, too. That fucking ride out was absolute hell. So, she’s got me all confused and shit. Chibs comes back and I go outside for a smoke just to get away from her questions.”

He takes a breath to brace himself. “Chibs comes rolling up on me a minute later and fucking pulls on me right there in the parking lot. Nancy behind him with a worried look. I’m just focused on not getting dead and Chibs is asking me if I was tasked.”

“Oh my God.” Jax groaned.

Heavy silence fell as everyone slid careful looks between him, Opie, and Piney. The ghost of what happened to Donna still fresh in the club’s history. Piney and Opie going still as they digested the meaning of what happened. He shook his head as he remembered that day.

“Were you?” Opie asked pointedly.

“No.” He said emphatically, giving Opie a solid look.

He rubbed his goatee. “I told him I wasn’t. That I didn’t know why it was me. Fuck, I really thought he’d kill me as Chibs stared me down. He eventually decides not to kill me and puts the gun away. Tells me if he finds out I was tasked on him or Nancy, he’d fucking kill me. And I fucking believe him. Christ.”

“This whole trip...it was a side of Chibs I’d never seen before. He’s always been so cool and collected. Just doing the shit that needs to get done. This is a whole other level. It’s beyond the club. The way he and Nancy are tuned to each other.”

He shook his head at Clay. “I warned you not to provoke Chibs earlier. You didn’t fucking listen. Do me a favor, quit picking at Chibs, will you? I’d like to live to see tomorrow.”

Clay, Bobby and Piney all exchanging heavy looks. He along with the rest of the guys picked up on the sudden tension between the three eldest of the club.

“What?” Jax questioned.

“I thought he’d left that behind.” Bobby shook his head grimly.

“Something like that, you don’t leave it behind. You bury it and hope it never sees the light of day again.” Piney barked angrily.

“What are you talking about?” Opie asked.

“What is that? I’d never heard it before.” Jax questioned.

“It’s Irish...means king’s sword.” Clay said with a wave of his hand. His tone of voice, hoping that they’d all drop the subject. A subject that could lead into areas that he didn’t want known.

“The king’s sword? You mean...the Irish Kings?” Jax asked taken aback a little.

“No, it’s more than them.” Piney interrupted. Everyone swiveled their eyes to him. Piney glaring at Clay for trying to quell the truth of their history with the Irish.

“What do you mean, Pop?” Opie asked.

“It was back when Chibs first came here. JT, he spent a lot of time with Chibs. He was in pretty bad shape. The injuries from his excommunication, they got infected and he was having fevers. Raving with hallucinations. Talking in Gaelic most of the time. We weren’t sure he was going to make it more than a few times. JT was the only one of us that knew enough Gaelic to understand what the hell he was talking about.”

“I never knew any of that.” Jax said, puzzled that as VP he didn’t know a vital piece of the club’s history.

“It was a long time ago. You were just a kid, your brother was still around then, too. It was a crazy time. We had to have someone babysit him for weeks after his fever broke. He kept trying to escape back to Belfast. Go after Jimmy.” Bobby added.

“We had to keep telling him that Fiona and Kerrianne would be killed if he got caught back in Belfast.” Clay said.

“Jesus.” Jax breathed.

“Chibs has always had a hard head. Stubborn.” Clay said.

“Chibs mentioned Kellen earlier...‘our good priest’...what does Kellen have to do with Chibs?” Opie asked.

“I asked JT what the hell Chibs was talking about one time. JT said that Kellen chose Chibs. Chibs had to prove himself when he joined the Army. He didn’t grow up in the Cause. You don’t just walk into some office and sign-up as if it were nothing. He was regarded with suspicion, especially with his time in the British army. JT wouldn’t say what it was that Chibs did to get Kellen’s attention. But you know it had to be bloody for that lot.” Piney said.

“So...what...Chibs was what...the King’s right hand or something?” He interjected, his eyes wide and heart pumping in latent fear of what Clay, Piney and Bobby were telling them all.

“No. I told you...it’s bigger than that. Kellen recognized the pull and power of the Cause. Not just among the rank and file, but even with the council...the King’s themselves. The Rithe Claíomh, refers to God. God is the King of Heaven and Earth. King’s sword...the King’s wrath. The only person who could extract vengeance both in and out of the Army. The Kings, even Kellen, weren’t outside of his purview.” Piney said harshly.

“You’re saying that Chibs, our Chibs, is some kind of executioner?” Opie asked.
“In a way. He worked behind the scenes. Most of the time, he worked like any other army man. Doing the grunt work of the Cause. Helped set up the Belfast charter and pave the way for the Sons to work with the Army on our gun business. JT and Chibs talked a lot back then, just on that business alone.” Piney informed, who ignored the glare that Clay was shooting at Piney.

“I thought it was you that worked with the Army on that relationship.” Jax asked Clay.

“I did.” Clay said emphatically, annoyed that the guys were seeing their relationship with the Irish in a new light. Never realizing just how integral Chibs was.

“Only after JT and Chibs made the deal. We never would have gotten as deep as we have with the Army if it weren’t for Chibs and his contacts. Even with Chibs excommunicated, he still has pull.” Bobby corrected despite Clay’s glare for the knock to his authority.

Bobby shook his head, sighed deeply in thought to only look up at the group of them. “I watched over Chibs one time, he kept ranting. One word in particular I caught. Asked JT what it meant because it was on Chibs mind so much. He kept saying ‘fuil’, over and over again. JT said it meant blood. I asked JT why’d he was so upset over it. JT simply tells me it didn’t matter, and wouldn’t talk about it. But I always wondered what it really meant.” Bobby said.

Piney sighed heavily. “I don’t know if any of this was true or not, but rumor that was going around, even McKeevey believed it to be true.”

“What?” Kozik asked.

“When Kellen chose Chibs. There was some sort of...ceremony done, to...induct or baptize Chibs as the Rithe Claíomh. In the sanctuary of St. Matt’s, it’s said that Kellen had filled a ceremonial tub with the blood of four horses. Red, white, pale, and black. Brought the horses right into the church, bled them out to fill the tub. Kellen blessed and baptised Chibs in that blood-filled tub.”

“When it was done, Chibs was the Rithe Claíomh from then on. A free agent to wield God’s wrath on anyone who stepped out of line for the Cause. Nobody knew but Kellen, that Chibs was the Rithe Claíomh. But the effects of what he’s done...the Rithe Claíomh became a myth. A rumor spread throughout the ranks. You fuck up and the Rithe Claíomh will pay you a visit.”

“Jesus Christ.” Kozik said in astonishment. “You mean like out of Revelations...the four horsemen of the Apocalypse?”

“Fuck! God damn it. Thanks a lot, assholes.” He complained in a heated rush. Realizing the full depth of how close shit came to him getting killed, because Chibs was on some holy mission from God. Ah, fuck!

“Hey, it’s not like I knew!” Jax argued.

“Are you kidding me? This is like Keyser Söze from the Usual Suspects.” Juice interjected. “And if Chibs is this ‘right clam’...whatever...how was it that Kellen didn’t put in place another when Chibs got kicked out?”

“I don’t know. It was something of the past, part of the Army and their history. I thought that Chibs had quit and Kellen found someone else.” Clay shrugged.

“I could see the Casey’s being groomed for it. How Sean cut up Liam. Looked medieval enough.” Jax said.

“But Chibs just now said he was the Rithe Claíomh. Sounds like he hasn’t quit it at all. And now
with him the way he is lately.” Opie followed.

“I thought he’d quit, too. Especially with him being banished. Can’t do your job if you’re not there. Maybe why Jimmy got so out of control.” Clay said.

“I don’t think it’s a job you can just quit.” Bobby added cautiously.

Chapter End Notes

No translations needed here. Whatever terminology spoken is explained in the conversation the guys are having.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Argh, sorry for not updating sooner. Feels like its been ages for me.

Big chapter here. Had to edit this pretty heavily. Trying to get the tone just right, the verbiage just right. Basically, nitpicking at this for the last few days and not getting any work done. Saving some of what I took out here for later chapters, where they'll fit better. I think. Maybe. Possibly. We'll see.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Let me go. Lemme go!” She yelled trying to roll toward the side of the bed, fighting the strong hands trying to hold her back. Her stomach roiled dangerously. “Gonna be sick.”

The magic words spoken, hands came off her in a rush. She was on her feet, running the few steps to get to the toilet before she made a mess on the floor.

Crashing to her knees on the linoleum tiles, she heaved into the bowl. Hands helped grab her hair. Chibs brogue listed in her ear as he helped hold her. The pounding of her head eased off. Her stomach pretty much empty to begin with since she hadn’t had anything to eat since the night before. Even so, it didn’t stop her body from heaving.

She drew a harsh breath as the life and experiences of Tig cut and rattled through her brain. The depth Tig felt for this club and how easily he was led by his nose by Clay. Donna. His guilt eating away at him, finally doing the right thing by admitting his part in her death. Relishing the punishment of Opie’s violence. Jutting his chin out to meet Opie’s swift action. Yet, looking at it, she knew Clay played Tig. Spoon feeding Tig to concoct their plan.

Opie’s life...his daughter’s life...hinged completely on Tig and his current unwavering support of Clay. Fuck.

She whined as the memories filtered and disseminated inside her. Tracking his life, how he came to this point in his life. And what the future holds for him. The smell of diesel and burned flesh seared inside her. Making her dry heave from the memory of that smell. Her hands shaking as she felt the heat and her ears ringing of Tig wailful begging to take her place.

Like with most people, the horror was mixed in with the humorous memories and experiences in Tig’s life. Idiot getting caught in that livestock trailer incident. To even watch Piney crash the tow through the motel where he was being patched up by the bounty hunters. Not exactly the protocol for storming a building, but it worked much to everyone’s amusement.

His time as a marine, sent into the infamous bloodbath that was Mogadishu. The blood sending her into the future...to the blood-stained room...Opie surrounded by large black men. Swinging a pipe wildly.

The sound of Jax and Chibs screaming and banging on the safety-glass separating them from Opie. The soul wrenching pain in their voices...knowing that it was Tig that killed two innocents for his
rushed belief that it was black who shot Clay. His absolute surety of it.

Chibs gently wiping her face with a damp towel. She curled into herself as best she could. But he pulled her into his arms and she huddled into his warm embrace. The shivers dying down the longer he held her. Her brain finally able to calm down from the storm, the shock of falling into Tig letting her go.

She wasn’t sure how to answer him. Taking a breath, she closed her eyes, mentally focussing, compartmentalizing and cataloguing what she’s learned. Doing her best to let the information be the information. It was just data...she repeated to herself. Data that had holes and logic errors. The future isn’t set in stone, she reminded herself.

“Hey, you feeling better?” He asked.

“Yeah. Sorry.” She looked at her reddened hands in confusion. “Did I burn myself?”

Chibs shook his head. “Not by any flame. Do you remember what happened?”

“He loves this club. He’s utterly devoted to it.”

“Do you remember talking about Fawn and Dawn?”


“They’re Tig’s daughters. Something about fire and blood. And a venus fly trap.” He looked at her curiously, waiting for her to fill him in.

She shook her head, not wanting to talk about what she learned...not yet, at least. She needed time to think. “This is new. I’ve never had this happen before.” She stared at her hands again.

He took her hands gently, checking for himself. “I put some burn ointment on them earlier. Do they hurt?” He asked.

“No, a little tender but fine.” She looked around and saw they were both sitting on the tiny bathroom floor. “How is it we seem to end up on the floor of bathrooms?” She questioned with a sigh.

“Just lucky I guess.” Chibs said sarcastically, huffing a laugh as he stood up, helping her to her feet, she grinned back at him.

He tossed a damp towel into a hamper while she quickly brushed her teeth.

Setting her toothbrush in Chib’s travel kit she turned to him. “Nobody tasked Tig to come with you, beyond just making sure you didn’t wipe out.” Her breath hitched as she recalled Tig’s fear of how driven Chibs was.

Chibs grunted at her, frowning at the whole possibility that Tig might have been tasked. But nice to know that he hadn’t been. Yet, at least. God knows what the guys will do or think after this demonstration she did earlier.

She pulled Chibs into a hug abruptly, holding him tight.

“Hey? What’s this then?” His arms holding her automatically.

“God, don’t do that again. Ride out like that. You are so lucky the weather held out. Jesus, the thought of you two on the bikes if the weather turned on you. Don’t do it again.” She said harshly,
fighting her tears.

“I had to come to you. Had to find you. Wasn’t going to let anything stop me.”

“It scared me. Scared Tig.”

“It’s okay. I’m fine. We’re fine. You’re safe now. And besides, I’m tougher than I look. Ye’ have no idea the weather we’ve got in Scotland. Seriously.” He consoled.

She pulled back to look up at him, her hands gripping his leather. “Don’t. Don’t do that. God, such an idiot. Tig was stealing your keys just so you’d stop for a few hours to rest. Don’t play this down. You do that again, and I’ll… I’ll...” She wracked her brain at what she’d do but she couldn’t come up with anything on the spot.

Chibs smirked down at her as she furiously tried to come up with a fitting consequence. She huffed in annoyance, stomping over to the bed, sitting down arms crossed. “I don’t know what’d I do, but you wouldn’t like it. That much I know.”

He sighed and sat next to her. “Aye. Okay. I won’t scare ye’ like that again. All right?”

“Hmpf...okay.” She settled.

“Anything else you want to tell me from reading Tig?”

He felt her stiffen next to him. Waiting for her to trust him and talk to him.

“I need time to think.” She said quietly. “I can’t... I don’t know how much is or might happen... I need to think.” She stumbled her reasoning to him.

“Okay.” He sighed heavily. Not liking she was clamming up on him. But he didn’t want to rush her either. She wasn’t running off to yell at Tig or doing something crazy like she did at that trailer.

“Well, you’re color is better, lets get some food in you. We’ll pack up and get over to the house. If it’s one thing about this place, you can’t get a moment’s peace.” Chibs grumbled.

“Okay. You alright?” She asked.

“Fuck, was scared watching you. I hadn’t actually seen you do that.” He admitted as he started picking up their bags.

Confused, she looked at him. “Sure you did. At the Harley dealership. And the dreams, you had to have seen it in those.”

Shaking his head. “No, you didn’t pass out at the dealership. Just got sick, which could have just as well been from the heavy lunch ye’d had. The dreams, aye. I saw those. But it was dreams, wasn’t sure what was going on. Fucking different watching you do it right in front of me. And with Tig, that was on purpose, ye’ held onto him.” He paused thinking what he’s witnessed and observed. Sitting down next to her again. “Fucking Clay. I hated it. Having ye’ read Tig.”

“I know... we fought over it in Church. And besides, I like Tig, despite his more than occasional idiotic decisions. He dropped everything just to ride with you to find me. He’d die for you and this club. No questions asked. I’d never read anyone with that kind of loyalty before. It’s very humbling.”

Chibs snorted. “Don’t let Tig hear that. Give him a swelled head and then we’d be neck deep in
some shite he got mixed up in because you gave him a compliment.”

She snickered at his description, knocking her body gently into his side. “It’d be nice if you didn’t keep threatening him. You’re on a hair trigger. I don’t want you to do something rash that you might regret later.”

He ran a hand through his hair as he thought about what she was saying. “I know. Bringing in a new person into the club like this, it’s complicated. I warned everyone in Church before I even brought you in. Yet there they were questioning you, questioning us as if I’d be lying to them.”

He slid her a serious look. “I warned them not to test you like they’d do with other old ladies. Even if it weren’t you, I’d’ve done the same. I don’t share and I don’t like being questioned when I’ve made up my mind.”

“Well, that’s good, because I don’t share either. You’re mine. And I don’t mind the questions they might have.” She shrugged. “Who knows, maybe one of them will hit on an idea that will help us.”

“I mind.” He argued. “And the chances of this lot of coming up with a viable idea is pretty damn small. I wouldn’t pin your hopes on it.”

“You’re probably right, but you never know.”

“Well, hopefully, you won’t have to read anyone like that again.”

“I don’t know about that.” She sighed as she got up, heading to the desk she’d straightened up earlier.

Chibs grunted behind her as she grabbed a small, crinkled up notepad and pen, quickly wrote down some details about Tig. Things that Tig would only know and information that wasn’t so personal that Tig wouldn’t mind the club knowing. Chibs followed her to the desk, his hand curling around her hip as she wrote quickly.

“What are you writing?” He asked pointing at the paper in her hand.

She pulled back from her thoughts focusing at what Chibs was pointing to on the paper.

“Damn.” She tore off the page and started writing again. “That’s my code.” She said absently.

Chibs grabbed up her tossed paper, studying it curiously. “Code?”

“Yeah, got tired of the other kids at school swiping my notes and using them for their own reports and tests. I was bored and had been reading up on hieroglyphics and codebreakers at the time. Thought it was cool. Started translating English to my own set of cryptography. I do it automatically now.”

She smirked as she straightened up, “Should have seen Jennifer’s reaction when swiped my notes. Never thought her face could get that shade of red. Almost purple really.”

Chibs raised a brow at her and she shrugged. “Hey, I had to find my own amusements where I could.”

Showing him the english translation of what she’d written. Chibs looking from her code to the english. “Jesus. Come on, let’s get some food to hold us over til we do some shopping on our way home.” He led her from the apartment.
Walking into the main room of the clubhouse, his nerves went on alert.

He caught sight of Tara leaving in the corner of his eye. But his attention fell onto the guys who suddenly and awkwardly stopped talking when he and Nancy entered the room.

The guys were scattered around in a loose circle, sitting on the couches and leather chairs. Jax and Chibs in chairs from the tables. Tig, looked upset by whatever it was they’d been talking about. Piney and Bobby slid guilty looks to him. The rest of the guys all shooting him odd to nervous looks.

“So if Chibs is the ‘rite clam’...what’s this ‘bangreen clod’ he was talking about?” Juice asked, mispronouncing the Gaelic so badly he mentally winced.

Staring down at the back of Juice’s head as he and Nancy walked closer the the group. Juice, who had his back to him, didn’t realize that he was standing right behind him.

Juice noticed the odd stillness from the rest of the guys and managed to get on the fucking clue bus. “Chibs is behind me isn’t he...Fuck.” He said under his breath. Seeing the nervous looks the others were sending him. Juice twisted around with a guilt-ridden expression. “Heeeyyy, Chibs…” Juice broke off at the dark, menacing look he gave the idiot.

He glared at Clay, Piney and Bobby. Realizing that they’d been talking about him and his history. The three of them were there when he came to the club. Hurt and flayed open physically and emotionally.

The three idiots talked. Piney and Bobby managed to look sorry for spilling the beans. But what exactly they told the rest of them he didn’t know. So much of what is said about the Rithe Claíomh had become rumor. Some was truth. Nobody really knew which was which. Only he did.

Clay remained his usual stone-face when shit was going on. Waiting to see what would happen before intervening. It’s like Nancy said, Clay used all of them when it suited him. Letting them take the fall so that he could remain clear of shite. He cursed himself that he didn’t see it before.

Nancy looked up at him, sensing his anger, as he stared the three of them down.

He took another step so he was in the circle of chairs. “Whatever it is that you girls think you know and blabbed your gobs about, you fucking shut it right now and keep ‘em shut. Or I’ll shut ye’ up permanently.”

“Jesus, Chibs. It’s in the past. What the hell difference does it make anymore?” Clay argued as if it were something that were inconsequential and meant nothing. Something that had died a long time ago. Not something that lived and breathed.

She shot Clay an angry look for his dismissive attitude. When it was obvious that whatever secrets Clay and the others talked about wasn’t their story to tell. They betrayed Chibs trust and did it thinking he wouldn’t care.

Before she could blink, he let go of her hand and had Clay pinned in his chair. Knife deep at his throat, knee pressing hard against Clay’s chest. His free hand forcing Clay’s head back, exposing his throat to the edge of his blade.

“Oh, God. Fuck!” The guys all sputtered at the speed that Chibs had put their president under his knife.

“Holy shit.” Tig breathed, wide-eyed, standing up.
“Chibs!” Jax’s voice came out of the sudden din.

“Jax, don’t!” Tig warned, hand raised in Jax’s direction, halting him from approaching.

“What?! Chibs!” Gemma interjected into the crowd of shocked voices.

“Ma! Gem…” Jax and Tig yelled in tandem sending Gemma a warning glare. Gemma huffed angrily, but stopped approaching Chibs and Clay under both Jax and Tig’s orders.

Dead silence fell over the club. Everyone stared at him and Clay. Waiting to see what the outcome of this fight would be.

Skin unbroken still, but he knew another millimeter of pressure, a slight twist of his wrist…and Clay would be bleeding like a stuck pig all over the fucking clubhouse.

Clay knew it, too. Shocked and fearful, blue-eyes looking into his determined ones. Clay’s jaw clenched from the strength of Chibs hands and weight, pinning him to his chair.

Good, he had his attention finally. Leaning harder into Clay, further immobilizing him, filling Clay’s line of sight.

“Who do you think it was that brought Kings and Priest to the table? Who do you think it was that told them to give your grandson back, no matter the cost? Who do you think told them to open their warehouse to the Sons? A deal you took advantage up right quick, didn’t ye’? Ye’ greedy bastard.”

He growled dangerously, his brogue thickening.

The confusion on Clay’s face as he listened to what he was saying finally registered in his fucking thick skull.

“What? You?” He managed to breath out from under his knife.

“Aye.” He answered. “The Rithe Cláomh…” He pressed harder into Clay. “… gave the Kings and the Priest…the opportunity to set things to rights for this club. And I can take it all away just as easily, old man. You want to keep your deal with the Kings? Then shut the fuck up about me and stop insulting me and my queen.”

He kept his attention on Clay, ignoring the shocked whispers that exploded behind him. Clay still glared at him, still fighting him, fucking bastard.

The moment stretched and even though Clay remained absolutely still. Chibs wasn’t happy the longer Clay held out, he could see it in Clay’s eyes, the disrespect. He pressed his knife another hair closer to the throbbing carotid begging him to slit open.

His dominance over Clay clear to everyone in the room. A warning to the rest of the club not to fuck with him ever again.

Everyone waited as the seconds ticked down in the tense silence. She saw the guys looking at each other to try and figure out how to end the standoff without Chibs killing Clay. Tig as SA was supposed to take the hits for Clay. Protect Clay. But even he didn’t know what the fuck to do. One wrong move or word could kill Clay.

Tig glanced back at her and she saw the fear in his eyes. Saw the conflict he and everyone was having while Chibs and Clay held in their standoff.

She walked around, circling behind Clay’s chair, making sure Chibs saw her moving. Gemma tried
to grab her but she was out of her reach. Ending up alongside Clay and Chibs, frozen in their power struggle.

She edged closer to Chibs side. Jax shook his head at her to back off. But she ignored his warning. Her hand going to Chibs arm with the knife. Lightly running her hand down his arm to his wrist. Her fingers curling around his straining muscle and tendons that worked to keep that sharply-honed knife exactly where Chibs wanted it.

“Chibs, let him go.”

Chibs breathed harshly at her voice. Her hand on his wrist pulling it back slightly, encouraging him to back off of Clay’s throat. “It’s okay, just ease back. You’re okay.” She whispered into his ear.

His body relaxed minutely, encouraging her to keep on.

Twisting in front of him, edging herself between Chibs and Clay. Using her body to press him back off of Clay. Her hand on his wrist still, guiding the knife out from Clay’s throat. Ignoring Clay’s sudden gasp as the knife fell back enough that he could breathe normally again. She kept edging into Chibs, forcing him to take a step back. His eyes still locked on Clay, but his body increasingly relaxing as she pushed and prodded at him.

“Come on, you said there was food. I haven’t had anything to eat since I woke up.” She said, knowing that would get his attention.

Chibs breathed and straightened up, slipping the knife away. His eyes focusing on her, his hands pulling her into his arms. Holding her close. His eyes holding his threat still, but not as intensely. She smiled up at him, her hand on his cheek feeling him relax even more at her touch.

“Aye, okay. Come on.” He breathed as his rage abated. His gaze taking in the boys. Still frozen as they watched him. Sending them a final warning as he started walking towards the kitchen with his queen in his arms.

She tossed the notebook at a stunned Jax. His eyes going to the paper automatically.

Gemma and Tig hovered next to Clay checking him. Clay waving them off, roughly. Gemma stalking past them into the kitchen and she mentally sighed as their drama of the day wasn’t over yet.

She heard the guys all converge over the notepad. Jax questioning Tig. Tig answering. Low rumblings emanating from their sector.

“You were in Mogadishu? Like Black Hawk Down?” Juice asked in surprise. Tig groaning and replying that it was a long time ago.

He ignored them as he led her to the kitchen again. Gemma and Chucky were in the kitchen. Giving them looks but kept quiet by Chibs warning look. Well, Chuckie did. Gemma was practically vibrating.

“Chibs! What the fuck was that out there? You pulled a knife on Clay!” Gemma attacked.

Chibs leaned in towards Gemma, his dark eyes flashing at her. Pointing a finger at her. ‘Clay was talking about shite that he shouldn’t have. I was reminding him the consequences of what he was doing. Don’t make me do the same to you.” He warned, turning to yank the refrigerator door open. “And fuck! When is someone restocking this shite! I had to toss a bunch of food because it was bad. Jesus Christ!”
“I’ve got the girls on it.” Gemma huffed.

“Aye, and what about you? You spend so much time here in the clubhouse…least you could do is make sure there’s fresh food in here.” He fought with Gemma.

She swayed and leaned against the counter behind her. Looking around the crowded kitchen, her eyes taking in the large pots and pans, jerking as an image of a vat of chili flared inside her with a sudden rush. Her nerves haywire at the suddenness.

Glancing at Gemma, she felt lightheaded and woozy. Looking back toward Chucky...frowning as she saw the large pot of chili again. The same one sitting on the back burner of the stove. Gemma stirring it, shock on her face. Talking with Chucky...in over his head. Head in the chili. The emotions and events of the day were catching up to her, she thought with a shake of her head.

She slid a hand to Chib’s back, her thumb circling a knob of his vertebrae above his leather belt. He shuddered at her touch but kept arguing with Gemma.

She flexed her hand in front of her, her reddened fingers seem to be getting better. They aren’t as sore as they were before. She’d never had a reading go that fast and deep before. Looking around the kitchen...maybe with getting more food, her abilities were ramping up? She wasn’t sure. She hated it when she had questions with no concrete answers.

“Hi, I’m Chuck, friend of the club.” Chucky pulled her from her thoughts, his prosthetic hand out for her to shake.

Chibs turned his attention back to her and saw Chucky holding his hand out to her to shake. Sending him a hard look that made Chucky drop his hand and back off. Nancy’s hand at his back, now at his side as he twisted around.

“Nice to meet you.” She said to smooth over Chucky’s hurt feelings. To which, Chucky gave her a quick grin before dropping his eyes to the floor again.

“So what did you do to Tig?” Gemma barked in her direction.

“Nothing that he didn’t agree to.” She said, keeping her voice relaxed. Attempting to calm things down, or at least not escalate the drama any further. Wondering why Gemma was so freaked out. She should be thanking Chibs for getting Abel back. But then Chibs nearly slit Clay’s throat. Could be Gemma didn’t hear Chibs divulge that bit of information. She sighed in frustration, tired of all the questions and drama.

“Really? And what was that?” Gemma didn’t let it go.

“I drowned in him.” She said staring down Gemma. “He consented.”

“Gemma! Leave her alone. Tig’s fine. Everyone is fine. It’s fucking club business.” Chibs ordered, pulling out a tupperware of leftover chili.

She groaned. “No, no chili. Can’t.” She shook her head trying to rid the image of a vat of chili with a human head in it.

Chibs looked at her, her distress filling her eyes. “Your stomach bothering ye’ still?”

She nodded feeling chilled, staring at the tupperware of chili. Then up to Gemma and Chucky.

Chibs searching through his jacket and found a joint. Pulling his lighter from his jean pocket, lit the
joint. Quickly grabbed her up and gave her a shotgun. “Sorry.” He said to her when he pulled back. She just shook her head, as she held the smoke of the pot for as long as possible. Breathing out, she took the joint from Chibs. “Keep working on that. You’ll be better soon.” He said as he tossed the tupperware back in the fridge.

“You have a problem with my chili?” Gemma accused.

“Too spiccy.” She said absently.

Her eyes landing on the large pot that would hide a human head. She swayed from the déjà vu, except it wasn’t in the past. It would be in the future. Wasn’t sure when exactly, but one day soon.

God, what was happening to her? Chibs pulled out deli meats again for simple sandwiches. She forced herself to look at the floor, her hand going to her eyes, pressing hard to stop the image. Her stomach churning, fighting with herself to keep from curling up on the floor.

“Don’t you have work to do in the garage?” He glared at Gemma. As he made up the sandwiches and grabbed up a couple of the bags of chips.

His dark eyes watching her as she took another hit on the joint. She passed it to him. “I’m good.”

“Aye, ye’ are, m ‘anam.” Giving her a wink and a smile. She smiled back up to him gratefully. Seeing the anger leave him finally. Partaking the last of the joint for himself.

Gemma huffing that she was being ignored, she stomped out of the kitchen. Chucky floppingly followed her out.

“Better?”

“Yeah. Thanks.” Chibs leaning in to give her cheek a kiss.

“Good, come on.” They settled into the same table as yesterday and Chibs waved at Rat. A second later a beer and a coke was set down for them from another scantily-clad croweater.

“Dig in darlin’. When we’re done here, we’ll go get some groceries, head home and get some more sleep. Christ, I’m tired.” The showdown with Clay still running high through him. He couldn’t wait to get Nancy out of here and to his home, where they could crash without the club coming between them every five goddamn minutes.

Nancy nodded and took some careful bites.

“You okay?” She asked him, her eyes going to his in concern. His confused at what she was referring to. “Juice and Clay, pulling on them. Well, Clay, again. That little showdown with Gemma just now.” She clarified.

Kozik and Clay had left while they were in the kitchen. Juice was typing away at his laptop at the bar. Jax and Bobby were still huddled with Tig and Opie.

“Aye, I’m fine.”

“Will you tell me? What you meant by the Rithe Claíomh?” She hesitated over the pronunciation.

“I’m not proud of it.” He admitted to her.

She bobbed her head. “It’s okay, you don’t have to if you don’t want to. Whatever it was, it meant something to all of them. And you were so angry. I just wondered is all.”
He tilted her head up to his. His eyes catching hers. “I’ll tell ye’. Not here. When we get home. It’s
not just you that’s changing. Something is shifted inside me. I can feel it. Thought I’d put all that
behind me, but maybe not.”

“Okay.” She sighed. “But really, if it’s too much, you don’t have to.” She offered him an out.

“Not to worry, m ‘anam. Eat up.” He leaned in and kissed her. He groaned as the kiss grew, Nancy
sighed under his lips that spurred him on.

They broke apart abruptly when Tig plunked himself down noisily. Setting his beer down on the
table with a hard smack.

He groaned in annoyance at the interruption. Tig just grinned back, knowing what his effect on
Chibs was and having fun at his expense. Nancy shrugged and took another bite of her sandwich.

Tig gave her a pondering look. He glared at him, silently telling him to keep his mouth shut. But it
was Tig.

“You okay, doll?” Tig asked her. Nancy nodded as she stared at him.

“You check in with your kids?” He asked, as long as Tig joined them, might as well make
conversation.

“Yeah, they’re fine. Still hate my guts, but they’re fine. What the fuck was that about a venus fly
trap?”

“Your salvation, Alexander Emil Trager.” She said simply.

Tig’s eyes widening at her use of his given name.

“Emil?” He smirked at him. Tig sending him an annoyed roll of his eyes.

“I’d appreciate it if you didn’t go spreading that bit of information around.” Tig said leaning in
towards them with his request.

He just smirked with a glint in his eye, there was no fucking way he was letting that little pearl of
information go.

“Fuck.” Tig whined. “So you going to tell me what’s in my future?”

She recoiled back in her chair. The horror ripped at her.

Chibs and Tig looked to her worriedly at her reaction. Her eyes flicking around the room. “No.
You aren’t ready.” She resolved.

Tig’s eyes widened at her refusal.

“I have a right to know.” He demanded.

“Tig.” Chibs warned, his voice low.

“Right?” she hissed at Tig. “There is no right. If I hadn’t read you, you never would have known
anything. So don’t give me your ‘rights’. “ She heaved a breath, staring at Tig. “You aren’t ready.
Only way to learn is to experience it. You learned didn’t you from your screw-up with Donna,
didn’t you?”
Tig jerked, glancing back towards Opie. “God damn it. *Don’t* bring that up.”

“As guilty you felt, you fucking learned from that. Learned patience and waiting for all the information before acting.” She sent him a hard look. “You will be tested...so don’t fucking forget that lesson. You *do not* want the consequences if you fail again.” She shook her head at him.

She and Tig stared at each other. Tig still wanting to know what she got from reading him, she not willing to tell him. Fear of what he might do if she did, fear of what might happen if she didn’t. She knew though, Tig was not ready. He was still under Clay and Gemma’s influence. Had years of following their lead. She knew how hard it’s going to be for him to shake out of that.

Even with their incident with Lily and that trailer, she knew that Tig thought what she does is fun. Like going to a palm reader at a state fair. She didn’t like being made fun of. Life was hard enough for her and now Chibs. She didn’t want to entertain Tig just to satisfy his sick curiosity at their expense.

With her glare at Tig, he leaned forward, elbows on the table, his blue eyes staring at hers. She staring back in a silent contest of wills. The two of them ignored Chibs groan. “Tig, seriously, a staring contest? How the fuck old are you?”

Tig didn’t break his eye contact with her, just curled his lip in amusement.

Jax joined them at their table. His blond head swivelling between her and Tig’s staring contest.

“Everything okay?” He asked cautiously mixed with a bit of humor.

“Fine.” She said, never breaking eye contact with Tig.

“I was asking her what my future held. She claims to know what is coming for me. But she’s refusing to tell me.” Tig managed to continue to stare at her.

“Why?” Jax asked her curiously.

“Because some things can only be learned through experience. And whatever I tell him right now, he won’t believe me. Why waste my time when he still thinks that what I do is a joke.”

“I *never* said that.” Tig argued. Breaking eye contact, losing the staring contest. “Damn it.” He swore realizing he lost.

“You didn’t have to.” She said back to him.

“Jesus, you’re stubborn.” Tig huffed and stalked off to the pool table where Bobby and Happy were setting up a game.

Jax watched Tig storm off and looked back to her in surprise.

She played with her food and kept her mouth shut. And realized she was waiting to be hit. Talking back to Tig like that...talking back to the club members...it just wasn’t done. It made her nervous the longer Chibs and Jax stared at her.

“Why not tell him?” Jax asked.

She blinked at Jax, dropping her hand to her lap, running her napkin through her sore fingers.

“M ‘anam?” Chibs encouraged at her.
“I dreamed of Belfast. I’m glad you found Abel.” She changed the subject to prove a point. Jax jerking in his chair.

“I’m sorry you had to go there in the first place, but it made you into a stronger person. Showed you how much being a father truly means to you, the responsibility of being a father.” Leaning towards Jax, locking her eyes onto his.

“What you went through during all that, that experience, forced you to learn, to grow. Didn’t it? How could it not? It’s not something you learn out of a book or having someone lecture you about it. You live it. Everyday.”

Jax broke her gaze as she saw the affirmative answer in his eyes. She leaned back in her chair poking at her sandwich, wishing that she’d just kept her mouth shut.

“Just how much do you know of us?” Jax asked.

She sent him an annoyed look for his stupid question.

“Jesus.” Jax huffed. “Anything you don’t know?” He asked out of disbelief and shock, his voice tinged with condescension.

She broke Jax’s eye contact. “Yes. I don’t know why I can do what I do. I don’t know why Chibs is the only person I don’t read. I don’t know why Chibs is on a hair-trigger. And the sad thing is, I don’t think we’ll ever know.”

“Hey, no matter what, we’ll get through this.” Chibs pressed a kiss to her temple.

She gave him a tight smile. ‘I’ll go pack.” She quickly released Chibs hand and was halfway across the room before they could react.

He sighed as he noted that Nancy barely finished half her lunch. He rubbed at his forehead as his headache started building again.

Jax watched his friend, seeing how he was growing more uncomfortable by the second. “Fuck, you really can’t be apart from her, can you?”

“No.” He said heavily. “Jax, I was never one for any of this psychic crap. But what if she’s meant to be here, meant to be part of the club. And, fuck, I feel like beating the crap out of you right now, because you made her feel like shit.”

Jax eyed him warily. “This information of what you did for us..for me...fuck...for Abel...in Belfast. I had no idea.”

“You weren’t meant to know all that. No one is supposed to know all that.”

“Fiona?”

“What part of ‘no one’ do ye’ not understand?” He questioned Jax, annoyed that Jax dared bring this up.

“How did Jimmy get you jammed up? Figure Kellen would have stepped up and kept it all from happening.”

Sending Jax a glare for trying to dig for more history. History he had no right of knowing. It was his and no one else’s. “It don’t matter anymore, he’s dead.”
Jax shifted in his chair, frustrated. “I feel like I don’t know you anymore. I had no idea that it was you that forced the Kings and Kellen to sit down with us in Belfast. To make that deal. Just so we’d get Abel back. How? I hardly didn’t see you take off on your own? All that time, I remember you with the club chasing down Jimmy or with Fi and your kid.”

He sat back and took a breath to calm down. Telling himself that Jax didn’t mean it.

“There was more going on with the Army than what we were dealing with, as a club and your boy. I was doing my job for the club and my sacred duty. What the hell do you care? You got your son back, rightfully so. The club has access to the Army’s warehouse as payment for the wrong they’ve done to the club. And got Fi and Kerrianne safe from that rat-bastard Jimmy. You don’t know the extent of the rot that had to be cut out.”

“You mean Sambel…”

He wanted to slap Jax upside the head sometimes. He could be so dense. “I meant the Army. The club handled Sambel all on their own.”

“Was it you who told Kellen to sacrifice his life for Abel in the exchange?” Jax dared to ask.

He flashed his dark eyes at Jax. Refusing to answer that question. But Jackie got an answer anyway.

“Like I said, Abel was only one thing out of many that I had to take care of over there. Barely got any fucking sleep the entire time. The Army was fucking falling apart. Fi told me some of the shite that was going on. All the subterfuge she had to do behind Jimmy’s back just to keep things from spilling out into the streets worse than it was. My other contacts, filled me in more besides what Fi knew. It was a right fucking mess.”

“But Fiona doesn’t know about you?”

“No. And she won’t. Look, I’m the same man you’ve always known. I’m loyal to the club. Consider you like my own son. But...I have a history beyond this club. I have a life beyond this club, always will til the day I die.”

He shook off Jax's sorrowful expression, running a hand through his hair. “Whatever is happening to me and Nancy, it’s between us. We’re barely here and haven’t had a chance to catch our fucking breaths. Much less figure out what is going on between us. And when Tig told me about the muling for the cartel…”

He lit a cigarette as he glared at Jax.

“I wanted to turn the other direction and never come back here. I set up the club with the Irish guns and Clay manages to drag muling into this? That you are supporting it? I question the direction of this club. It was only because of Nancy telling me we had to come back that we’re here. And if Tig tried to stop us...I’d’ve put him down. Brother or not. You lot should be thanking her for convincing me to come back. Yet, all we get is threats and insults.”

“Chibs, you know this is so completely out of left field. We’re all trying to wrap our head around her. I agree she can’t go back. But I don’t know if we can trust her with all the stuff we do, especially right now with the cartel. Things are going to get heavy around here. I haven’t even told Tara all the details yet.”

“Jackie, Nancy already knows. I think she knows a shite ton more than she’s letting on. There’s something coming. Just from her reaction in reading Tig. Fire and blood. Tig tried to press her for
details of what she meant. But she’s had ten years of being beaten bloody...of people ignoring her warnings. She’s fucking scared to death of being here. Yet, she was the one that convinced me to come back. I’m not liking what I’m seeing and hearing at the table. Clay challenging her. Wanting her to read Happy. That’s a fucking threat. You and I both know what Happy does for the club.”

“Tig is just as bloody as Happy. If not more twisted.” Jax agreed gravely.

“I know. She knows about Tig killing Donna. I told her the story on the ride back, but she’s read Tig. She knows it. Reminded Tig what he did. Told him he would be tested again.”

“Fire and blood.” Jax said, connecting the dots.

“Aye.” He stood up. “She said a venus fly trap is Tig’s salvation, I think she just might be the salvation for this club. What the fuck are you thinking with this muling for the cartel? We going to be cooking and dealing next? What the fuck are we doing? Where did our truth go?”

Jax stared up at him. “We need the money.”

He froze at that, staring at Jax like he’d never known him before.

“Money from the guns wasn’t enough for you? You’re a good VP, Jackie. A good man...I’ll hear you out on all this. But what I know and heard so far...you and Clay both have your fucking heads up your asses.”

He stalked back to the apartment, mentally swearing at Jax for being an idiot.

Walking into the apartment he saw their bags were packed up and Nancy was curled up on the bed waiting for him. He eased in next to her. Turning to face her, his arms around her, pulling her into his body.

“Sorry. I don’t know why I did that. I know he’s the VP...your boss. Sorry. God, I even challenged Clay. What the hell is the matter with me?” She cried softly into his shoulder.

“You know more than you’ve been telling me, don't ye?” His hand stroking down her back.

“God, the crap he gets into. The crap he allows himself to get into.” She sighed futilely. “And I tried, I tried to not fall in him. I know I’m a problem for you in the club. It’s why I spoke to Jax the way I did. Thought if we could convince him, it would help convince the other guys. And you’re probably mad at me for saying things out of turn or something, breaking some ‘old lady’ rule.”

He crooned to her, soothing her with his voice. Running his hands over her back and arms. His hand moving to her cheek. Thumb sweeping at her tears, their eyes connecting. “You’re okay, love. I’m not mad. I talked to Jax after you left. Gave him some words to think on.”

“What did you say?” She asked nervously.

“Thought that you are meant to be here. Meant to help us. Help the club. That you may be our salvation. Just as a carnivorous plant is to Tig.” Chibs grinned at her. “I’m not mad at you. You did nothing wrong. You bring out truth. And with this lot...it’s been a fucking long time they’ve seen anything remotely looking like truth.”

“You didn’t.” She said with a crushed look.

“I did. The club is wading into shit they have no idea they are getting into. And the idiot I am, I
helped them get there.’’

“It’s not your fault about the muling. You only helped set up the guns. I’m not that thrilled about that either. But I’m new...to all this.”

“I want you to keep challenging me and everyone.”

“What? Why? Thought you’d want me to lay low and sort of let everyone get used to me before going ‘full-on’ weird me-ness.” She huffed, struggling to find the words to express herself.

He grinned at her with an amused glint in his eyes. She rolled her eyes at his reaction to her terminology.

“I figure if we stay here, they need to know the Mt. Everest of intelligence and ethical morals that is you. And you’re not weird. Some of these idiots, they’re more weird than you could ever be. Jesus, you read Tig. I shouldn’t have to tell ye’ about weird. Plus, the way the club runs, us having votes. We debate and try to pick apart our own ideas on things. Supposed to make us better. But I think, we’ve all gone blind to seeing into these deals lately, it’s all familiar. Even me over the years, recognized it at church, how everyone assumed who I was. And part of that was me, letting them think that. With you…” he held her tighter “...I can’t wait to hear you argue with the boys of their schemes. I love strong women. Stand up for what is best for everyone. Don’t you dare think I want you to be some doormat. That’s not you. Even back home, everyone tried to stifle who you are. It’s impossible, you can’t help be who you are. I’ve seen you in the dreams, taking abuse to protect others when they couldn’t. Challenging your teachers. You had a shit life, it could have broken you. But it only made you stronger and wiser than anyone around ye’.”

“Just wish I knew what the hell was happening to us. It scares me. And with you on hyper-alert. Not even twenty-four hours and you threatened Clay twice and Juice once. Gemma’s got a bug up her butt. Told off Jax. Where does it go? Or end?”

“I know. Me, too. But we can’t do nothing about it right now.”

She sighed, recognizing that he was right on that.

“You ready to get out of here?” He asked.

She nodded.

He got up and helped her up. She stumbled into him and he automatically held onto her, making sure she had her feet. But he looked to her face and fell for her all over again. He knew he didn't deserve such innocence or devotion. But the gods decided that she was his. And he was going to do his best to make sure he didn’t kick that gift-horse in the mouth.

They stood swaying in each other's embrace, she tilted her head slightly and he followed, their lips finding the others. Their kiss was as intense as the first.

Heavy metal music started up in the bar. He swore as he broke the kiss in annoyance at the outside world interrupting them. “Come on love. Let’s get out of here.”

He grabbed their bags and linked hands with her. Leading her out, the guys in the clubhouse staring after them, at her.

Juice moving in front of them, he snarled at him for getting in his way. Juice bobbed his head.

“Hey man, I just wanted to say sorry again for what I said earlier. Really, I’m sorry.”
“I know ye’ are, Juicey.” He said. “Don’t do it again.” He stressed as he pulled her around Juice protectively and out the door.

The light bouncing brightly off the concrete parking lot, making her blink as she grabbed at her sunglasses. Music blasting out from the garage drew her attention.

She saw Jax and Opie at one of the bays talking with some hand and arm waves, punctuating whatever it was they were talking about.

Gemma and Clay were in the doorway of the garage office, watching her and Chib’s move to his bike. Chibs strapping their bags on quickly.

“Come on.” He said with a kiss. “Let’s get some groceries and go home. Sleep for twenty-four hours.”

She nodded with a small smile. “Sounds like a plan.”

He swung on his bike, glancing back at her as she wrestled with her chinstrap of her helmet. “Darling, I’ve got nothing but good plans.” He said proudly.

She stifled her laugh as she climbed on easily behind him. “I know you do.” She appeased his ego.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
King’s Sword = Rí Claíomh
Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

Clay needs help.

Uncomfortably aware of how vulnerable his neck felt...along with his pride...he walked out of the clubhouse. Heading for the garage office where Gemma should be. The guys all questioning Tig with the details that the gash wrote down as proof of her 'reading' of him. Tig confirmed everything she wrote and saw how everyone was freaked out by her and Chibs. Fucking nightmare is what it is.

He’d never seen Chibs move that fast. The shock of hearing Chibs admit that it was he that forced the Kings to sit down with them. Negotiate for Abel...for the club to gain access to their warehouse. To move the club up as the leader in gun running up and down the west coast. He had no idea that it was all Chibs.

His worry went on overdrive when Chibs threatened to take it all away, too. Fuck. That goddamn bitch. She twisted Chibs into something that he didn’t think he had any control over anymore. Which could be bad. Very bad. He had a lot of plans for this club. And he didn’t need one of his member go completely off the reservation because of some pussy.

He knew Chibs would be a hard sell with the muling but he had hopes that he would see the need. But this new gash was putting a major wrinkle in his plans. Gemma was already on high alert with this stupid note she found from JT’s gash.

Focus on the deal. Nail that down and then he can rest easy, set for the rest of his life. To get that to happen, they needed Chibs on board. He mulled over his options as he walked. They needed more intel. That was clear. He’d already tasked Juice to find more about this gash.

“Get out, Chucky.” He ordered.

Chucky closed the door behind him. Gemma sat back in her chair. The desk overflowing with piles of papers and folders.

He sighed and shifted a pile over so he could hitch his hip on the desk.

“What the hell happen with Chibs and that gash of his?” Gemma asked. “I don’t like her Clay. I can tell she’s trouble. Got Chibs so spun out, he threatened you in front of everyone! You gotta nail Chibs down hard. You can’t let him get away with threatening you like that.”

He winced as Gemma started interrogating him. Telling him shit he already knew.

“I know. I know. Christ. I don’t like her either. Don’t like how she’s affecting Chibs. But we have to be careful dealing with him right now.”

Gemma’s shoulders dropping, and he braced himself as he recognized the signs that she had to tell him something that she did.

“I searched through their stuff in the apartment.”
“Did you find anything?” He asked, not liking that Gemma took it upon herself to dig into things without asking him beforehand. But maybe she found something he could use.

“He bought her new clothes…”

He rolled his eyes at that, like buying clothes was a federal offense. “Anything else?”

“Found some legal shit in one of their bags.”

“Legal shit? What kind?” He perked up.

“I’m not sure...Didn’t have a lot of time to sit down and study it. Looked like it was some kind of will or something. It was thick. Not like the wills we have.”

He sighed again, wondering what that was about. Chibs didn’t say anything about any legal shit that this gash might be embroiled in.

“Like I said, I didn’t have time to read it. Heard the gash screaming her head off and had to hustle out of there before anyone found me.” Gemma explained further. “This is bad, I can feel it.” She shook her head.

He could see her ramping up to do something that’ll set fire to shit. And he didn’t have the time to deal with whatever fallout would happen when she got up in arms. Especially in things that she shouldn’t be involved in. This deal was too delicate for her to ruin because she thought she knew better. And the deal would fall apart if he or Gemma pushed Chibs or his gash to the breaking point.

“Calm down. You gotta get off your high gear. We won’t be able to get Chibs to do what we want if you push and set fires. You’ll only push Chibs away. And we need him. We can’t have Chibs jumping out on the club.”

“I know that. But the way you’re talking...what aren’t you telling me?” She narrowed her eyes at him suspiciously.

He sighed. “You don’t know Chibs’ history back when he was in the Army. He is a dangerous man. He has ties to the Irish...ties that can end our relationship with them. He can kill our gun supply with one phone call.”

“What are you talking about? You and JT set that up.”

“No. It was Chibs and JT.” He frowned, hating that. He had his hand in it, but JT and Chibs were thick as thieves talking with Kellen back then.

“Our trip to Belfast...it was Chibs that brought the Kings and Kellen to the table. Opened their warehouse to us. To pick up the slack when he told them to cut Jimmy out. To get Abel back. No matter the cost.”


Clay leaned into Gemma. “This doesn’t go any further. I had a knife at my throat for even daring to talk about what Chibs is.”

“Okay…” Gemma gave him an uncertain look.

“Chibs is known as the Rithe Cláíomh. The King’s Sword. It was back when he joined with the
Army. He’s been tapped by Kellen in some cryptic ceremony, given the full authority to kill anyone in the Army who stepped out of line. The Kings themselves weren’t safe from him. Not even Kellen.” He paused. “It was Chibs who told Kellen to sacrifice his life in the exchange for Abel.”

“Oh my God.”

“JT was the only one around here that knew enough Gaelic to understand some of what Chibs was hallucinating when he came here. And JT only told me, Bobby and Piney only a little of what he was talking about. The way Chibs has been acting lately, Tig telling us some shit that went on while they were out...the three of us just now put together the pieces of what we knew.”

“Are you understanding what I’m saying...without Chibs...we wouldn’t have gotten Abel back. Wouldn’t have this opportunity with the guns. This club depends on those guns. Chibs is the one that forced the Kings and Kellen to make that deal with us, I didn’t know about it until today. Nobody knew.”

“I...how...Chibs barely left the guys. Or he was with Fiona and Kerrianne.”

“Not sure, had to be going out after dark. Doesn’t matter. But this girl he’s obsessed with, she’s claiming she’s psychic. That Chibs is the only person who she doesn’t read.”

“Psychic?” Gem’s brows shot up, as she stared at him in disbelief. Frowning at him like he lost his mind. “There’s no such thing. Are you off your meds or something? I can’t believe you would fall for that.”

“Gem...I had her prove it by reading Tig. She wrote down some facts that Tig said were true. Shit that he wouldn’t have told anyone.”

“Are you saying you believe her?”

“It doesn’t matter if I believe or not. What matters is that Chibs does. I can’t have Chibs pissed off to the point that he calls the Irish and kills this deal we have with them. If that deal falls apart, it will kill this club.”

“So what are we supposed to do?”

“We need more information about this gash. Time to talk to Chibs without her around. Try and convince him that this deal is too important to fuck around with. Time for me to get hold of Galen and see what they know about Chibs. How much weight he really holds.”

He watched Gemma process what he told her.

“Okay. We’ll do a potluck...tomorrow night. It’ll be a welcome home for Chibs and Tig. I’ll have her in the kitchen helping out. While she’s there, you can talk to Chibs.”

“That’ll work.” He nodded.

“Has Jax mentioned anything about the letters?” She asked again.

He mentally rolled his eyes at Gem’s ability to never let anything go. Especially shit regarding JT and Jax. “No. We’ve been busy setting up this deal and figuring out Chibs and this gash. I don’t think its an issue. We would have known if he’s read any letters. Leave it alone. I have to call Galen.”
He got up and moved towards the door. Opening it, he saw Chibs at his bike with the girl. Chibs strapping his bags on. Gemma coming up behind him and watched as Chibs and the girl took off out of the lot.

Shooting Gemma a look to get on with her plans for the dinner, he stepped out and walked back to the clubhouse to get hold of Galen. Hopefully, soon, things will calm down and everything will fall in line. The money rolling in once the routes and schedules are set. And he couldn’t wait for that to happen. His time of scraping by will be at an end with this deal. Nothing and no one is going to get in his way over this deal.
Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

First, thank you for reading this story. I find it incredible how many have read this. Especially, since it's my first that I'm posting. So thank you.

Second, school is going to be coming up in a couple of weeks. So posting chapters might slow down.

This chapter is more of Chibs and Nancy settling in. I don't want to spoil it for you...enjoy.

They rode up a quiet, tree-lined street and pulled into a yellow, ranch-style house. That was at the end of a windy, tar-and-gravel covered road. There weren’t any sidewalks, the lawns stretching completely out to the edge of the road. You’d have to get back on the street to go to the neighbor’s house, where the rest of the houses were set closer together. The house was set back from the street. From the dreams, she guessed he had roughly three-quarter to an acre of land that his house sat on.

There was a blue pickup truck in the drive. “You have a truck?” She asked, taking off her helmet.

“Aye. Don’t drive it much.” He replied as he started unloading their bags and groceries from the storage of the bike.

Shopping with Chibs was an adventure. He grabbed up a plastic basket and moved with single-minded purpose through the store. Hitting nearly every section the store offered. Fresh fruit, vegetables, the deli counter for lunch meats and cheeses. Steaks and salmon from the meat counter. Chocolate candy for her. She protesting the addition but, he wouldn’t hear of it. They were in the dairy section now, milk and now a dozen eggs added.

“Why not get a cart?” She asked as he stuffed a carton of eggs on its end to fit, anxiously waiting to see if the top of the carton was going to unhinge. The breakage factor was fairly high in her estimation. But he was able to nestle the carton just so, that the top held in place.

“This is just to hold us over a couple of days. We don’t have much room on the bike.”

“Two days? This is a lot for two days…” She eyed the amount of food he was able to cram into the tiny basket.

Shaking his head. “M ‘anam, don’t worry about it. Come on.”

He led her around to the frozen food section and stopped in front of the ice creams.

She was about to protest getting ice cream when he simply gave her a daring glare. Huffing and crossing her arms she watched as his eyes scanning their options. Opening the door and taking a pint of mint chocolate chip ice cream out and plopping it in the last remaining spot left in the overflowing basket. She could’ve swore she saw the plastic handles bend under the weight of the food. Dear God.
“Think you got enough?” She asked. "I think there's still some canned goods that you might have missed."

He grinned and took her hand again. “Not even close.” Leaning in for a quick kiss. Halting her amused snort.

They checked out and she watched the master at work, organizing their groceries in their packs. The tops of their bags barely able to close properly when he was done. “See...Told ya’.” He grinned at her proudly for his accomplishment.

“I stand corrected, sir.” She joked back to him swinging on behind him.

Looking between the truck and the bike. “If you had the truck, why did you ride the bike to find me? With the weather, wouldn’t it make more sense. Even better, why not get on a plane?” She asked as they unloaded the bike and walked to the front door. Quickly grabbing the bag of groceries he was struggling with and unlock the front door at the same time.

He grunted and managed to get the door open a moment later.

Stepping inside, she followed him.

He dumped his load of bags on the floor and quickly took the bags from hers.

“Honestly, I didn’t even think of it. Soon as I knew where your school was, I was packed, told the boys I was heading out. Jax and Clay foisted Tig on me. We were on the road soon after.”

He went into the kitchen with the groceries and tucked the food away quickly. Shaking his head in thought. “Christ, if we had to ride in the truck together, I’d have killed him. He would be driving me up the wall with his incessant chattering. Remember, Tig’s on release. Soon as he tried to buy a ticket for a plane, he’d be kicked off before he even step foot at the airport. And, well, its just second nature riding the bike.” He shrugged as he walked up to her, pulling her into his arms. Looking deep in her eyes.

“Hmmm…” He gave her a quirky grin.

“What?” She asked suddenly nervous. “Did I do something wrong?” Her hands twisting in front of her.

He sighed deeply and pulled her closer. Instantly regretful for making her nervous. “Sorry, mo ghaol. Just realized that maybe I should have carried you over the threshold or something.” He admitted.

Her eyebrows popped up in surprise, her hands coming around his waist. Her body relaxing at what he was talking about. “You already carried me over the threshold...several times. Those first nights on the road, carrying me into the motel rooms.”

Shaking his head at her, his eyes twinkling in amusement. “Nope, doesn’t count.” He argued. Swiftly picking her up and walking back to the front door.

Quickly grabbed onto him as she woofed out with his sudden move. “God...you are insane.” She laughed as he stepped back outside and twisted around only to step right back in.

Chuckling at his own silliness he was so fucking happy to be home finally. Safe in his arms. In his home. His heel catching the door, kicking it closed.
“Okay, I know you probably know the layout here, but this is the entertainment room. All my books and record collection are in here. You’re welcome to partake. Just make sure you put the records back where you found them. I’ve got a whole system for them, I’ll show you later. Large screen TV where we will be relaxing at the end of a long day. Working on getting you up to speed on the shows and movies on the list.”

She expected him to set her back down on her feet, but he kept hold of her. Moving into the kitchen. “This is the kitchen. Few months ago, I put in new appliances and had the cabinets redone. Granite countertops, as you can see.”

She nodded, “Yes. It’s very nice. You can put me down now.”

“Nope…” He stepped into the sun room. “Here, you’ll note the skylights and the vast view of the patio and backyard. Will eat in here if the weather is disagreeable.”

She tucked her face into his neck, she smiled into the curve of his neck. Feeling him shudder, his voice wobble a little at what she was doing. But he managed to keep up his tour guide persona. His warm, spicy scent filled her senses, as he held her...introducing her officially to his house. His home. Their home now. His voice becoming background noise as she clutched at him tighter. Never wanting to let him go. Thankful for him. Thankful that he was opening his home and life to her. Promising to herself to never take this man for granted. What he’s done for her, she could never repay. Only hope to bring him the same amount of peace and happiness that he’s given to her.

He showed her the patio and large backyard. The edge of his property lined with large bushes and trees. There was areas that she could tell were meant for flower beds or garden, but he hadn’t gotten around to planting anything. He had installed a massive built-in grill. A firepit with a seating area on the other end of the large patio. A round picnic table and chairs were set near the grill and the sliding door back into the house.

Back in the house, he showed her the guest bath, his office, and the three guest bedrooms offshooting from the main hall each with their own bathrooms. To finally the master bedroom suite. His initial humor dying down slightly as they came into this room.

“I just redid the tiles and stuff in the bath.”

“It’s incredible. Did you do all this by yourself?” She asked looking around, noting the skylight above the tub along with a picture window looking out over the side yard. The yard large enough that nobody could see in unless they were right outside the window. A small closet with mirrored, bi-fold doors were along one short wall. The doors weren’t shut all the way and she could see that he stored towels and supplies in there.

“Most of it. When I couldn’t sleep, I’d be in here tiling. Had the cabinets done along with the granite installation by tradesmen. Put in new loo and tub. Know about plumbing and electrical enough to get me into trouble and back.” He shrugged.

He turned and went back to the bedroom. One wall was covered in closet doors. He sat down on the king-sized bed. The duvet a midnight blue with matching shades for the sheets and pillow cases. Skylights and picture windows opened the room to the backyard and sky above. “Haven’t gotten around to putting up curtains.” He kept talking, not quite meeting her eyes.

She shifted so her knees straddled his hips, her arms looping loosely around his shoulders and neck. His hands dropping to her hips, helping hold her steady.
“You can decorate how you want. I don’t mind. I’ll clear out half the closet for you, some room in the dresser.” Trailing his speech to a halt.

She ran a hand along his cheek and he shivered at her touch, his warm brown eyes meeting hers. She saw he was nervous.

“Hi.” She said with a soft smile. Pressing her forehead to his, their eyes locked.

His eyes flared in recognition giving her a quick smile back.

“Hi, back.” He replied back easily.

Their own little moment of remembrance to when they first spoke to each other.

She felt him relax under her hands. “I love your home. And I don’t need so much room. I’ve got what I need...right here in my arms.” She reassured him. His hands slid to her waist, locking around her back.

“It’s your home too now.” He said. “I want you to make this place your own. I’ve been meaning to fix up the carpets and paint the walls.”

She shook her head at him, awed by how much he wanted her in his life. It humbled her how deeply he felt.

“It’s your home, too. Our home. We’ll work on it together. There’s no rush.”

“Aye. I like that idea.” He said in relief that she wasn’t complaining he hadn’t completely fixed up the house for her.

They breathed and took the moment to appreciate their presence in each other’s arms. She felt a strange tension build inside her, between them. The reality that she was here in his bedroom.

“I know on the road and especially when you found me...I wasn’t very healthy and I know I’m not pretty.” She ducked her head, her long hair hiding the scar across her cheek.

“Don’t say that. You’re beautiful. Anyone who says otherwise are fucking idiots.” He said harshly, brushing her hair back, making her look into his eyes. “And your weight is coming back on. You’ll keep getting better, especially since we’re home now. Not having to get up at the crack of dawn and hit the road all day on the bike.” His hand waving, punctuating his words.

She bit her lip...still having a hard time letting go of the hateful words she’d learned to hear and bury from her father, Claire, and peers. She sighed and let go of that issue for the moment at least.

“I know. But all this time, sleeping in the same bed...yet never...God, why is this so hard to talk about...” She complained to herself.

She saw the flare of knowledge of what she was leading to. “Mo gràidh...no...it’s fine. I don’t expect us to have sex now that we’re home. You’re still healing, I don’t want you to feel the pressure of that until you’re ready. Physically, mentally, emotionally.”

“But I want that...the way I feel when we kiss and touch each other...I want that.” Her hands gripping him harder at how much this meant to her.

He sighed deeply, his hand coming to her cheek. “I want it, too. I feel it, too. But I know...you aren’t ready yet. And I don’t want you to force yourself...to try and do something that you aren’t
ready for. You hear me? I couldn’t live with myself if you did that.”

She teared up at that. “I just…”

“Hey...you’re okay, lass. It’s okay. It’ll happen when it’s meant to happen. And I know...when it does...it’ll be perfect. So don’t be fashing yourself over it.” He ran his thumbs over her cheeks, swiping away her tears of frustration. Smiling at her as she pulled herself together. Her body relaxing once more as they came to an understanding.

“Besides, I’m probably more nervous than you are. Whatever it is between us, its strong and so pure...I don’t want to mess this up.”

She gave a small huff. “I hardly believe that. You know what you’re doing. I’m new to all this. Except what I saw in reading people...I don’t think I could do all that. I’ve seen you with those women, even though I looked away…”

“Okay...first of all, those women...they’re all croweaters or porn stars. They use their bodies all the time like that. For money or protection of the club.”

She frowned at that.

“Hey, it’s the life…and they all know the deal when they start hanging around the club.” He explained. “You’re not one of them...you’d never be one of them…”

“I don’t like it. Seeing that going on. And passing it off as the life...that doesn’t fly with me.”

“Look, we can talk about this more later. But it is what it is. And like I said, you aren’t one of them. I don’t want you to become like them. I don’t. You’re my old lady. My queen. Nobody will touch you. And what goes on between us...when it happens...it’s between us alone. I don’t know what things you’re worried about as far as the act itself...we can talk about it. I won’t do anything that you don’t want to do. I know you’re a virgin. I knew the moment I first kissed you on that cafeteria floor. And I liked it. No...I loved it. To be your first...Christ...you have no idea…” He huffed, catching her blush.

“You read Tig...that asshole at the bar...God knows who else and what shit was going on in their heads...I’m not into any violent shit. I’m not out for humiliating or hurting anyone to get off. I don’t like tying anyone up, having them unable to protect themselves. You understand what I’m saying?”

He checked her, seeing her listen to him.

“I’m all about the pleasure. The rush...the high of making my partner find their own pleasure...finding it again and as many times possible. I want you to be free with me. Be comfortable in your own skin...comfortable with my body. Building that kind of trust...it takes time. And I love simply holding your hand. Kissing you …” He pressed a kiss to the slope of her neck.

She gasped at the sensation.

“Hearing you gasp at what I’m doing that drives you to make that sound. To keep doing it to keep hearing it. It’s exploring...it takes time. We have the time, mo ghaol. We have all the time in the world. So don’t put that pressure on yourself. It’ll kill me to think that you felt you had to have sex with me out of some obligation. Okay?”

She nodded, “Yeah. Okay. Sorry, just feels like we warp-sped into a place that was past the whole initial sex part of our relationship. Being on the road, like you said, we had to keep moving. Tig waiting to burst in at the most inopportune times. Now we’re here...talking about
decorating...sitting on your bed. Alone finally. I realized we hadn’t had the talk.”

He ran a hand down her hair to settle at her hip. “I know. I felt it too. I probably should have brought it up before, but like you said...it’s not something to talk about when we weren’t alone. And Tig’s propensity to chatter off, no telling what he’d be saying to whom about us.”

She grinned at his aggrieved tone. “He’s just very curious about certain things.”

Rolling his eyes, he fell back onto the bed with a groan. She falling with him, twisting so that she wasn’t laying on top of him. “Can we just make it a rule that we don’t talk about Tig and his curiosities while we’re in this bed? Please?” He begged.

She huffed a laugh at his aggrieved tone. “Yes.”

“God, I’m so fucking tired.”

She hummed her agreement.

“Come here.” He said as he moved up higher on the bed. Tossing his boots off. She followed suit, the boots making a heavy thud to the carpeted floor.

Groaning herself as she nestled herself in his arms. She should probably insist on unpacking their clothes but she was tired herself. And after their conversation, she just wanted to be close to him. Take the moment to let things settle before diving into figuring out how to live together.

He woke with Nancy tucked into him, their legs twining, he holding her at his side. Her soft breath fanning across his chest. He yawned and enjoyed his pain-free state. Remembering their bags were still in the front hall, glancing at the clock they’d gotten a couple of hours of sleep.

Growing more alert, he recalled their conversation over having sex. The talk...as Nancy put it. God, she was so cute. But she had a point to bring it up. On the ride, they didn’t talk about it. The need to get home and help her survive the ride utmost in his mind. He didn’t want to pressure her at all. Told her earlier that he was willing to wait as long as it took.

She probably seen and felt things that she shouldn’t have had to. And her inability to touch or be touched all these years pushed her to the corner of growing up in a normal teenage life; forced to watch from the fringe. Going on dates and having fun with boyfriends her own age, was never in the cards for her.

Instead, she was ridiculed and made a joke amongst her shithole classmates. And that bastard jacking off on her, threatening rape. Fuck, it was rape what that asshole did. Using her pain for his own sick amusement. It was no wonder she was so fucking nervous.

He remembered his own teen years when he was a brash lad, wild and testing the boundaries, pushing every rule and everyone as far as he could. Even with Fiona, the two of them were both bright and bold. She pushed him for more, faster than he ever dared. And he certainly wasn’t inexperienced when he and Fi hooked up. It was new and exciting for him having her take the lead in their relationship. Even getting married, that was all Fiona’s idea.

After he was forced out of Belfast, he was bereft with the loss of Fi and Kerrianne. The years passed and from the diminishing number of letters and phone calls, Fiona was focussed on raising their daughter. She didn’t have time to worry about him.

Their love cooled and with the ocean separating them it was inevitable that they grew apart to the
point they were pretty much strangers. That last time he and Fi hooked up, he sighed, it wasn’t like he thought it would be. The sex was satisfying, but didn’t have the heat he always associated with the two of them. No, they were over. There was no going back to try and rekindle their marriage.

He moved on after awhile, taking advantage of the croweaters that he fancied at the time. Croweaters were more than willing to spread their legs for him as a Son. One or two tried to vie for a more permanent relationship, but the easy way they gave themselves to him, turned him off.

Realizing, that it didn’t matter to them that they were sleeping with him or one of his other brothers. And the expectation of having to support them, he knew he would if circumstances played out, but he hated how the girls just wanted to land a man to take care of them.

So he kept himself a bachelor; making damned sure he used protection. Enjoying the trysts that he did engage in as an activity in of itself. Never letting it get more serious. Making sure that his partners knew from the get go, that there was no future for them.

But Nancy, he mused, she was shy and constantly doubts herself. Afraid of stepping over the lines. She was the complete opposite of Fiona’s confidence and the croweaters constant lookout for a man. Her focus had been staying fucking alive; a true survivor.

Gently brushing her hair from her face, she sighed at his touch. He likes she doesn’t press for more, yet. She wants to, he knows. But he knows that she isn’t ready yet. She has her own mind and ideas, lines that she does her hardest to not cross.

He wants to romance her, maybe take her on a few dates. He tried to do that for her on the ride home, but with the schedule...all he could do was take her out for breakfast or dinner without Tig around. She deserves to have him run through some hoops. Her birthday is coming up, maybe he can plan something for that. Depends on what’s going on with the club.

He had a feeling that the club was in dire need of her. If only they could find a way to be apart without having the headaches. He didn’t mind having her around. He liked it actually. Felt like he’d found his other half. That the two of them were one soul.

The guys, he was sure, were laughing their asses off at his predicament and making bets on their relationship. But he couldn’t get tied up with all that. He knew it was all in good fun. He’d done it to the others when they went moony over some girl.

Rubbing his hands over his face, fuck, enough of this. He needed to get their laundry going and get dinner started. She was still thin, but with regular meals and a better variety of food, she was starting to fill out. Her collarbones weren’t as prominent as when he first saw her two weeks ago. He still could feel her spine and ribs too easily that made him worry still.

She groaned as her head was squeezing her brain. Turning over, she blinked at the clock sitting on the bedside table in front of her. It was six twelve and it took her a minute to figure out if it was six pm or six am. By the setting sun through the large picture window, it had to be six pm. She heard the toilet flush and the water run in the bathroom.

Yawning she stretched and arched her back out. Feeling odd, sleeping so heavily in her clothes on top of the bed. Odder still, sleeping the afternoon away. This was a really comfortable bed. Much better than the motel beds and the apartment bed at the clubhouse she decided.

Chibs stepped out of the bath and he grinned down at her. He sat down next to her, leaning down for a kiss. Her hand finding his, fingers twining as their headaches drew back.
“You hungry? I’ve got the grill heating up.” He asked when he pulled back from their kiss. She whining a little as the kiss ended.

“No, just tired.” She caught his concerned look. “Sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. You’ll see, one day, your stomach will wake up and I won’t keep asking you.”

“Yeah, okay.” She said with a sigh, sitting up.

He pulled out a joint from his shirt pocket, lit it, handing it to her. “Here.”

She pulled in a drag from the joint. Confused she looked closer at the joint. It tasted different. Smoother. Breathing out the smoke, she looked up at him. “What is this?”

“Better quality weed I had stored away. Not that crap Tig was providing us on the ride back. Come on. I gotta get the steaks on the grill.” He said, standing up.

Getting up herself, she looked woozily up at him. “Shit, that’s strong.”

He grinned shaking his head at her. “Lightweight.” He teased.

Rolling her eyes, she waved him off. “I’ll meet you in the kitchen.” Escaping into the bathroom to take care of her needs. She noticed that her toothbrush was in the holder next to his. Her comb on the vanity. He unpacked already. Jesus, she was out. She didn’t hear him.

Rubbing at her eyes, she wandered into the kitchen, the bluesy music from his massive stereo set was softly filling the house. He came back in from the patio. Handing her the joint again. “Just put the steaks on.” He informed. "I unpacked and tossed our laundry in the washing machine.”

“How long have you been up?” She asked astonished.

“Only about a half-hour before you woke up.” He shrugged. “We’ll have to make a run to some stores, get you some more clothes. I hadn’t really realized how little you have in the way of clothes.” He shook his head in thought as he moved around the kitchen.

“How did you manage your headache if you’d been up that long?” She asked confused.

“I didn’t. Made pitstops, held your hand.” He shrugged.

She didn’t know whether to be annoyed that he was up and around doing things while she was zonked out, or that they still had to seek each other out just to deal with their headaches.

“Anything I can help with?” She asked, moving closer to where he was working cutting up a bell pepper for a salad.

“Sure, grab a couple of plates and silverware from over there.” His head tilting over in the direction of the drawers and cabinets by the dishwasher.

Flipping open the upper cabinets, she found where the plates were stored. Same with the drawers in the lower cabinets. Chibs went out to the grill to check on the steaks. She kept exploring to familiarize herself where he’d put things.

Opening the last drawer she froze at what she found in it. It was a junk drawer, filled with the odd tool, kitchen gadget, batteries, and a gun.

He walked back in, noticing her staring down at the drawer. Coming up next to her, he saw what
had her attention.

She looked up at him. Running his hand across her shoulders, pulling her into a half-hug. “I’ll show you where the weapons are kept. We’ll have to get you out on the range and teach you how to shoot.”

“I don’t know if I could ever fire a gun.”

He gave her a grave look. “I hope to God that you don’t ever have to. But there are guns and knives in the house and the clubhouse. Every Son has a stash of weapons. You’re going to be around us, you need to know the basics, at least. Tara, Jax’s old lady, she’s a surgeon and she knows how to fire a gun. I’ll feel better if you know what you’re doing in case you need it. But I’ll do my best to make sure you don’t ever have to.”

“Okay. Let’s eat.” Shutting the drawer, shutting the topic down for now.

They sat at the picnic table on the patio, plates filled with steak and salad. Chibs setting down a couple of glasses of cold beer for them to drink. She was determined to eat more; each meal, she stuffed herself as much she could. She didn’t like the worry he had over her weight, especially when he found out what her diet had been for the last ten years. They tangled their bare feet against each other to free up their hands.

“Do you miss Scotland?”

“Sometimes. I miss the weather more. Charming is sunny, a lot. I miss the days when its all grey and pissing rain. My father would take me with him to the pub, I was a wee lad then. He and his mates would talk and drink.”

“Are your parents still alive?”

“No, they passed a few years ago. My brother is still there. We swap holiday cards and the odd email once in awhile. He’s a university professor, married, has two daughters. Padric was Andrew’s eldest. He had a hard time when he died. Blamed me for getting Padric in the club.” He said sadly. Remembering the blistering phone call from Andrew’s wife to Andrew’s bitter silence.

She saw his pain at the memory, her hand catching his. “I’m sorry.” She apologized, empathizing with him.

He shrugged it off, “It was awhile ago. I only put a good word in, warned Paddy what to expect if he decided to join. The club, I know, they didn’t give him a pass in his prospect year. He earned his way into the club. I tried to talk him out of it at first. I knew my brother and sister-in-law were against it. But he was too much like me. Had a stubborn head and had his mind made up. I think things are okay between me and Andrew. Like I said, we still email each other occasionally. I won’t know for sure until I see him face to face.”

“How’d you and Fiona meet?” She asked carefully, trying to steer the conversation through the landmines. She hoped that he knew that she had to ask, that she didn’t mean to dredge up his pain just for some amusement. But for her to know him better. For him to trust her with the hard parts of his past. She felt Chibs go still at her question, but after a second he curled his toe along her arch.

“When I was a teenager, I was a bit wild. Ran with a rough bunch. Got into more trouble with the law. Joined up the British Army, it was that or the clink. Worked as a medic for a bit, lasted five months til I was court martialed.” He said with an easy grin.

“Hmmm.” She grinned at him, sensing a story. “What did you do to get kicked out?”
He squirmed a little in his chair. Her brows raised as she looked expectantly at him to answer her question.

“Fuck. I was a fucking idiot and it was a long time ago, you gotta know.” He prepared her.

“Of course, continue.” She teased, her grin widening, making him roll his eyes.

“Me and a few of the other lads, we sort of...borrowed one of the tanks to go on a pub crawl.”

She snickered at him, reveling in his story. Imagining a younger Chibs dragging his friends through town to go to all the bars that they could manage to get to, drinking at every stop.

“Fucking limey bastards, couldn’t hold their drink at all. Once one spewed, they all spewed. Inside the tank. Jesus, it stank to high heaven.”

“Yeah, cause stealing a tank...sorry...borrowing a tank to go drinking wasn’t cause enough. It was the puking that did you in.” She joked. “Didn’t the police stop you? And how did you even get the tank off the base?”

“One of the lads was an MP.” He said with a grin.

She giggled as the details just seemed to get better and better. He just grinned at her with a shake of his head, enjoying that she was finding such amusement out of it.

“The army tried to whip me into shape, but I wanted to go shoot guns and blow shit up like the other lads.” He offered as an explanation. “And the way the English talked about the Irish, Scots even. Thought their shit don’t fucking stink. Was sent to the western front that handled a lot of the dealings with the Army. Had to patch up some of their prisoners a couple of times. They beat the shit out of those boys. For no good reason. The history and politics between England, Ireland, and Scotland, Wales, too. It’s all fucked up. The English didn’t care. Wanted their claim and run of the taxes and shit.” He cut off as he felt himself getting worked up over it again.

“It just wasn’t working out. Soon as I was kicked out, went to Belfast and joined up the IRA. Fi is third generation to one of the Kings. The Kings are the original families that organized the Army for the Cause. She took a shine to me, I was the odd one out in her usual gang of chaps. Being from Glasgow. Guess she was tired of the usual Irish lads who were only looking to hook up with her to get closer to the Kings.”

“It was a fast courting. I’d just turned twenty-one when we married, in secret. Fi was twenty. Her family, along with her five brothers and twelve cousins fucking hated the idea of me and Fi. She’s a spitfire. God help ye' if ye’ crossed her. And nothing got in her way when she wanted something or someone. Most of the time, I just barely kept up with her. She got pregnant not long after. I worked my way up the ranks. I had a knack for building relationships. It’s how I came to know JT. Worked with him to create the Belfast charter. They then worked with the Army transport and protecting the Army’s supplies. The Army opening up their warehouse to the Redwoods so we could sell guns up and down the west coast.

He paused and pulled out another joint. Leaning back in his chair after lighting the joint, looking up at the darkening sky. He took a drag and handed her the joint. She took it and carefully took a breath of the smoke. She passed it back to him.

“Fi gave birth to Kerrianne and I thought my heart would explode. I was so excited and scared at the same time. I couldn’t believe we’d created this perfect bairn. It wasn’t to last though, not that I knew it at the time.”
He paused for another drag.

“There were problems cropping up in the ranks.” He looked to her, propping his head up with the heel of his hand, elbow on the table as he hunched over. “Jobs were going sideways with no explanation. I figured we had a leak or a mole. One of Fi’s old boyfriends was working with me on several jobs. Jimmy O’ Phalen. It was no question he hated me for stealing Fi from him. For having a family with her. He told her many times he loved her. That she belonged with him. Even after we were married and had a child. I hadn’t realized it, but Jimmy had been making inroads for himself with the Kings. By the time I figured out what was going on, he built a case that pinned me as the one who was messing with the jobs. Men died, equipment destroyed. It was a right mess. It all came to a head, Jimmy had me excommunicated from the Army. Took Fi and Kerrianne. As a final reminder, he cut me. To remind me for the rest of my days that he won.”

She moved from her chair and slipped into his lap as his body tensed with remembered pain. Her hands gently tracing his twin scars. His hand holding her into his lap. He took another hit of the joint, leaning towards her, she met him halfway for the shotgun. She wasn’t there for the pot, but to take on some of his pain. Letting him share it with her, so that he could let some of the pain go. At least, she hoped he saw the comfort she was offering.

“McGee, president of the Belfast chapter, found me bleeding out on the street. He grabbed me up and took me to their clubhouse. They patched me up and smuggled me out of the country. Sent me here. JT and the club took me in. I still had some contacts with the Army, I helped build and continue the relationship of the Sons with the Army for the guns. Kellen made sure I got paid, it’s how I got the down payment for this place.”

“I tried to keep in touch with Fi, but it was too dangerous to contact her more than a few times during the years. Jimmy kept her on a tight leash. Things with the Irish were getting out of control. The local rep, kidnapped Abel, Jax’s son, killed one of our prospects. Both the Army and Jimmy wanted Abel to use as leverage against each other. We didn’t know the extent of the shit that Jimmy was getting up to. And when I heard the shit going on...fuck I was pissed. It was a right mess. Jimmy had been moving on the Kings. I tried to get Fi and Kerrianne to come to California for safety. You know about that part. I had to intervene to put things to rights again.”

“I...I dreamed of you killing a man, you used a set of knives. Against a school bus. That was Jimmy, wasn’t it?”

“Aye, I’m sorry you had to see me do that. But I had to do it. I had to be the one that took him down. He stole my wife and daughter, tried to ruin me, I had to be the one. Made a promise to keep Fi and Kerrianne safe.”

He watched her process what he's told her. Admitting to her the murder he committed, hoping she'll see the reason he had to do it. She hugged him and he breathed a sigh of relief. Leaning in and kissed her again. Leaning on each other when they broke for air.

“If it weren’t for these headaches, you could have gone back to Belfast, rebuild your life with Fiona, spend more time with your daughter. We never would have met. I would still be in Naperville. You would be free.”

“M ‘anam, we could probably spend the rest of our days arguing that issue. But my life with Fi is over. It’s been over for a long time. Her and Kerrianne will always have a part of my heart. But even if I could do it over again, I wouldn’t have changed one thing. I would have come to you, because the thought of you back in that basement. It would have fucking killed me. We can’t go back and change the past, so it doesn’t do any good to dwell over it. Aye?” She nodded with a small smile. “Good, its getting late, we should turn in.”
They cleaned up the kitchen with ease and got ready for bed; showering separately. She slipped one of his t-shirts on. Chibs in just his boxers. They settled in, curling into each other like they’ve done every night since the first.

“You didn’t ask me about being the Rí Cláíomh.” He said in the dark.

“I figured if you wanted me to know, you’d tell me.”

He sighed. “It was a dark and bloody time for me. Something I regret getting into. I didn’t want to taint what you thought of me. I’m not the Rí Cláíomh for the Army no more. I’m yours. I’ll protect ye’ to my dying breath.”

She clutched at him. “Don’t say that.” She pleaded. “I couldn’t bear that.”

His fingers brushing her hair back. “Mo ghaol, don’t fret. Nothing’s going to happen. We have all the time in the world.” He soothed to her.

“I couldn’t bear it if you disappeared on me. Not when we’ve just found each other.”

He heard the exhaustion and the anxiety in her voice. Giving her a kiss, the feel of her melting into him. Her body relaxing in his arms.

“Gods, it’s been a long day. I’m so happy you’re home with me. Graim thu.” He sighed into her.

“I’m happy to just be wherever you are.”

He hugged her close as she dropped off to sleep. He following after her.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
My darling = mo gràidh
I love you = Graim thu
**Chapter 27**

Chapter Notes

Short chapter, meant to get more posted but work is overwhelming right now. Problems cropping up that are annoying me to no end.

Stick with me, I know everyone wants to get to the 'dinner' and sex part. I do, too. But there’s things I need to develop character and plot-wise. So hang in there with me. We'll get to the good stuff soon.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She stretched, her leg sliding along his. Her eyes slitted open heavily, her lips curled into a smile.

“Morning, mo gràidh.” He purred, pressing a kiss to her lips.

She turning into his body with a deep moan, kissing him back. Their kiss deepened and their tongues teased and caressed each other. He didn’t know what it was about kissing her...he just didn’t want to stop. It was innocent and wild at the same time. Like walking along the edge of a cliff and wanting to drop off into the thin air, just to feel the wind against your skin.

He shivered as, the thought drifted over him, this was the first time they’d woken up without having anyone come interrupt them. No Tig...no club...in his own home...in his bed.

He rolled ending up on top of her, her arms sliding around his waist. Making him curl into her, heat shooting down to his cock which was nestling against her welcoming hips. Her legs easily wrapping around his hips. She gripped him tighter as she followed his lead. Her purple eyes widening, glinting with gold and blue as the light of the rising sun streamed into the room.

Entrancing him as he let himself dare to take the next step in their relationship.

There was no thought, just feeling as they rocked and shifted over each other, sinking into the physical sensations. Reveling in it. He shifted his lips to her jaw and down to the curve of her shoulder. Her hands sliding from his waist, up his chest and over his shoulders, ending up around his neck. Fingers carding through his hair. Her nails scratching at his scalp, making him hiss as the goosebumps shivered down his neck and spine. His hips pressing harder into the cradle of her hips. She gasped under him. They teased and ramped each other up with their exploring.

Slipping a hand down along her side, and back up to pause at her breast. He wanted desperately to slip his hand under her shirt. Feel her flesh under his hand. But he remembered what he’d told her...what he promised her yesterday.

He gave her a dark questioning look. He saw her face blush at his touch. His hand gently squeezing the plump flesh. She arched into his hands, stretching up to kiss him. With her kiss he took their exploration a step further. He swept a thumb over her nipple, feeling it harden under his administration. He wanted to rip the shirt off her, to see her breasts. Wanted to suckle on her nipples in the morning light. Wanted to feast on her. Consume him.

God. He broke from the kiss, leaning his forehead against hers. His heart pounding inside his chest so hard, he thought it would break free. The two of them gasping for air.
He looked to her again and saw her interest in what he was doing, what they were doing, but a sliver of uncertainty edged her eyes. Seeing that uncertainty, he backed off, realizing they were moving at warp speed. She needed time, still. Wanting her to be sure that she wanted to be with him as much as he wanted her. Anything less would be wrong he knew. Still didn’t help his cock from berating him for being an idiot.

Shifting to his side on the bed. Pulling her into the curve of his body. No longer hovering over her, he dragged in air, to help cool himself down. He saw her fear ratchet up as he pulled away from her.

“Mo chridhe, relax, its okay.” He murmured to her, soothing her with his voice. His hand moving to hers, lacing their fingers.

“Did I do something wrong?” She asked worry flooding her eyes.

“Noooo, you’re perfect.” He peppered her cheeks with kisses. “Just thought we were going a bit fast there. I don’t want to rush this, rush us. That’s all.”

She looked to him, uncertain that he meant what he said. He squeezed her hand gently and she let the issue go. “Okay. So, uhmm, what’s the plan for today?”

“Thought maybe I’d show you around town. Run some errands. I have to check in with the garage.”

“Can we stop off at a bank?”

“Sure, whatever you want.” He gave her a questioning look at her request.

“I need to settle the paperwork.” She reminded him.

“Okay, no problem. I’m going to shower and get breakfast started, graim thu.” He kissed her quick, sliding out of bed.

She flopped back on the bed as Chibs escaped into the bathroom, the shower turning on. She hugged his pillow, breathing in his lingering scent. Doing her best to ignore the mounting headache. Listening to Chibs as he moved around the bathroom. Watching the minutes tick down on the clock.

She felt anxious. Her body revved up by their aborted lovemaking session. Nervous about having sex for the first time. She probably wouldn’t be so nervous about taking that next step with Chibs if she could read him. But on the other hand, she didn’t want that. To see into him like that when he couldn’t see into her...the imbalance of that would be wrong.

She hoped that Chibs didn’t think her hesitation was out of malice or some game she was playing to screw with his head. From reading people, she knew that most times there was an expectation of payment of some sort for having sex with them. Claire, it was money. Jennifer and her friends, it was out of vanity and power within their social circle. The guys didn’t care most times because they got their needs met. She hated seeing something that should be sacred be twisted and used as a weapon. She didn’t want that with Chibs. Ever. Whatever it is that brought them together, she knew that they had to forge a partnership going forward.

Her thoughts stuttered to a halt as Chibs stepped out the bath with only a towel around his hips. His cross and wood-beaded necklaces swinging across his broad chest as he watched her walk towards him. She didn’t even register that she got out of bed as he folded her in his arms. The heat of his skin making her shiver.
“God, you’re always so warm.” She groaned, her headache pulling back.

“Just think, when we do finally do the deed, we can share showers.” He winked at her as her cheeks flooded red at his suggestion. Man she was easy, he thought to himself.

Nancy looked up at him with that, a sudden image of Chibs naked in the shower, water spilling down his hard-muscled body. Chibs smirked as the thought took form in her mind.

Her eyes catching his, narrowing and glinting in amusement to his teasing. “Can’t wait. I’m all about water conservation.” She whispered and planted a quick kiss on his lips.

Before he could react, she escaped his arms and disappearing into the bath. He swayed, leaning back into the wall next to the door, at her agreement to their future of shared showers. His head knocking into the wall.

“Witch.” He laughingly accused her through the door. Hearing her low laugh as the water to the shower was turned on, he forced himself to dress and not go storming into the shower to join her.

Snapping his jeans on, carefully zipping around his raging hard on and stalked into the kitchen to make breakfast. He usually just had cereal, but he was on a mission to beef up her up; he could still too easily feel her ribs under his hands for his liking. It wasn’t just helping her gain back some weight, but he just felt the need to take care of her, he mused. It was an overriding need he’d been noticing. He had to make sure she was taken care of before he started his own meal. He needed to satisfy his mate. What the fuck was going on with him? He’d never felt this possessive over anyone, not even Fi or Kerrianne. God, he was truly fucked, and oddly, he didn’t give a shit. It’d been a long time since he’d had a real relationship, just felt happy and content to be in one again.

After running out to the end of the driveway for the paper, he poured himself a cup of tea and pulled the skillet out for eggs. The omelets were nearly done when Nancy joined him in the kitchen. The two of them easily kissed each other and continued to cook. She pulled out the cinnamon-raisin bread and popped the slices into the toaster. Watching him and the toaster, her fingers curling into the waistband of his jeans as they worked.

Their bare feet tangling under the table in the sunroom. He was happy to see her eat over half her eggs and most of her toast. He gave her the business section of the paper while he scanned the front page. The news still in a tizzy over the Russians left for dead on the Heights build site.

Sitting back, he finished his tea. His mind whirling with what’s been possibly going on with the club since he and Tig left. Trying to decide if he wanted to know or not. Giving up after a moment, he was going to get pulled into club shit sooner than later. Wanting to just keep it for later as long as possible.

“You finished, mo chridhe?”

She pulled back from reading her section of the paper at his question. “Hmmm? Oh, yes.” She pushed her plate towards him, going back to her reading.

He quickly finished off her eggs. “What’s that you’re reading?”

“Oh, there’s all kinds of speculation and opinions running around regarding the upcoming Fed meeting. Whether they’re going to raise the rates yet or not. And if they do, what impact it’ll have on the markets, if not, what impact that’ll have. Wondering how much the rates might go up...”

He raised his brows at her as she rattled off.
She grinned at his almost scared look. “Basically, nobody knows anything.” She explained.

“That seems to be the truth in a lot of things.” He said with a wry grin. “Come on, let’s clean up and get going.” He prompted.

They cleaned up the kitchen, and finished dressing. She grabbed up the thick manila envelope, checking the contents one more time.

“I put the rings in the safe.” He told her, as she handed him the envelope to tuck into his jacket for safekeeping.

“Oh, okay. I was wondering if I should get a safe deposit box at a bank or not.”

“Nope, don’t need one, got the safe here. I’ll show you the combination. I keep some guns in there, too. Come on, we need to get a move on.”

The morning was bright with few clouds as they rode to the garage. Nancy held on around his waist, her fingers curling around his belt. When they came to stop signs and stop lights, he’d reach down and give her thigh a gentle squeeze.

Once parked, he swung off, handing her his helmet. “Stay here, I’m just going to check the schedule and we’ll go.” He explained with a kiss.

“Okay.” She shifted as she watched him jog into the garage.

He didn’t waste any time, bypassing the office where Gemma was holding court with Bobby and Chucky. He didn't want to know what that was about. Pulling the clipboard down, he scanned the schedule. The guys left today open for him. But he’ll have to come in tomorrow.

Sighing and running a hand over his eyes, wondering what he was going to do. She’ll have to be here in the garage with him. He’ll never get through the day without her near to touch. Not with their headaches. Even now he felt the building pressure. Fuck it. They’ll figure it out, but for now, they had errands to run in town. No sense in worrying over it until he had to. Turning to head back to Nancy, patiently waiting for him at his bike.

He almost escaped unnoticed, when Gemma grabbed his arm, turning him to face her. “Dinner my place, tonight. Everyone’s coming.”

Bobby shot him an amused look as he ambled past him and Gemma heading into the clubhouse.

He ripped his arm from Gemma’s grip. “God damn it, Gemma! Jesus, we just had a dinner for Ope like two weeks ago.” He complained.

She stepped in close to him, glaring at him. “Bring her.” She ordered.

Before he could bow out of the dinner, she stalked off back to the office, the door banging closed behind her. The subject over and done. Fuck. He fumed in the middle of the lot.

Nancy gave him a curious look at the confrontation between him and Gemma, as he stalked back towards her.

“We have to go to Clay and Gemma’s for dinner tonight.” He explained.

“Okay?” She questioningly replied as he put his helmet back on.

“No, not okay. Stupid woman doesn’t know how to leave well enough alone. We’ll make an
appearance and get out of there as soon as we can.” He said as he swung onto the bike.

Nancy settled behind him. Her hands sliding around his waist, and he couldn’t stop the shiver at her touch. His headache from not touching Nancy easing off, but the headache mounting over the potential insanity of Gemma’s dinner tonight...fucking nightmare this was going to be. Wishing he’d just stayed in bed with Nancy. He was a fucking idiot, he mentally sighed.

His mood dark with Gemma’s directive. He wanted to avoid having anyone get in his way with Nancy or threaten her. And with Gemma...fuck...no good could come out of this. He revved up the bike and rode out the lot heading into downtown Charming.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My darling = mo gràidh
My heart = mo chridhe
I love you = Graim thu
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

Details of what is in the trust comes out to Nancy and Chibs.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Parking in front of Charming National Bank, he handed her the envelope as they took off their helmets and moved into the bank. The bank was outfitted with white marble that made everything very stiff and formal. It was quiet with only a few people waiting in line at the teller counter and several employees behind desks grouped in sections based on their job. They were confronted by a middle-aged, school-marm receptionist behind a mahogany desk.

“May I help you?” The receptionist asked coldly. He felt his hackles rise as he caught her eyes taking in his kutte, the disdain directed towards him and Nancy. Her lips puckering as if she’d sucked down a lemon. What the fuck?

“I need to open an account.” Nancy said uncertainly, put off by the receptionist’s cold look and tone.

“Have a seat. I’ll get the manager.” The woman got up and went to an office near the back of the bank.

“That’s odd.” He said watching the receptionist hustle off. Pulling her into his arms as they stood waiting for the manager. Ignoring the receptionist’s order to sit. His eyes scanning the rest of the patrons and employees. Noting the similar looks that were being sent their way.

She leaned over towards the reception desk, the front littered with information about the banks various accounts and services. Grabbing up a pamphlet, she scoffed at the interest rates they offered. Sadly, given the current economic climate, she wasn’t that surprised by how low their rates were on savings and investment accounts.

Looking at their other offerings, they focused on home mortgages, home equity lines, some business accounts, and the usual checking and savings accounts. Looking around the receptionists desk again, she caught sight of the Christian fish symbol sticker-ed onto the monitor of the computer.

While she didn’t begrudge anyone of their chosen faith, she didn’t like it being used against her or anyone trying to conduct business.

Before she could suggest that they try a different bank, a balding man in an ill-fitting suit came bustling over to them. The receptionist following her boss back to her desk with a smirk.

“I’m sorry, but we can’t do anything for you.” The manager told them.

Chibs slid his shades off and glared at the man. “And why is that?” Chibs anger threading through.

The manager eyed the kutte and looked even more harshly at Nancy. “I didn’t realize the Sons were into jailbait, now. We would prefer you to take your business elsewhere. Your club is in enough trouble with the law, we don’t need any of you here. We’re a respectable bank.” He hissed.
“Shameful.” The receptionist uttered under her breath, her beady eyes glaring at her.

Nancy paled under the insult. Chibs glared at the pompous idiot and stepped closer to the little man, stalking him. She slid slightly behind Chibs, her hand at his waist.

“She is the one needing the account. And she is not jailbait. So you and your gash here better fucking apologize for your insults. I have an account here. You’ve never had a problem taking my money before now. So what the fuck are you talking about?!”

The manager quailed under Chibs threatening tone, but held his ground. “Please, it’s not like nobody is confused to what is going on with the dead bodies over at the Heights project. Of who is responsible for that.”

She rolled her eyes at the drama unfolding. Unbelievable.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.” Chibs lied to the manager.

“Hang on…” She interrupted, waving the promotional pamphlets between the two of them. Distracting Chibs and the manager who turned their attention to her. “Do you have the ability to handle trusts? What’s the largest account you have here?”

The manager took a step back at her questions. “We’re a small, respectable bank. We focus on treasury bills and certificates of deposit. I hardly think you would need an account you are asking for.” He said taken aback. “We don’t deal in dirty money.” He directed that towards Chibs.

He growled at the insult. Moving towards the manager threateningly. The manager stumbling back in surprise. The security guard stepping forward, his hand going towards his weapon. She moved halting Chibs from doing bodily harm to the manager.

She snorted at the manager’s answer. Tossing the pamphlets carelessly back on the receptionist’s desk. “Come on, let’s go. They obviously can’t conduct themselves professionally.” She took his hand, stepping towards the door.

“Aye, you’re right, m ‘anam. Given how they refused us service, I may have to mention this incident to some associates of ours. I’m sure they won’t like it either. I know Elliott Oswald won’t.” He said loud enough so everyone in the bank heard him.

Chibs gave them a last scathing look and led Nancy out of the bank.

“Fucking bastards. I can’t believe that just happened. We’ve never had that happen before. This bank is fucking dead after this.” He ranted soon as they stepped on the concrete sidewalk.

She let him vent. They were still in full view of the manager, the receptionist, and the security guard. She smiled widely up at him. “What?” He asked in frustration, catching her look.

“They’re waaatching.” She grinned wider at him.

He shot a look back at the bank and back to her. Her hands moving to his neck. His body shook at her touch. “Want to give those self-righteous asses a show darlin’?” He grinned wolfishly to her. She giggling as he caught on to what she was suggesting.

She stepped closer, he pulled her into a deep hug, and pressed a full on kiss. It was a show, but nevertheless, they enjoyed the intimacy.

He pulled back from the kiss and gave the bank manager and company the finger, pulling her down
“You mentioned the club has a lawyer on retainer?” She asked breathlessly.

“Aye.”

“I think it might be easier to have them handle the paperwork. Is their office nearby?”

“Just how much is in this trust?” He asked as he led her across the street and down another block.

“I don’t know.”

“Okay. Here.” Chibs pulled a door open for her.

“Hello, how may I assist you?” A young man asked behind a reception desk. The atmosphere more welcoming than they’d just had at the bank.

“Yes, I need some help with a trust fund.” She said.

(Of course, Ms. Lowen is just finishing a call, if you’ll have a seat. Can I get you anything to drink while you wait?)

“No, thank you, we’re fine.” He said.

“Chibs?” A polished, brown-haired woman stepped from a back office that she recognized from the dreams.

“Hey, Lowen, how are ye’?” He and Alison shook hands.

“Good, thanks. Hi, I’m Alison Lowen.” The lawyer introduced herself to her. Holding out a hand for a handshake in greeting. She eyed the hand nervously.

“Hi, I’m Nancy Fraser, I need some help with a trust.” Ending up just waving the manila envelope as cover for not taking her hand.

(Of course, come this way.” They walked to Alison's office where they sat down. She handed the paperwork to the attorney.

“We tried to get Charming National to do this, but they seemed to have gotten a bug up their arses about the Sons.” Chibs supplied as Alison pulled the paperwork out.

Alison looked at Chibs. “Let me guess, short, balding, cheap suit?” Chibs nodded. “Yeah, Tony’s been getting high and mighty since he married Ivy, the minister’s daughter. Pastor Roberts over at the Calvary church.”

“Ivy...the receptionist?” Chibs asked.

“Yes, that’s her.” Alison trailed off as she started going through the paperwork. Pretty soon the desk held several piles as she’d separated the trust’s information by section."Tony's been after the church's accounts for a long time, rumor has it."

“Jesus Christ.” He muttered shooting her a look. She just shrugged.

“You’re from Illinois?” Alison asked.

“Yes, just moved here.”
“Okay, well this is pretty standard. You mentioned you want a brokerage account?”

“Could you help me with setting it up with TD? I think they have a checking account along with their brokerage accounts. It’d be easier for transferring money back and forth if I need to.”

“Absolutely. The trust is in your name exclusively, you can do whatever you want with it.” Alison swiveled to a computer and started typing and making notes on a legal pad. “Do you know how much is in here?”

“Not really. It was left to me by my grandparents. My father had it in his safe, so I couldn’t keep track of it.”

“How old are you?”

“I’ll be nineteen on the twenty-fourth.”

“You know you were supposed to have gotten this on your eighteenth birthday. Your father should have handled this a long time ago. You can sue him for fiduciary negligence; if you’d like.” Alison looked to see her take on it.

“No, it was complicated. He traveled a lot for business. I’d rather just get this deposited and move on. My father is no longer a part of my life now.”

“Well, the money has been in a pretty diverse set of investment funds, mostly in long term CD’s and bond funds. All of which backed by the government so the principal amount was never in jeopardy.” Alison totaled up a list of numbers and turned the legal pad towards her and Chibs.

“This is the principal amount, and this is the total value today. Here’s the difference from interest.” She and Chibs leaned closer, their eyes focused on the numbers that Alison was circling.

She felt the blood rushing from her head as she looked at the numbers. She had no idea. Tears welled up and she fought to keep from crying in front of the lawyer.

Chibs had to look a second time at the amount. “Can...can you have it all transferred?” Nancy asked, as he thought his heart had stopped. Turning to look at her, her hand gripping his tightly.

“Absolutely. It’ll take a few days for everything to clear. I know a guy at TD who should be able to get it processed fairly quickly. I need to grab some forms and we’ll get this going.”

“Thank you.” She managed to say as Alison stepped out.

“I’m not dreaming, am I?” Chibs breathed. Nancy looked to him shaking her head, taking in his shocked eyes.

“Jesus fucking Christ!” Chibs was blown over, the total of the trust was for just under seventy million fucking dollars. She had access to millions but was forced to live in a concrete hellhole. Beaten to the inch of her life for years. He couldn’t take it, he pulled her from her chair and put her in his lap. Holding her into his arms.

Tears welling in his eyes. His anger rising the more he thought of what might have happened. “I should have killed them. Those bastards, what they did to you, all the while you had this. And they stole it from you. That’s why they wanted you to sign it over to them. Fucking bastards. Fuck.” He gripped her tight, feeling her shake in his arms.

Her eyes locked to his. “It’s over, you got me. We’re safe now. It’s okay. We’re okay.” She
soothed at him as he took a shaky breath. Nancy swiping away his tears. And of course, that was when the attorney walked back in.

Alison took one look at him and how he was clinging to Nancy and she him. She’d seen a lot since working for the Sons. Everyone mostly saw the hard-core bikers who were invariably in and out of Stockton or Chino. But she knew them to be very loyal to their own and will protect their loved ones to the ends of the earth. They were violent men, Chibs, one of them. To see him in tears, seeking comfort with a nineteen-year old girl was new for her. But she was a professional and simply let it go without comment.

Settling behind her desk, she turned the forms to Nancy for her to fill out and sign. Watching as Nancy filled in Chibs address. Asking him for his zip code.

“I’m going to need to see some ID, for the notarization.” Alison said.

Nancy pulled out a thin wallet and pulled out her school ID from Illinois. Chibs watched Nancy with concern, his eyes seeing the ID.

“You don’t have a driver's license?” He asked her.

Nancy shook her head. Her eyes flicking from Chibs to Alison, the attorney discreetly ignored the conversation going on in front of her.

“How could I learn?” Nancy said with a quiet voice.

“How’d you get to school?” Regretting the question as soon as it left his lips.

“Walked.” She replied without looking at him, her head bent as she signed the form, passing it back to Alison.

He recalled the ride from the high school to her house. It had to be four to five miles. Fucking hell. Suddenly he remembered a dream he’d had of a blizzard. Icey snow pelting at her. Her head down as she weaved around cars along the side of the road, because the sidewalks hadn’t been shoveled. Fuck. He was such an idiot. He should have gotten to her sooner. God damn it.

She looked down at their hands weaved around each other as she waited for Chibs to calm down. She looked to Alison, “I’d like Chibs to be cosigner to the account.”

Chibs went still, his head twisting to look at her. His eyes wide on her as she talked with Alison, not sure if he was hearing shit right.

Alison looked over at the girl. She was nineteen in body, but just looking in her eyes, was an old soul, a weight of knowledge weighed down on this girl. “Okay, no problem. Are you thinking of maybe a will? A living will, as well?”

She sighed, “Yes, let's get all that set up. I hadn’t planned on it just yet, but we’re here, might as well.”

“M ‘anam, what are you doing?” He asked in a harsh tone.

Nancy looked to him. “I was going to talk to you about it before we came here, I thought it would have been a simple matter dealing with a bank. But with the amount in the trust...I realize I need someone I trust that can take over the accounts if something happens to me.”

She paused as she heard him growl at the thought of her getting hurt or worse under his watch. She
looked deep in his eyes. Barreling on with what she was saying despite his reaction.

“If I became incapacitated, the courts will administer the trust to my next of kin, that would be my father and Claire.”

“Chibs, she’s right on that. If there’s no will, the state will decide on how the assets are taken care of. You should have a will as well.” Alison interjected. “Not to mention the tax implications of going through probate.”

“Can you give us a minute?” He asked Alison.

“Sure.”

The door closed and Chibs pressed a hand to his forehead. “What are you doing? Ye’ can’t have me sign off on that trust. Or the will.” He panicked.

“Why not?” Her brows flattening as she saw his reaction.

“Why not.” He shook his head at her question, not realizing what it was she was doing. Asking of him. “Because its what married people do. That’s why not.” Chibs exploded in a panic.

Nancy flushed and tried to escape back to her own chair. But Chibs refused to let her go.

“God damn it, Filip Telford. I just want to have someone I trust on the paperwork. I’m not pressuring you into marriage. We can’t go five minutes without each other. I barely know the guys in the club. You want me to put Tig’s name on the trust and will? If I don’t put someone on the paperwork...”

She paused trying to get hold of her emotions. “...if something happens to me...”

“Stop that...Nothing is going to happen to you.” He argued harshly.

Frowning at him, she continued as if he hadn’t interrupted. “You wouldn’t have any legal standing over my welfare, my father and step-mother would be the ones the hospital calls. They could block you from seeing me. They would have access to the trust. And I don’t want them to have it! After all the shit they did to me. You’re the one that I trust. You keep telling me to trust you, well I do. You saved me, saved my life. You didn’t have to do it. Neither one of us knew what was in that trust. You didn’t come find me because of the money...you came for me. Put up with me and my abilities. Telling me that we’re meant to find each other. And you’re the one giving me pet names, at least I think they are pet names, I don’t know Gaelic.” She sidetracked momentarily.

“But that’s beside the point, you say you love me. And, well, I’m sorry, but I love you, too! So just...fucking deal with it!” She exploded, slapped at his chest when he wouldn’t let her go.

Huffing in frustration, she crossed her arms. She refused to look at him, angry that he was being this way. Saving her from her hell in Naperville, taking her into his home and his life, and he pulls this shit. Stupid man. The silence in the room was heavy as Chibs stared at her. The silence getting to her she glanced at him through the corner of her eye.

“Ye’ love me, aye?” He said with a sly grin.

Nancy scoffed at him. “Of course, that’s what you would pick up on. Really?” Giving him a glare of disbelief.

“I’m sorry, m ‘anam. Ye’ just took me by surprise is all.” He cajoled. Gods, she was being
stubborn. He couldn’t stop his grin, he felt giddy inside at her admission. She loved him. He’d been saying it to her for awhile now and he realized she hadn’t ever said the words back at him til now.

She gave him a baleful eye. “You’ll sign then?”

“Tell me ye’ love me again.” He pressed.

She sighed in annoyance. “I love you. Happy?” She said rotey. Chibs smile broke over his face, his eyes lighting up in joy at her admission.

“Chibs, not Happy.” He corrected her earning him another glare. “Aye, I’ll sign.” He grinned at her ire.

She huffed at him. “Good, glad that worked out. Really didn’t want Tig having control of my medical needs. That's just...disturbing.” She grimaced.

“Aye, don’t ever mention that again. Give me a heart attack.” He joked and kissed her before she could retort. She sighed and leaned into the kiss. God his kisses had to be addictive. She could never stop kissing this man.

“I take it things are resolved?” Alison said at the doorway.

“Aye, sorry about that. Needed to hash things out a bit. Get the wills set up.” Chibs ordered.

Alison and her receptionist/assistant created a basic will and living will for her. She and Chibs argued over her setting up a trust for Fi and Kerrianne. Chibs arguing with her that it was her money and that Fi and Kerrianne were fine. She let it go for now, thinking she could do something for them later. Give Chibs a chance to wrap his head about the money. And herself, too. She was just as shocked as Chibs was. It didn’t seem real to her. Maybe when it all got deposited into her account it’ll hit her.

They signed and initialed the paperwork while Greg, the receptionist, acted as a witness, Alison notarizing everything. Greg making copies and Alison explaining that she’ll file the documents with the county. Meanwhile, Alison’s contact with TD was sending her information about setting up an account for her.

“Good thing we came here instead over at that shitty bank. We’d be stuck there for the next millennia.” Chibs commented at one point. She smirked at his observation.

Once all the paperwork seemed to be in order, Chibs tucked their copies into his jacket for safe-keeping, he pulled her up off his lap and stood himself.

“Thanks for your help. I really appreciate it.” She said to Alison.

“For once, I didn’t have to bail someone out of jail, it’s my pleasure.” Alison smiled back easily, still organizing her piles of paperwork on her desk. Greg taking a stack from her to go back to his desk.

“Ooch darling, not to worry, I’m sure one of us will find us a bit of trouble to mess with your day.” Chibs chided the lawyer.

Alison snorted, “Right, well, take your time about that. Now, get out of here, I have work to do.” Alison shooed them out of her office.
He felt like he was floating down the sidewalk with his girl next to him, heading back towards his bike. He grinned at her, and she just rolled her eyes at him, still a little miffed with his meltdown. She felt better in general that the trust was finally being handled.

“Well, now that you’re swimming in it, how about treaten’ us to some lunch?” He teased as they found themselves in front of a diner.

“I don’t have the money yet. So you’re buying.” She corrected.

They walked into the diner and sat down at one of the booths, he facing the door so he could watch out for threats.

They settled down with their burgers and fries. Simply enjoying the silence, playing footsie under the table.

“So what do you plan to do with all that cash?” He asked.

“Well, I’ve been learning how to trade options and futures. I’d set up a practice account online back home. When I had a chance to get to the computer lab at school I’d go online to practice trading. So I’m curious to see how I do with real money.”

Chibs just shook his head at her. “Thought you’d want to go out and spend a bit of it.”

“No, I really don’t need things. I saw how Claire would whine and beg my father for money to spend on clothes and makeup. Her need for more money scared me. Even the other girls in my class complaining about their boyfriends and what they did or didn’t do. How empty their lives really are, even though they were surrounded by people, who cared and loved them. I never had that except with my mother. And I only have a few memories of her. It was so long ago. I barely remember my grandparents.” Chibs took her hand in his. She gave him a soft smile.

“Then the dreams started. And I saw you and the club. The things you did, how you all were more of a family than anyone I ever saw in my life in Naperville. Once the dreams started, I couldn’t stop thinking about you. Everything else seemed so inconsequential. I wanted people in my life that actually cared for me. Not because of who and what my family is or the money my father had control over. In a way, reading people was a blessing, it showed me how vapid and selfish people can be.” She admitted.

“I’m pretty sure, I was days away from death from starvation, and...and nobody cared.” She stopped talking abruptly, the thought of her actually dying from starvation was overwhelming. Tears fell before she could stop them.

Seeing her distress, he moved quickly to her side of the booth, pulling her into his arms.

“Sorry, I don’t mean to be all emotional.” She apologized again.

“Shh, don’t be sorry. Sounds like you need to let it out. Like earlier when you yelled at me. You’d been shoving and hiding your emotions and thoughts for so long...you had to in order to survive. But you’re free of that place now, you can let yourself feel them. To be yourself without fear. Its okay, mo leanabh.”

Nancy nodded hearing what Chibs was saying and knew he was right. But still she hated being seen all out of control. She worried that it’ll be too much for Chibs and he’ll decide he’s had enough.

“You know what you need?” He interrupted her thoughts.
“What?”

“You need to shoot some guns off.” He said with conviction.

“I do?” She said suspiciously. Her eyes narrowed on him over his idea. Not convinced that it was a valid solution.

“Aye, ye’ do. Come on.” He helped her from the booth and dropped a twenty to the table.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
My baby = mo leanabh
Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

A bit of a disclaimer, I don't know much about guns, except what I've read in other fictional books.

I tried to keep this on the humorous side, but damn it, Opie kept stalking me with his general malaise of sadness. And I keep wanting to push more of the story into each chapter instead of waiting for later ones where it fits better.

Needless to say, I've rewritten this several times. This was supposed to be a super short chapter, but it turned into a seven pager according to Google docs. Run on sentences are my fault.

The Dinner is next up after this. I have school starting on Monday night, so it might be a while before it is posted. I have to nitpick at it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chibs called Jax telling him he was taking her to the gun warehouse and for the guys available to join them. She put on her helmet and let Chibs help her onto the bike. Her hands at his waist as he drove across town. They’d passed by the garage where Jax and Opie caught up to them on the road. Parking in front of a big barn. Miles and a couple of the prospects were already there when they arrived. The doors were open and the prospects were pinning some targets on some stacked up bales of hay that faced off into the woods. They all got off their bikes, the guys hugging each other. Talking excitedly about practicing their shooting skills. Or, well, insulting each other over their shooting skills.

Walking into the barn, more hay and abandoned equipment scattered around along the walls and corners of the interior. A table was set up with a wide array of weapons to choose from. They guys easily pointing and handling the guns. Discussing the merits of each one to her. Miles set out some bullet cartons for each of the guns.

She was still wondering how Chibs convinced her to go shooting in the first place, when she was brought back to present with Jax and Opie arguing over the handguns.

"Jax, put away the 45’s. There’s no way she could fire a 45.” Opie said disparaging of Jax’s apparent love for the said 45’s.

“aright...” Opie scoffed, ”...the gun’s too heavy and won’t be able to aim. The recoil will knock her on her ass and she still gets killed. Better to go with the smaller calibers.”

Chibs held her hand as he smirked at his two friends bicker and debate. “Oy, let's let her decide
which she likes.” Chibs finally interjected. Jax and Opie both looked at her and Chibs.

“Sorry.” Opie said. Jax punched Opie, Opie punched him back. The two of them behaving like five-year olds. Chibs sighed and rolled his eyes.

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I’m beginning to regret asking them to come.” He complained to her.

“This was your idea.” She reminded him.

She broke into a giggle at his annoyed look.

He buzzed a kiss to her temple, “Come on.” He led her towards the table where the weapons were all laid out, explaining the size and how they work. Making sure she knew where the safety was and how to engage it. Jax and Opie watching her, providing some unsolicited opinions to what Chibs was lecturing to her. She was nervous and didn’t want to touch the guns in case she did something wrong.

“You want to feel the weight of the gun, it should feel like its a part of your hand. Don’t want it too light or heavy. If you spend too much time with the weight, you won’t be concentrating on firing.” He instructed, plopping a gun in her hand. “How’s that feel?” Her hand swooping down at the sudden weight of the gun.

She shook her head. “Heavy. Sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. You’re learning.” He countered.

They had her try out more guns, testing the weights until she found one that seemed to work. “That’s a 22, good weapon.” Chibs nodded.

The rest of the guys picked out their own weapons, Opie had brought a gun he’d gotten for his wedding. Chibs checking it out, handing it back to Opie. “Later. I want to try that beast.” They all moved back outside and lined up facing the targets.

Chibs helped her with her stance. “Okay, now take aim at the target, sighting down the barrel, take a breath, hold it, release it and squeeze the trigger nice and easy.

Chibs watched her do what he instructed, very aware of the guys watching her, but she tried her best to ignore them. She breathed and squeezed the trigger, twisting her head off to the side in case anything came flying at her. She really didn’t like this. Feeling the recoil thrumming from her hand and up her arm.

Chibs grinned as he caught her shutting her eyes as she fired. Rookie move, he thought. Catching the guys grinning at her, too.

“You can open your eyes, darling.” He said wryly.

“Did I hit it?” She asked, cracking her eyes open. Hating at how girly she sounded, but peered down at the target.

Chibs chuckled. “Almost, it’d be helpful if you kept your eyes on the target.”

Nancy flushed. “Probably would help.”

“Let’s try again.” Chibs stood behind her and raised her arms to the target and helped her sight again.
She still couldn’t help but twist back away from the gun. Her heart racing as her mind kept jumping around on her. Memories of her dreams mixed in with the reading of Tig. The image Tig had of Donna shot in the back of her head, blood across the windshield. The sense memory of the rain hitting her as she landed on top of the hood of the car, her face feeling like it was ripped off her.

“Stand firm, don’t twist like that. You’re shots are going wide with you shifting like that.” Jax said.

Her hands dropped as she looked wide-eyed at Jax and Opie. Her panic stretching to another level at the sight of Opie. The potential future that was in front of him.

Chibs caught her panicked eyes and reached for her.

What was happening to her? She’d never had her abilities jump around on her like this. Ping ponging back and forth. She couldn’t sense her own body, floating, seeing everything laid out in front of her. The pain and destruction. And nobody knew it but her.

“Hey...What’s going on?” Chibs asked her, his dark eyes capturing hers.

Suddenly she was snapped back in her body again. Jax and Opie were staring at her, Chibs worried over her again. God damn it. Get a grip. She told herself sternly. Nothing is set in stone yet.

“Sorry. Just feels like the gun is going to go off in my hands, shrapnel flying everywhere. And all of you staring at me is nerve-wracking.”

Chibs weighed her answer and she tried to push the gun into his hands, to get away. But he wouldn’t let her go. Wouldn’t let her let go of the gun.

“Hang on, I’ve got an idea. Rat...go get her helmet.” Chibs said. Rat, the skinny prospect with sharp features and unkept hair, ran off towards their bike and was running back with her helmet. Chibs hovered over her, his hands digging out her sunglasses from her jacket.

“What are you doing?” She asked as she flinched at his unexpected move, sliding her sunglasses on her face.

“You’re afraid of something flying at your face. You’d been cut up before, natural reaction. Think this might help til you get used to shooting. Let you focus. And ignore the peanut gallery.” He said plopping her helmet on.

She shook before him, her breathing erratic as what he was doing registered for her. She breathed and tried to forget the sound of her mother’s fear-filled cry. Her face hurting under the rain. “I’m sorry, I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

Chibs hands holding her steady, his hand hard over hers holding the gun.

“It’s okay. Just breathe. You’re okay. I won’t let anything happen to you.” He said. After a moment, she was able to breathe normally again. Chibs shifted her around to face the target again. Keeping hold of her, his hands raising her arm up, pointing the gun. His voice low as he talked in her ear. Look down the barrel of the gun, line it up to the center of the target. Breath, hold, squeeze and release your breath. That’s it. Let it go. Good.”

He held her while they fired through the clip of bullets.

“Good. You’re getting it. How do you feel?” He asked, making sure she flipped the safety on.
“Better. Fuck, I don’t know what that was. Sorry.” She apologized in embarrassed relief.

“Hey. Don’t be sorry. Let’s try again without the helmet this time.”

“Yeah, okay.” He pulled her helmet off and set it on the ground. Opie handing them a fresh clip. She shivered as memories of Opie breaking cover in a gun fight came over her.

“You okay?” Opie asked.

“Yeah. I’m good. Sorry. I’m not used to guns is all.” She explained away, studiously watching Chibs handle the gun.

“She’s fine.” Chibs reiterated sternly to Opie who nodded once and went back to Jax.

He frowned at her, but took her at her word. “Okay, safety on...release this here, slide out the empty clip...” He took out the empty, pocketing it. “Line up the clip and smack it into place. You’ll hear and feel it snap into place. Safety off. And you’re ready to go.”

He held her as he helped her line up her target. “When you’re ready, breath and fire.”

She took a deep breath and stared down the sights and to the target, seeing beyond the target, firing reflexively.

Chibs was right, she was getting used to the gun and firing it. Setting the safety on, before taking the empty clip out.

Chibs handing her another full one. Her hand and arm, thrumming with the strange exercise. “Last one. I’m getting tired.” She told him as she loaded the new clip. Her eyes going to Chibs to make sure she was doing it right.

“That’s fine. Just take your time. You’re doing good.”

After she emptied the last clip, she sagged on her feet. She didn’t think it would be so difficult handling a gun. “Safety on?” Chibs asked as he pulled her into his arms.

Jax and Opie joining them. “Not bad for a first time.” Jax nodded, as Miles handed him her paper target.


“Yeah. God, I’m tired.” She hugged him. “Thanks for helping me with this. Not sure if I’ll ever get used to using a gun. Back home, everyone settled disputes with lawyers not guns.” She half-laughed. “I think I’ll let you be in charge of the guns.”

“Hey, you’ll get used to this. We’ll keep coming out to practice and you’ll be a natural. But, for now, you know enough of the basics, so that you won’t hurt yourself or anyone else. Let me and the boys shoot some rounds off. We’ll go home after. Rest up for the dinner tonight.”

“Okay.” She planted a kiss on his cheek, he captured her, preventing her from backing off, turning her head and kissed her properly on the lips. Her hands curled in his kutte as she felt her bones turn to jelly. Jax and Opie started whistling at them and they tore themselves away. Chibs swearing giving them a glare for interrupting. She just managed to keep to her feet, as he let go of her. She watched the guys line up in front of the new targets, scooping up her helmet from the ground where Chibs had set it down earlier.
Jax, Opie, and Chibs started shooting off rounds with rapid precision. Switching out the hand guns to the rifles. Jax and Chibs getting the chance to try out Opie’s wedding gift gun.

“Fuck, that’s a wicked gun.” Chibs said handing Jax the gun for him to try out.

The prospects put up fresh targets while Jax and Miles cajoled Chibs into showing them his knife skills. Rat barely moved out of the danger zone when Chibs let loose a couple of knives in rapid succession. Hitting the heart and head on the target.

“Chibs! Fuck! At least wait til I’m out of the way!” Rat yelled back. Chibs giggling in response.

“Jesus, you gotta show me how you do that.” Jax said astonishingly.

“Practice, Jackie boy, practice.” He just replied.

“She okay?” Jax asked. “Never saw anyone learn to shoot with a helmet on.”

He and Jax walked to the target to collect his knives.

“It was an idea. She was fucking thrown through a windshield, cut her face up. She was afraid the gun was going to explode on her. Plus, she’s not used to our ways here. People back home, they use lawyers to settle their beefs. But she’s here now, and she needs to learn how to handle a gun.” He shrugged at Jax. “Or, did you want her to accidentally shoot you in the ass, boyo?”

Jax raised his hands up in supplication. “Does she have panic attacks a lot?”

“No. She had a pretty bad one on the ride back. But it was the middle of the night, had a nightmare that triggered it. This one, its different. I don’t know. She’s still not talking about what she saw in Tig. I’d appreciate it if you boys kept your noses out of it. Let me handle it.”

“Okay. But you know that we’re here for you.”

“I know and I appreciate it. But this is something I have to do, what her and I have to do alone. I don’t tell you how to be with Tara, give us the same respect is all I ask.”

He checked over the edging and points of the blades. He'll have to hone them.

“Sure.” Jax agreed. “Mom told you about dinner, right?”

“Christ. Aye, she did.” He sighed heavily.

“You know she just wants to check her out.” Jax said with a shit-eating grin.

“Jackie, I could give a shite what Gemma wants. She’s staying, if she isn’t welcomed into the club, I’m walking and taking her with me. I’m serious about it.”

“Shit. Are you in love with her?” Jax’s humor dying with the turn of the conversation.

“Aye, I am. And she with me, too. She’s special, Jackie. She may not show it now, she’s still healing. But she’s got a smart mind and a wicked humor about her. Fuck, it was close. Give her a chance.”

“She picked up firing a gun pretty quick, despite her panic attack. Tig told us about what happened at the trailer park. The girl you saved.”
“I didn’t save her. It was Nancy that did that.” He shook his head, wondering what else Tig had been talking about. “Come on. I want to get her home to rest up before we have to avail ourselves to Gemma and the rest of you knuckleheads for dinner.”

He started back towards the barn to collect his other half. Hopefully, they could figure out an excuse to bow out of this dinner.

Jax grinned, slapping a heavy hand on his shoulder. “It’ll be fine. Tara managed to survive it.”

“Oh, fuck you.” He complained with an exasperated sigh. “Tara took off to Chicago. Survive it. Jesus. Is there not a muzzle ye’ can put on your mother?”

“Yeah, actually, it’s Fiona.” Jax chuckled.

“What?”

“Tara told me when you were laid up at St. Thomas. Gemma and Fi had a little dustup. Told Tara that she was afraid of three women in her life; her mother, her third-grade math teacher, and your ex.” Jax grinned gleefully at him.

“Jesus Christ.” He ran a hand through his hair, his head pounding. “That’s not helping convince me to go to this fucking dinner…” He complained as the two of them joined Nancy and Opie.

“Thanks for helping me with this, today.” She said to Opie, as they watched Chibs work with Jax on his form for throwing knives.

“No problem. Chibs is right, you need to know how to shoot if you’re going to be with us. You picked it up pretty good. Keep practicing and I’ll bet you’ll outshoot Jax.” He joked.

They walked back to the barn, where Opie started wiping down some of the guns.

Nancy shifted and shrugged, “I hardly doubt that. I’m not sure if I could kill someone. Shooting at paper targets is one thing, but to kill a person. I don’t know. I’ve always avoided people...avoided situations that could lead to something like this. Whatever violence done to me, it wasn’t my choice.”

Opie regarded her silently. “We’re an outlaw club. We run with other outlaws. Some of them...they have no problem taking your life. They’ll kill us, our wives…” His voice hitched and she looked at him in concern. “...children even. If you ever find yourself in a kill or be killed situation, you have the skill now to fire back. Kill them before they kill you.”

She held Opie’s sad eyes and watched the weight of the world press over his shoulders as he hunched over, cleaning the gun in his hands.

She gave Opie a sad smile. “I’d rather not have that ever come to pass.”

He matched her smile. “We can only pray for that, but prepare in the meantime.”

“I suppose so.” She agreed with him.

Her headache increasing but she couldn’t make herself walk away from him. His depression tugged at her. She argued with herself if she should say something, try and alleviate his pain. But he’s married with Lyla, supposedly moved on from Donna’s death.

Sometimes its best to not poke the sleeping bear. And he didn’t know her, didn’t have a friendship
with her enough that she could talk to him about the difficulties in his life. It wasn’t her place to say anything unless he asked her for help.

God, she sometimes hated holding back when she knew she could help. But she learned that it was best to wait. Getting beaten for unsolicited advice was a harsh lesson she learned over the years.

He glanced at her as she stood awkwardly near him still. The question in his eyes. “Something wrong?” He asked her.

“No. Just never thought in a million years I’d be here, learning how to shoot a gun. Or well, be here.”

Opie grinned at her vexation. “Where did you think you’d end up?”

She knew he asked out of humor, but her gut reaction beat her to the punch. “Dead.” Opie’s eyes widened at her reply. And she instantly regretted saying it. “Sorry. I...I don’t know where that came from.”

Opie looked at her, his eyes sweeping across her face, to land back on her eyes. “It’s okay. I know what you mean.”

She nodded and gave him a small smile. Her headache flared and she gasped. Her hands going to her temples. She caught Opie’s worried look. Before she could say anything, Jax and Chibs came into the barn.

“Hey, everything okay?” Chibs asked.

Chibs arms coming around over her, pulling her into his body. The two of them shivered at the touch. Their headaches backing off. Her nerves charged through her at the sound of Chibs groan in her ear.

Jax raised his brows. Sliding a look to Opie that he was watching what he was seeing. Seeing her and Chibs do their 'mind meld' thing, as Tig called it.

“Yeah. Just was telling her that if she kept practicing, she’ll be able to outshoot Jax.” Opie covered.

Jax shooting his best friend a glare for the insult. “Asshole.” He shot back easily.

Opie just grinned and handed off the rifle over to Miles who had wandered over to them.

Chibs grinned against her neck, his goatee lightly scratching at her skin. “You know if Chibs and Tig hadn’t told me, I’d never have guessed that you two were best friends.” She joked.

Chibs laughed at her sly observation to Jax and Opie’s ridiculous behavior. Jax and Opie rolled their eyes which set him off even more.

“Come on m’anam. Let’s go.”

“See you later at Ma’s.” Jax needlessly reminded him. Bastard.

Chapter End Notes
Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 30

Chapter Summary

The dinner...

Chapter Notes

Super-duper long chapter. Been nitpicking at this, would still be picking at it, but I need to get this out to you before I pulled all my hair out.

Probably should have broken this up in smaller chunks, but it flowed so nicely. At least it does in my head.

Enjoy...

It was her second full day since she’d become a Charming resident. Chibs held her hand, her anxiety rising the longer they stared at the front of Gemma’s door. By the number of cars and bikes in the drive and on the street, it looked to be a full house. He sighed heavily and she loosened her grip, thinking he was angry with her latching so hard onto him. But he turned to her with a stern look, pulling her into a hug, belying her barnacle act.

“Okay, whatever happens, just say the word and we’ll split. Don’t take any of what Gemma says to heart. She’s going to grill you on who you are...what we are.”

“It’ll be fine.” She said assured him and herself that this dinner would in fact be fine...hopefully.

He still didn’t like it. “Don’t let Gemma get to you. Tara’ll be there with the boys. Gemma will most likely be distracted by them. Opie is here with Lyla and their kids. And no matter what, I love you.” He pressed a kiss to her, she easily returned it.

“I love you, too.” She said when they broke for air. Chibs grinning at her, like he couldn’t get enough of her saying it. She returned his smile, a blush rushing to her cheeks.

“Seriously? God, Christ, you two.” Tig’s voice dragged their awareness from each other to Tig, Happy with him. His permanent scowl in place. Chibs flipped Tig the finger. But they all did their round of hugs while she stepped out of the way.

Tig opening the door to the house and they all walked in; without knocking. Something that would never happen back home. But she wasn’t in Naperville, so she kept silent and took in the large house that she’d visited from her dreams. Being president paid well apparently. The guys were all in the family room, talking and laughing adding to the party atmosphere.

Clay and Jax leading the charge of greeting them. She looked off to the side where the smell of cooking was coming from and heard the women all congregating there. Couple of kids running
from the kitchen to another part of the house. One older girl, carrying Thomas with her. Gemma stepping out, wiping her hands on a towel as she was bestowed with kisses and hugs from the guys.

Chibs stepping back to her, taking her hand again, before Gemma could get her kiss from him. Clay shot Gemma a look before he slapped a meaty hand on Chib’s shoulder, encouraging him to step with him into the family room with the rest of the guys. “We’ve got business to talk about…” Clay intoned at Chibs.

“Club business? Here?” Chibs asked.

“Well, you and Tig have been gone for the last couple of weeks, need to get you two caught up.” Clay grinned widely, acting as if Chibs hadn’t threatened his life twice the day before.

She felt Chibs stiffen next to her. Before Chibs could counteract Clay, Gemma stepped up and gave her a hard look. Her heavily made up eyes sweeping over her, hands on her hips as she cocked her hip out. Even at home she was wearing her high-heeled boots, dark jeans, black shirt, a decorative silver belt nipped in her waist.  Silver rings gracing her fingers, her nails painted black.

“Hi, thanks for inviting me to your home.” She said politely. Hoping to keep everything on an even keel with what could potentially be a disaster. “Chibs said that we didn’t need to bring anything…” She slid Chibs a look, thinking they should have at least brought some wine or flowers. But Chibs had told her it wasn’t necessary.

“You know how to cook?” Gemma asked abruptly.

“No. Sorry?” She blinked glancing at Chibs who rolled his eyes.

“Well, can you stir at least?” Gemma brought her attention back.

“I think I can handle that, yes.”

“Okay, then. Let’s go. Got a lot of people to feed.” She brooked no argument, turning and heading back into the kitchen. Chibs was dragged away by Clay to where the menfolk huddled.

Their eyes caught each other’s as they were separated.

Gemma waved her to a large pot of boiling water with noodles. “Stir that. That’s Lyla, Opie’s wife. Tara, my son’s fiance.” She introduced the women with a wandering point of her finger. “Everyone, this is Nancy. She’s...with Chibs.”

Gemma’s voice turning bitingly humorous to the women who perked up at the newcomer. Their eyes shifting to her with caution by the tone that Gemma had introduced her. Like the idea of her and Chibs together was some cosmic joke. And with everyone listening, if they knew better, they’d follow Gemma’s lead in treating her like a kid that didn’t know anything. Jesus, it was high school.

She sighed as her headache started up, wishing she let Chibs call Gemma and tell them they weren’t coming. But she idiotically reasoned that if they didn’t go, they’d just show up at the house to satiate their curiosity over her and him. Might as well get it over with in one go.

“I thought Chibs was married.” A lushly-rounded, dirty-blond woman asked from the sink. Gemma introducing her as Bobby’s latest lady-friend.

“No, he’s been divorced for a year or so now.” Gemma corrected, going back to coordinating the women who labored over their specific jobs in the kitchen.
Tara was next to her working on a salad. She gave her a small smile when Tara looked to her. Might as well try and make friends.

“Are you okay?”

“Hmm?”

“I helped Chibs yesterday, you had passed out.”

“Oh? Yeah. I’m fine. Sorry.”

“If you don’t mind me asking, when was the last time you saw a doctor?”

She stiffened at the line of questions coming from Tara. “I know you mean well. But I don’t need a doctor.”

“It’s just, you’re very thin, passing out...Chibs was very anxious when I went to assist him. Wouldn’t let me touch you.”

She shook her head. “I thought Jax would have told you about me.”

“Told me what?”

She thought about how to answer her. Reading Tig was during Church and she didn’t know if Jax was telling Tara what was going on in the club or not. She didn’t want to break confidence between them. “Look, I don’t know what to tell you. What happened...it was in Church. I don’t want to break some rule telling you what was discussed or done. If you want to know, ask Jax. Ask Opie.” She included Lyla in her answer.

Lyla looked up at her directly, instead of sliding cautious looks from the corner of her eyes. Looking to Tara, ready to take Tara’s lead in responding. Tara simply looked her over and shrugged. “Okay, fair enough. You really should get checked out though.”

She couldn’t help the grin as Tara wouldn’t let go of her professional opinion.

“So where are you from?” Lyla asked.

“Naperville, Illinois.” She answered, knowing that Gemma and everyone was listening to her.

“Really?” Tara looked at her in surprise. “I did my internship and residency at Loyola and Chicago Presbyterian.”

“What’s your specialization?” Nancy asked.

“I’m a neonatal surgeon.” She said proudly, her eyes bright with her accomplishment. She couldn’t help but smile back at Tara for her achievement.

“She saved my Abel’s life. No thanks to that junky whore.” Gemma spit her vitriol into their conversation. Tara and Nancy shuddering at Gemma’s attitude.

“So you have family?” Tara redirected.

“My father and stepmother are still in Naperville.”

“You know this town?” Gemma asked Tara suspiciously.
“Sure, I got to go there a couple of times. Bunch of my girlfriends went there for shopping and checking out the local restaurants. It’s a nice town. It was nice to escape the city and the hospital. Parking was ridiculous.”

“Yeah, the town grew really fast. The city had a hard time dealing with the increase in business, balancing out the small-town feel with the push of Starbucks, Barnes & Noble, and Apple setting up shop.”

“Sounds rich. Not like Charming here. You’ll be disappointed with the shopping here. Have to go out to Lodi or Stockton to see a Starbucks or an Apple store.” Lyla said.

She shrugged, “I’m not one for shopping. I was pretty pissed when Apple came in and tore down the local grocery store for their new location. Had to hike out of my way after that to the next closest grocery store.”

Lyla and Tara shot her concerned looks. Lyla looking apologetic for her criticism.

“So what does your father do?” Gemma returned everyone’s attention back to her.

“He runs a hedge fund.”

“Hedge fund? What’s that?” Lyla asked.

“It’s where you deposit money to a manager to invest it for you in the markets. Hedging refers to the style of investing.” She answered Lyla.

“And your stepmother?” Gemma asked.

“She works for my father, networking for the business.” She shrugged.

“And they didn’t have a problem with you taking off?” Gemma lit a cigarette, blowing the smoke in her direction.

“No.”

“So what happened to your face? That what you used to sucker Chibs into bringing you here?” Gemma waved a dismissive hand in the air, indicating her scar.

“Gemma!” Tara admonished Gemma’s sudden personal attack. Lyla ducked her head, her hair hiding her face as she was stuck between Tara and Gemma at the moment.

Gemma glared at Tara. “What? I’m just learning more about the girl that has our Chibs dropping everything to go get her from across the goddamn country. Nothing wrong with that.”

Nancy blinked at Gemma. Pretty much nobody talks about her scar, she herself really doesn’t see it anymore. She’s lived with it for so long and her other quirks took center stage in her bizarreness that people didn’t bring it up most of the time. Or if they did bring it up, it was used to bully her over it.

She mulled over her options on how to answer Gemma’s intrusive questions. Tara and Lyla shooting her apologetic looks. Which was weird to her. She didn’t know much about Lyla, but her demeanor was submissive. Hardly making eye contact with anyone. Tara, she was a surgeon, yet she was positioned as far away from Gemma as possible in the kitchen. From the doctors she’d read, they never had any sense of fear from anyone. They were gods in their work and that attitude tended to carry over into their personal lives. What the hell was going on?
“Well?” Gemma huffed when she hadn’t answered her question. Pulling back from her thoughts she looked at Gemma, who looked to be vibrating, waiting for her answer.

From reading Tig, she knew some of the stuff that Gemma’s done, her attention was always centered around Jax. Pushing Tig to let her go find Jax when they had an Irishman bleeding out on the reaper table. Clay telling her to stay put, but only to end up ignoring his order, forcing Tig to go with her. Potentially put Tig’s life in danger because she was so worked up wondering where Jax was. No not wondering...needing to know.

The memory...tickled at her as she stared at Gemma. The silence getting to Gemma, seeing her switch her weight from one foot to the other, her body leaning in towards her. Tara and Lyla looking at her as she took her time thinking. She’d never seen Gemma so worked up over any of the other guys. Certainly not Chibs. Yet, here she was, threatening and mocking her...digging for something that she could use. Use to break her and Chibs up. Jesus, that's what this dinner is about...divide and conquer. Classic.

She thought about her options. Fighting was out. Verbally attacking was out. This was supposed to be a party. And the way Gemma was staring at her...it was as if she was begging for the fight. She couldn’t help the small grin and started turning back to the boiling pot, catching the unnerved look in Gemma’s eye at her grin.

Tara and Lyla both eyed her and Gemma, the silence growing thicker with the aggression Gemma was throwing out over the room. And she just ignored her. Refusing to be drawn into the battle that Gemma was so badly itching for.

“I was thrown from a car. The glass of the windshield cut me up pretty bad.” She said simply, stirring the pot.

“That must have been scary.” Lyla said softly.

“I was eight when it happened, a long time ago. I just grew up with it and it doesn’t bother me.” She directed her attention back to Gemma, “And it certainly doesn’t bother Chibs.”

“If you don’t mind me asking, your accident...was this in Naperville?” Tara asked.

“Not sure, I was transported to Chicago Children’s Hospital. That’s where I woke up at least.” Tara nodded. “That’s a really good hospital. I was thinking of transferring there.”

“Why didn’t you?” She ignored Gemma who was standing awkwardly, clearly not liking that she was ignoring her, focusing her conversation with Tara and Lyla.

Tara flushed and refocused on the salad. “Well, things got really complicated for me. Decided it was time to come home. And St. Thomas had a job opening. Seemed like it was time or fate.”

“Do you like working there?”

“Oh, yes. It’s not as fast paced as Chicago. But I love doing surgeries. Helping save lives.” Nancy smiled at Tara’s obvious love for her work. “So, how did you and Chibs get together?” Tara asked.

Gemma interrupted them, “Yeah, how did you and Chibs hook up? Were you emailing each other or something?”

She huffed, “I just looked up in the cafeteria one day and saw Chibs coming right for me. Thought I was dead or had lost my mind completely.”
“You know Chibs was married, is a father?” Gemma dug at her. Nancy had to smile at Gemma’s attempt to undermine her relationship with Chibs, she thought Gemma might drag out Fi and Kerrianne much sooner. “His daughter is about the same age as you…”

“Yes, I know about Fiona and Kerrianne. Chibs and I talked. He told me about his relationship with Fiona and Kerrianne. Told me that he was divorced and still sends money to them to help with their bills.” She breathed as her headache ramped up.

“And that doesn’t bother you? Him sending them money? Money that he might be spending on you?” Gemma queried. Well, the former wife and daughter line of attack didn’t work, she decided to switch to the money...the gold digger angle. She had to fight to keep from laughing. Chibs would be having hysterics by now.

“No. I know he has a life before me. That he has responsibilities beyond me.”

“No?” Gemma asked imperiously. “Those are some new clothes, aren’t they? Even that leather jacket, had to cost a several hundred dollars.”

“Hmmm...I wasn’t aware that Chibs had to check with you over his spending habits.”

She glanced at Gemma. “I’ll be sure to mention this to Chibs. He must have forgotten to call you. Oh, but wait…”

She tossed her head up, eyes looking upwards as if a forgotten memory hitting her. ”...he and Tig were calling the guys to buy parts for their bikes. Were they supposed to run that by you, too?”

Tara and Lyla were looking from her to Gemma and back in wide-eyed shock. She waiting for Gemma’s reaction for calling her out on her bullshit over Chibs buying her a coat and some new clothes. Clothes that she needed. Jesus Christ.

“Watch it, little girl. You’ve got a smart mouth. Girls with smart mouths don’t last long in Charming.” Gemma glared at her a little longer. Tara looking poleaxed at Gemma. Lyla paled and bent her head back down, her long hair hiding her face from the drama. She inwardly smirked, knowing that she won, Gemma reduced to PG insults.

“I’m simply asking a question. I don’t see how asking questions is being a ‘smart mouth’.” She gave Gemma a helpless shrug.

The weight of Tara and Lyla’s attention on her and Gemma’s little dustup had Gemma going back to Lisa at the sink.

“That was...I don’t know what that was…” Tara said quietly with a shake of her head.

“Really? It was quite obvious what Gemma was trying to do.” She gave Tara an annoyed look. “I didn’t have a winter coat. I wore a sweatshirt that was literally falling apart. I didn’t have boots, only a pair of worn out Keds. I walked to school. You lived in Chicago...you know what the winters are like there. And nobody has the right to question my relationship with Chibs. Just as nobody has the right to question your and Jax’s relationship, or your and Opie’s.” Tara shot her a chastened look. She felt bad for upbraiding Tara like that, about to apologize for her harsh criticism when her head started crushing down on her.

She eyed the doorway towards where the sound of the men’s voices filtered though. She could hear Chibs brogue as he spoke. She took a breath to steady herself. She could make it. She will make it, she told herself sternly.
“Are you sure you’re okay?” Tara asked alarmingly.

Nancy shook her head. “I’m fine. Just a headache. Chibs is helping me. He saved my life when he showed up. I was in worse shape than now a week ago.”

“Saved you?” Lyla asked coming back to part of the conversation. “From what?” Her eyes looking to her in worry.

“What Tara says about Naperville is true. But my life there...was a nightmare.” She broke off as her headache ramped up suddenly, making her sway.

“Maybe you should sit down.” Tara asked gently moving in her direction. Her move alarmed her.

“Please, don’t touch me.” She jerked back from Tara, saw her debating with herself, the doctor fighting to help her.

“I know you want to help, but you can’t. Do no harm, touching me would be harm. I’m sorry.” She apologized, Tara’s eyes widening.

“How is it you’re so thin. God, I’ve been on every diet known to man and I’m still trying to lose weight.” Lisa asked frustratedly and oblivious to the conversation going on. She finishing drying a pan sliding it to where it was stored.

Nancy gave the pot another rough stir. “This isn’t by choice. Let’s just say, I didn’t have much in the way of food.” She said grimly. Tara and Lyla looking at her uneasily.

“You’re not anorexic or bulimic are you?” Tara asked.

“No.” She said, frustrated. “I just didn’t have much food to live on.”

“You didn’t have money?” Lyla asked.

“There was plenty of money...just not for me. I can’t...I can’t talk about it right now.”

She sighed as the three of them turned back to their food preparation.

“So, you were doing that fasting diet?” Lisa asked cluelessly.

Nancy gripped the edge of the counter as her head was kept arguing with her. Sweat starting to bead across her forehead from the heat of the kitchen and standing over the boiling water she was stirring, per Gemma’s order. Glancing at Gemma, who had snagged the older girl she’d seen before to help set the table.

She gasped as her head felt like it was twisting and crushing her brain. She was about to go find Chibs. Her eyes focussing on the doorway, wondering if she could even make it there.

She dropped the ladle she was using to stir the noodles. Her hands gripping the edge of the granite counter. Fighting the pain, fighting to keep the tears from falling. Just what she needed, to be crying over the stove like some weakling. It took everything in her to keep from collapsing to the floor.

“What’s going on?” Gemma asked abruptly, noticing that the three of them weren’t working.

Before anyone could say anything, Chibs came barrelling in and came right to her. She wanted to cry in relief at the sight of him. But the pain in his eyes matched hers. The sound of the guys laughing and making jokes trailed behind him.
“Chibs? What are you doing?” Gemma accused, like it was a capital crime for the guys to come into the kitchen.

The women all ceased in talking, eyes wide as Chibs grabbed her. She fought to keep her feet under her, but the pain was making her weak-kneed. Chibs gripped her tighter realizing she wasn’t holding herself up.

Lyla quickly took over her stirring job with the noodles.

“Christ, why didn’t you come find me?” He asked.

“I was on stirring duty. And what...you can’t come to me?” She argued plaintively. “And it didn’t seem like it would be a good idea interrupting you with the guys.”

“Fuck, I wish you did.” He complained.

The two of them groaning and sighing, as their headaches pulled back. Chibs shifted and leaned her back to the wall next to the side door, his hands holding her to him.

She wanted to throw a tantrum over these headaches. They were making life difficult for the two of them. She felt bad for the jokes that Chibs was suffering from.

“Better?” He asked gently.

“Yeah, thanks. You?” She gasped.

“Aye.” He purred that set her bones to liquid. She breathed deeply, her lids fluttering as her pain level dropped. “How much longer for some food?” He demanded of Gemma.

“Ten minutes.” Gemma said peevishly.

“Come on.” He said, pulling her out the side door and led her into the backyard. The cool air a slap in the face, reviving her.

The guys had moved from the living room to the backyard, where they were all smoking and chatting. Clay smoking a cigar. Happy and Juice were the only ones that didn’t partake in the smokefest.

Chibs sat on the top of the picnic table, his feet on the seat. She nestled between his legs, leaning against his left leg. He lit a joint, handing it down to her. She took a drag, holding onto the smoke she passed the joint back to him. His hand resting on the top of her head, playing with her hair. She breathed out the smoke, her brain already getting mushy, tilting her head into his hand and against his leg. They passed the joint back and forth.

“Is Gemma behaving herself?” Jax asked her.

She didn’t know how to answer that question. The pot hitting her system making it hard to think of an appropriate answer.

“She’s fine.” She said diplomatically.

“Yeeahh...right.” Jax drawled, not believing her answer.

The guys chuckled at Jax’s joke, as she forced herself to remain aware of her surroundings and not get floaty with the pot and the relief of the pain of her headaches. She noticed she’d been feeling floaty more often. Not sure what it meant. She tried to eat more, thinking she needed protein or
something. But it happened even with a full stomach. And the panic attack earlier at the barn, she
didn’t know what to think.

“So, what happened at the clubhouse?” She asked in the lull of conversation. The guys looking at
her in confusion. “The plywood door and patched up walls.” She clarified.

“The sheriff and the fire department did a pop inspection of the building.” Bobby said.

“Thought you were psychic, wouldn’t you know?” Clay asked sarcastically.

“No. I wouldn’t.” She swivelled to look at him. “Because I’ve only read Tig. He wasn’t there when
all that destruction went down.” She answered Clay directly. Turning back to the rest of the guys,
“And since when do inspections include trashing the place?”

“It was retaliation for something the cops think we did.” Kozik said.

“Let me guess, the Russians on Hale’s pet project.” Chibs put together.

“Yeah.” Kozik said.

“Was it the fire department that trashed the place or the Sheriff?” She followed up.

“Sheriff Roosevelt swung the axe.” Juice added.

“And the fire department guys just stood around and let the Sheriff go to demolition town?” She
questioned.

The guys all shuffled their feet as that was exactly what happened. “We needed to get Jax and Opie
out of a jam over at Wahewa. Faster to just let them do it.” Bobby said.

“What jam?” Tig asked.

“The Russians, they attacked the Wahewa. Ope and I were going there to double check that things
were running okay with the squaw when we were held hostage to get their guns back. Romeo and
Luis showed up and got us out by the time Clay and everyone could make it out.” Jax admitted.

“Did you have tape of what Roosevelt did?” She asked them.

“No. Why would we?” Bobby asked.

She shook her head. “Bunch of idiots.” As she took another drag.

Everyone looked at her sharply at her insult. Chibs knocking his knee into her side. Looking up at
him he gave her a what the fuck look. “Care to explain that comment, m’anam?”

“I take it that Roosevelt didn’t even have a warrant, did he?” She challenged the guys, seeing them
all shuffle and look to Clay or Jax. Shaking her head, “Jesus. Annual inspection of the building by
the fire department does not require a police escort. It’s a walk through. Yet, you let Roosevelt take
an axe to the clubhouse without cause or a warrant. Roosevelt overstepped his role as Sheriff. If
you had proof of what happened, you could sue the Sheriff’s department. Gotten paid back for the
damages he caused and at least a censure in the Sheriff’s department. Maybe possibly gotten the
town and city council to rethink having the county Sheriff oversee the policing of Charming.”

Silence fell over their group as she finished her tirade. Handing Chibs the joint. She didn’t have to
look up at Chibs to see him grinning and holding back his laugh at the stunned looks on his
brothers faces.
“How could you possibly know that? You a cop?” Clay asked in his gravelly, disapprovingly tone.

She scoffed at him. “I’ve read cops and firemen. I know what their jobs are. And a cop doing the job of a fire inspector is not on their list. You guys think like outlaws too much. Whenever you have been wronged by the law, you think and react as if you were guilty automatically. It’s habit now. Quit it. You’ve got a Sheriff that feels emboldened that he can just waltz in and out of the clubhouse without so much as a by your leave and you let him.”

“Well, we are outlaws. Sorta comes with the territory.” Kozik said with a shrug.

She breathed around her annoyance to that attitude. Glaring at Kozik. “You think the cops and everyone in this town doesn't know that? Of course they do. Your job is to counteract that thinking. Make them question who and what you are. Not just lump you in with the common criminals. By acting guilty, only confirms their suspicions. That’s what I’m saying. If the Sheriff had done that to any other business in Charming, they’d be all up over the city council...the mayor. The Sheriff overstepped his authority.”

She took a deep breath, rubbed at her forehead trying to get her anger under control. What the hell was wrong with her? Getting up in the club’s face over something that they did was not the way to handle things.

“She’s new here. You don’t know the history we, the club has. We know what we are and how we are looked at with the town and the cops.” Jax said, jumping in before Clay took her to task. “We know what you’re saying. It was a shitty thing that happened. But half of us are on parole. We can’t be challenging the cops. They’ll just scoop us up and put us back in Stockton. We’ve got a lot going on and we can’t take the risk of getting more entrenched with the Sheriff up our asses. It’s easier to let them do what they think they have to do to send their message. It’s a game that is played. Been played for a long time.”

She frowned at Jax’s defense. Thought maybe to argue with him some more over it. But Chibs handed her the joint again. His dark eyes silently telling her to let it go.

“Sorry. It just pisses me off when a person in authority oversteps their duties...or blatantly ignores their responsibilities.” She said as she took a hit off the joint.

“What’s with the pot? Seem a bit young to be smoking it.” Opie asked, changing the topic thankfully.

“Her head tilting back to look up at him. He towered over everyone, even Clay. He wasn’t thin, he had muscles and heft to him. Could easily break her in half she suspected. She looked down at his feet and she couldn’t tell how big his feet were, pondering his shoe size. His jeans long and frayed covering his heel and over top. She took another hit as Chibs spoke up.

“It’s to help her eat.” Chibs answered for her. “She’d been taking aspirin for the headaches, was throwing up blood at the Harley dealership. We need to get a scale for ye’.” He directed the last to her.

“Okay.” She shrugged, still pondering Opie’s shoe size. “What size shoe do you wear?” She asked Opie.

Opie’s eyes popped wide at her question, his eyes going to his boots where she was staring, the guys all looked down at his feet, too. Opie shuffled under the sudden interest in his feet.

Jax and Tig giggling. Opie rolling his eyes. Chibs tilted her head to look at her, he shaking his
“Jesus, no more pot for you.” He said with an easy grin.

“What? I’m curious.” Taking one last toke, grinning back at him. Chibs grabbing the joint back from her.

“Yeah, Ope, what size shoe do you wear?” Tig giggled.

Opie sighed, “They’re sixteens.” He informed her. Turning to look at Tig, “Big enough to turn you soprano, Tiggy.”

“Doesn’t seem big enough. You’re really tall.” She debated. Jax and the guys falling into another laughing fit.

“That’s cause, you’re sitting and he’s standing, m’anan.” Chibs explained with a grin and a sigh helping her and Opie out.

Tig started laughing his ass off, “Man, you are such a lightweight.”

She frowned looking at Tig, “Of course I am. I was eighty-nine pounds the day before you and Chibs showed up.” Confused by his comment. “Did you know that Illinois is the only state in the whole US that requires physical education? Just my luck.”

The guys all stilled at her reply to Tig. Bobby and Opie both swearing, Jax shook his head as they all put together what she meant.

Chibs slid his hand down to her shoulder, his fingers gripping onto her. His heart twisted at her innocent answer to Tig’s question. “You were weighing yourself?” He questioned.

“Uh, huh. There’s a pharmacy on my route home from school. Would stop there and use the scale they had on display. Kept a journal of what was going on. Really tried to stay above a hundred pounds.” She sighed. Nancy bringing her hand to Chibs at her shoulder, looking up at him.

His eyes dark as he fought to remain calm. Reminding himself that she was safe now. “Not to worry, m’anan, you’ll get better now that you’re home, aye.” He said to her.

“Jesus, Chibs, what the hell are you thinking with her? You can’t be babysitting some wounded chick, not with what’s going on right now.” Clay interjected argumentatively, waving his hand dismissively at her. She flinched as if cold water was thrown on her. Chibs turned his angry eyes to Clay.

“Fuck Clay, you’re more worried about some vote and the goddamn cartel than our brother’s need? That’s cold.” Bobby hissed before Chibs could say anything.

“I’m not wounded, I’m high.” She argued. “Made it back here in one piece. Survived my stepmother and father, survived school. I’m not wounded...nor am I stupid.” She looked directly at Clay, leaning towards him within the confines of Chib’s legs, “I know about the mule vote, you can talk about it in front of me.”

Clay glared at her as he breathed out his cigar smoke. His eyes looking at Tig and Chibs, “You told her club business?” He hissed.

“I don’t keep secrets from her. And it’s not like you don’t talk to Gemma about club business. So don’t give me that crap. You told us to get back asap for your mule vote. Plus, she read Tig, at your fucking request.” He fired back at Clay’s accusation.
“Yeeesss, you two were very vocal in your discussions, you vented to me over it. And it’s like you said, I read Tig, there isn’t anything I don’t know about his life.” She affirmed, her eyes shuttered as she looked at Clay, taking the joint back from Chibs.

“Such an interesting life you’ve led.” She commented easily looking back to Tig who was smirking at her. Rolling her eyes at his humor, “Idiot.” She muttered.

Tig frowned at her in annoyance, “No, I’m not.” He complained.

“Well, on the one hand, you’re running a truck, full of weapons to a cartel. It makes business sense to pack the truck with something on the run back up. Waste of gas and energy driving an empty truck.” She felt Chibs still above her at her reasoning. But he didn’t stop her from speaking her mind.

Some of the guys nodding.

“On the other hand, its drugs. A lot of drugs. I’m not well-versed in what the penalties are if you get caught with that amount of drugs on you. But I imagine it’s enough to land all of you in jail for a really long time. Something, I’d like Chibs to avoid. I don’t know what is happening to us. The headaches are real, and nothing helps except the two of us holding onto each other. Do I agree that it should be coke you’re hauling across state lines? No. There is already enough of a drug problem in this country.”

“The drugs will come here in any case, why not profit from it?” Jax said anxiously.

She gave him a scathing look. “If a building is burning with people inside, you want to flick lit matches to the flame, too?” Jax gave her a flare of angry eyes, she sighed. “The money is good, yes. But it comes at a cost. It never pays to be greedy.” The guys stared at her, she felt all floaty again. “But then, sometimes, you need to learn the hard way.” She mused.
She sighed and took the last toke, snuffing it out on the brick patio. Before the guys could argue the muling some more Gemma stepped out, yelling at them to get back inside, dinner was served.

The guys all started towards the house again. She stood up and let Chibs step down and take her hand. Pulling her close holding her. “Sorry, if I overstepped, I think I’m really high.” Resting her head to his shoulder.

Chibs grinned at her, “Aye, ye’ are. It’s good weed. Not that crap Tig smokes. And don’t apologize, you said what needed saying. Said what I’ve been telling the guys, they were grilling me with the vote earlier.” He said heavily.

“I don’t know what Clay and Jax are thinking with this muling. We’ve never done anything with drugs. It was our thing, keeping the drugs out of Charming. Now they want us muling. Next, we’ll be cooking and dealing.” He worried to her.

“It’ll work out. The sun will rise and the world keeps turning.” She said. He kissed her and she melted into him, only pulling apart when Gemma yelled at them again. He groaning in frustration.

“Why were the guys laughing when I asked about Opie’s shoe size?” She asked bemusedly at him.

He barked out a laugh to her question shaking his head as he started leading her back to the house. Leaning into her ear, he whispered the joke, but she just held tighter to him at the feel of his heat and gentle breath at her lobe. She felt as if her bones turned to mush. He smirking down at her as if he read her mind.

Everyone was already at the table and food was going around. He sat her down next to him. Tig was on her other side. Between the two of them they filled her plate for her. She protesting at the massive amounts they piled onto her plate. “God, I’m not going to be able to finish all this. Stooop.” She complained under her breath.

Tig and Chibs just ignored her protests. “Just eat what ye’ can. It’ll get easier.” He said in her ear.

She sighed and picked up her fork. Started with the massive meatball, cutting it down to smaller pieces and munched on that for a while. She paused her chewing as the spices hit her, the spices of the meatball were really strong. Swallowing it down quickly. She drank some of her soda to cool the spice and switched to the noodles. Again, the sauce and noodles didn't seem to taste right. But then, she didn't know what it was supposed to taste like in the first place. She switched to the salad and that was good. Focusing her attention to that, leaving everything else.

“So, Nancy, you were in school?” Tara asked.

“My final semester, senior year. Actually, got my GED the year before.”

“Wait, if you had your GED, why were you still going to school?” Jax asked.

“Several factors. Wanted to see if I could pass it. Curiosity sake.” She shrugged at Jax’s flummoxed expression, shared by Opie and the rest of the guys. “Going to school, let me out of the house. Used the library and the computers there for my own research. There’s just so much to learn, to know.” She trailed off, mentally making a note to ask Chibs to get her to a library.

“What did you want to study after high school?” Opie questioned next.

“I wasn’t sure. I’m good in math and finance, history. It was easy for me. I liked astronomy. How the galaxy was formed, the planets. How important the moon is to the earth’s existence. How our very existence, was formed from exploding stars. Still is. One day our sun will explode and everything will change again. The idea that we are all made up of exploding stars fascinates me.”
Everyone was staring at her again. “Sorry, still feeling the effects of the pot.” She shrugged sheepishly.

“The sun is going to explode?” Juice asked to the table.

Tig sighed. “Jesus Christ. Here we go with the science shit again.”

Chibs put a hand to her nape and kissed her cheek. His lips quirking into a smile as he caught everyone’s confused expressions. Tara and Jax though chuckled in amusement.

“Stardust doesn’t pay the bills or help you be an old lady or survive the life in the club.” Gemma zinged to her, snidely.

“I never said it did. Just answered Opie’s question.” Embarrassment hitting her with Chibs sitting right next to her. She glanced to him, he took her hand in his. She breathed a sigh of relief that he was with her.

“So wait, you took the GED a year ago, still went to school...how did that work?” Bobby asked.

She bit her lip nervously. “I didn’t know if I was going to live long enough to graduate with the rest of my class. That’s the main reason why I took the GED. I wanted to at least have that done before...” She broke off for a moment, taking a breath. "I’d gotten in the habit of doing all the reading and homework over the summers and breaks. By the time I was in class, I was barely paying any attention to the lectures the teachers were giving. Just had to take the tests and hand in the homework. I was working on the stuff I was learning on my own during class. I read and studied all the time. I didn’t have TV or a social life. Books were the only thing I had. That and trying to figure out what I was going to do when school was over. Where I would go or survive...if I made it.”

Jax leaned into Tara, whispering to her. Tara sent a worried look to her.

“So what are you going to do now that you’re here?” Gemma asked. “You planning on having kids?”

“Jesus, mom.” Jax huffed at Gemma.

“And how is that any of your business, Gemma.” Chibs whipped to the older woman. His eyes sharp on her. Nancy leaned closer to Chibs as his body went stiff.

“This club is my family. I look out for my family.” Gemma warned. She couldn’t believe what Gemma was saying. The tightening of Chibs fingers around hers told her that Chibs couldn’t believe what she was saying either.

Chibs went still alongside her. She caught Lyla and Tara watching the interplay with concealed curiosity. Looked to Tig, remembering when Tig had to watch over Gemma when she went on the lam from the law. Gemma’s blatant disregard for what the club was doing for her, making things even more difficult. Remembering Chibs telling her to not hide herself anymore. To try and stifle herself into what people wanted her to be. Pressing her lips together, hoping that Chibs meant what he told her.

Before Chibs could lash out again she spoke up, tackling Gemma and her idea of protecting her family. Protecting them from her. What a joke.

“And how was it looking after your family when you disregarded Tig’s orders...the club’s orders, to stay in the motel when you were on the lam. The guy you stabbed when you tried to steal his
SUV. Tig had to pay out of his own pocket to keep him from calling the cops. You haven’t even paid Tig back for what he did for you.” She said.

“Could have been arrested if he hadn’t handled it. You two never would have gone to see your father. That caretaker, Amelia, might still be alive. Way to go protecting your family. The club.” She snorted. “More like thinking of yourself and your needs, not anyone else’s. Certainly not the club’s.”

The table went dead silent. Sets of silverware hit plates. Jax and the guys looked at her to Gemma and to Tig. Tara went pale at the mention of the caretaker. The kids, thankfully, didn’t know what was going on or knew not to question what was going on. She felt sorry for the kids. Innocent at this table. Trapped by the circumstances that their parents wrought. Abel, especially, used as a pawn before he even had a chance to decide for himself. God.

Tig put his head in his hands at what she just let slip. Muttering ‘oh my god’.

Chibs, Jax and everyone looking from Tig, to her, to Gemma and back again.

“You fucking told her?!” Gemma accused at Tig. The weight of Gemma’s heated reaction had her reel back in her chair.

“No! Why would I go talking about that to some girl I barely know!” Tig yelled back at Gemma.

“Well, how else could she have found out?” Gemma waved an arm in her direction.

“Because she’s psychic and read me yesterday in Church!” Tig said.

Gemma scoffed so hard, she raised her eyebrows at it. “There’s no such thing as psychics. What bullshit scam are you running in my club!” Gemma accused towards her.

Some of the guys looked at her and she just shrugged helplessly, not bothering answering Gemma’s wild accusation.

“Hold up, was that up in Rogue River?” Jax asked looking from Gemma to Tig and back.

Tig glared at her and she winced that she overstepped.

“Sorry.” She said to him. Tig sighing in frustration. “I read you. I told you, I’d know everything about you.”

“Fuck.”

“It didn’t happen that way.” Gemma tried to defend herself.

Tig glared hard at Gemma for throwing him under the bus.

“What...did you think that if they didn’t call Rogue River that they wouldn’t get the story? Jesus Gem. I love you, but you push and push. God damn it. I was there to protect you. And you made everyone’s job harder with that stunt you pulled. So don’t try and spin that this was my fault.” Tig spit out.

Gemma shot her a death glare, but her silence only showed everyone that she was right with what happened.

Clay leaning towards Tig. “Explain. Now.” His finger jabbing at Tig and down on the table. Eyes hard on Tig.
“Clay…” Gemma tried again.

Clay glaring down the table, finger pointing at his wife now. “I’m talking to Tig.”

Tig took a long breath, releasing it before speaking. “She found out about her mother and Nate in the paper. She was going stir-crazy in Oregon. Gemma snuck out of the room and tried to hotwire a SUV. The owner of said SUV showed up she fought with the guy. We were running to help her, but she stabbed the guy before we could take control of the situation.”

Clay glaring down the table at Gemma as Tig laid out the events. Jax swiveled his head from Gemma to Tig.

“How bad?” Clay asked.

“She nearly cut his di...manhood off.” Tig said, eyeing the kids at the table.

“Ma!”

“I did not! It was a flesh wound. If I wanted it off, it'd be on the ground.” Gemma defended herself. All the guys flinched at the thought of being stabbed down there.

“Jesus Christ. How much?” Clay asked.

“Five grand. Wiped out my reserves on me at the time. We couldn’t stay there anymore after that, we had to go to Nate’s.”

“What did Bachman charge you?” Opie asked.

“Two, but Gem had most of it, the rest he took in goods from the house.” Tig reported.

“Jesus Christ.” Clay swore.

“It’s fine, Clay. I fixed it. We’re fine. This was what...two years ago.” Tig waved the whole thing off.

“But Gemma never paid you back the five grand, did she?” Bobby picked up.

Tig sighed but didn’t deny Bobby's question.

“For two years, you owed Tig five grand. And you never paid him back?” Jax asked his mother.

“It was club money, not his.” Gemma defended herself.

The guys reeled back at Gemma trying to pass the buck.

Tig glared at Gemma for trying to deny the truth of what they had to do to protect her. What he had to not just do to protect her but pay out of his own pocket. She noticed Tig didn't argue back to Gemma over the issue, letting it slide. Well, that wasn't right. After all this...no. Not happening.

“No, it wasn’t. It was Tig’s.” She informed everyone, not letting the truth get buried by Gemma’s need to do a PR spin on her fuck up.

“Five thousand, two years, three percent interest rate, compound it monthly...You owe Tig, five thousand three hundred and eight dollars..seventy nine cents.” She said as she did the calculations in her head, imagining the numbers floating over Jax’s head.
Tig and everyone staring at her again. Gemma shooting flames of napalm at her.

“What?” She yanked her attention back from her math problem back to the people around the table. All of whom, stared at her like she was a freekish alien.

“I told you I was good at math.” She said defensively. The silent staring getting to her, making her nervous.

“Three percent matches the return of the S&P 500 lately. Not a completely horrible investment, though you could have done better if you traded the five grand in the option markets.” She pointed out to Tig, filling in the silence.

“Oh my God. She’s gone completely rainman on us.” Happy said.

“What? Rain man? What’s that?”

Tig groaned next to her. “Oh fucking hell.”

“You don’t know who Rainman is?” Bobby asked astonished.

She checked Chibs, but he was fighting to keep from laughing his ass off. “I’ll put it on the list.” He managed to tell her.

“Oh, it’s some movie reference?”

He nodded, wiping at his eyes.

She shrugged. “Okay..whatever.” Giving him a soft nudge. “Quit laughing at me, you told me to be my whole weird me-ness.”

Chibs just pressed a kiss to her temple. “Love you, m’ anam.”

Opie, Happy, and Bobby just shook their heads. Jax pointing to Gemma, “Pay Tig back his money, all of it. Jesus Christ, my mother, a welcher.”

The table broke then, the guys all laughing. She wasn’t sure if it was because of her or Tig they were laughing at. Gemma kept glaring daggers at her and she sighed in defeat that she couldn’t win at whatever just happened.

She didn’t mean to make waves. Between the pot, the stress, and Gemma’s general interrogation of her, pushed her to divert the attention away from her and Chibs and having kids. What the hell was the matter with her? She learned from years of abuse to just keep her mouth shut and stay in the woodwork. Let everyone else take the spotlight of the life going on in front of her.

And, now, here she was stirring the hornet’s nest. She couldn’t seem to find her footing anymore. She thought in frustration.

Slightly pissed that Gemma ruined her high with her snide questions and comments. As if she had any bearing in her life or Chib’s life. And kids. Where did that come from? She stared at her plate, she hadn’t thought about having kids. She didn’t think she would be alive right now.

She looked to Chibs and wondered if he wanted to have kids. He had Kerrianne already. But was he expecting her to become a mom? And with her abilities, would she even be able to hold her child without reading them? It was something that she never considered before.

God, things were moving so fast. It’s been barely two weeks since Chibs found her. Got her out of
the basement, riding across the country. She loved travelling with him. They were so in tune with each other. With the money in the trust, they could travel the world. She wanted that. But not right now. Everything just exhausted her, physically she needed to get stronger. Back up to a normal weight. She refocused back to the table. Gemma and Clay having a showdown. Jax leaning back in his chair looking at her curiously, as Tara helped Abel wipe his mouth. Opie matching Jax.

“So what are your plans?” Gemma harped still at her and Chibs. “Does Fiona and Kerrianne know you’re hooking up with a teenager?” She directed the question to Chibs. Jesus, this again.

Chibs settled back in the chair and held her hand, his thumb doing that caressing thing that sent her heart racing. He looked to her with a heavy eye and she knew he was feeling the connection, too.

“I haven’t had time to call Fi or Kerrianne. We just got back. Not that its any of your business, but Fi and I are divorced. I’m still Kerrianne’s father. I send money to them every month. And I doubt they would have a problem with Nancy being in my life.”

Nancy gave him a hopeful smile.

“We just got back to town, want to settle in, before making any decisions. The club needs to vote on her yet anyway. Just want her to focus on gaining some weight back. There’s no rush.” Chibs volleyed back to Gemma.

“What do you mean the club has to vote on her? You’re going to vote her into the club, to the table? That’s not allowed by the charter.” Gemma harped towards Clay and Jax.

Chibs sighed, his arm going around her shoulders as she leaned into him. She wanted to curl right there in his lap and fall asleep. She just felt so safe in Chib’s arms, despite the arguments and barely concealed threats glared her way from Clay and Gemma throughout the night. Clay glaring at her for becoming a problem not just in the club, but now at home. There was just no winning it seemed.

Jax and Tig quickly filling in Gemma on why they need to figure out what to do with the two of them.

She didn’t like how they had to explain the club business to Gemma, as if she had any weight in what the guys did or not. From what she’d seen, and learned so far, old ladies don’t have a say in the club. The fact Gemma was forcing them to tell her this set her on edge. Lyla and Tara’s eyes bouncing between Gemma and the guys, flicking to her in concern. But silent as they let the guys handle Gemma.

She gave Chibs a sympathetic look as he heaved a heavy sigh. The two of them of the same mind in that moment. Her hand tightened in his, his responding eyes sharpened on her.

“So Chibs might leave?” Gemma’s voice grew strained. “How will that work with the Irish?”

He was starting to think it might be a good idea to leave anyway. The danger the club is coming into with this cartel shit was worrying on him. Plus, the money in her trust, if anyone found out about it. They could try and take her, take her money, use her against him and the club. It wouldn’t be a bad idea to set up some fake papers, in case they needed to leave suddenly.

Her worry that with the muling, she was right that if they were caught, it would be hard time they go away. He didn’t want to be separated from her. Nor she him. God, the thought of her out here on her own, while he was locked up. No, it couldn’t happen. She looked up at him, his hand squeezing hers as his thoughts raced. He kissed her again, ignoring the conversation around the
Fuck, he’d leave the club in a heartbeat if she said the word. Bobby trying to tell everyone to quit talking about club business outside of Church. Gemma gripping her silverware tightly as if she was getting ready to use them as weapons.

“You ready to go?” He asked her in a thick brogue that set her heart racing.

“Absolutely.” She agreed breathily.

He stood up, helping her up, as well. Everyone’s attention moved to them again as they got up. Gemma glaring at Nancy. He was tired and wanted to go home. Everyone had a chance to interrogate her. Now it was time to get the fuck out of here.

“Where the hell do you two think you’re going? We’ve got dessert yet.” Gemma ordered.

He growled frustrationally, as if sitting through dessert was going to change his opinion on anything. Nancy jumped in, saving everyone from his anger and frustration.

“Thank you for dinner. I enjoyed meeting and speaking with everyone. But, I’m still really tired from the trip. Maybe next time?” She said politely.

More politely than anyone ever is or was in the club. Her manners making Gemma back off for the moment. Long enough for them to escape.

He took her hint and just started out the door. She following him, their hands linked.

He quickly climbed onto his bike, helping Nancy on. And they were racing out into the dark night. Her hands tucked into his belt and palming his abdomen as he navigated through the town to his house. Their house. The further they drove away from Gemma’s house the better he felt.

Walking back in, they put their jackets on the hook by the door.

“You want ice cream?” She asked, as she headed to the kitchen.

“Aye. Gods above, I wish someone would tell Gemma to lay off the spices.” He watched as Nancy scooped ice cream into a couple of bowls.

“So it wasn’t just me. I thought it tasted weird, but most everyone seemed to be fine with it. Thought my taste buds were screwed up. But then, I have no idea what its supposed to taste like in the first place.”

“No, you weren’t wrong. One of the reasons, a lot of us try and avoid going to her place for meals. She gets so riled up telling people what to do she forgets if she spiced something or not. Ends up overdoing it or not. Everyone is too scared of her to tell her she’s a terrible cook.”

“What about Clay...wouldn’t he say something?” She asked as she put away the ice cream.

He huffed. “No, I think with those cigars he’s always smoking he can’t taste anything anymore.”

They went to the backyard patio to eat their ice cream.

“Salad was good though.” He said.

“Tara made that. Sorry for spilling the beans about Tig and Gemma.”
“Don’t be sorry. You were right to bring it up. I’m surprised Tig let that go for so long. Course he was in Stockton for most of that time. But if there’s anything else like that, I hope that you know you can trust me to tell me whatever it is.”

“I didn’t mean to bring it up. The way Gemma was questioning me...questioning us. You didn’t hear what she was asking me while we had been separated.”

“Oh?”

She licked at her spoon. “She quizzed me on where I’m from, my parents, what they did, asking that they didn’t mind me taking off. Tara knew Naperville, went there with some girlfriends of hers when she lived in Chicago. Gemma then asked me how I got my scar, if that was how I suckered you into bringing me here.”

“She didn’t.” His eyes sharpened on her, outraged at Gemma’s insinuation.

“She did. You can ask Tara or Lyla. Tara was outraged. Kept asking me if I’d seen a doctor. I put Tara off, got a feeling she’s not going to let it go until I get checked out.” She shrugged.

“Anyway, Gemma switched her game plan, asked me if I knew about Fiona and Kerrianne, pointing out my age. Told her that we’d talked, that I knew you were divorced and helped them out with money. When I brought up the money, she asked if it bothered me that you would be sending money to them rather than spending it on me. Brought up the new clothes and coat I was wearing.”

“Jesus Christ, why didn’t you come get me?”

“If she’d gotten physical, yes, I would have come for you. But it never got that far. I had to start to lay the ground rules for her. I had to draw the line that what we have with each other is not consumption for anyone but us.” She thought about it and remembered the verbal sparring going on. “I think also, Tara and Lyla needed to see it, too.”

“What do you mean? Were they challenging you, too?”

“No. Not at all. But I got the sense that watching me spar with Gemma...it was a learning experience for them.”

He sighed, looking at her in thought. She shrugged at him.

“Anyway, I mulled over my options on how to respond to Gemma. I couldn’t fight her and believe me, she was asking for a fight. She wanted it. And we were at a party, getting into a physical or verbal fight wasn’t very festive. You would have had hysterics when she tried to paint me as a gold digger.”

“So, what did you do?” He snorted.

Grinning at him, “Well, I just said that I didn’t realize that you were supposed to call her to get her approval for your spending money for my clothes. Then remembering that you and Tig were calling the guys for all of your parts, asking if you and Tig were supposed to call her for approval on that, too. Told her that I’d mention it to you.”

He slapped his hand to his forehead. “Mary, mother of Christ.” He swore. She waggled her brows at him with a smirk. And he broke laughing. “Fuck, I wish I was fucking there to see it.”

“Next time you buy something, I think you should call Gemma. Even if its for a pack of gum.” She suggested.
He guffawed at her idea. He pulled her into his lap as they relaxed under the dark night sky.

“I’ve been thinking, with the trust we shouldn’t tell anyone about it.” He said a few minutes later.

She looked to him in question. “Why? I mean, I wasn’t going to. It’s not anyone’s business except ours.”

He shifted a little. “Yours. It's your money. You do what you want with it. But, we are outlaws. We deal with some not so nice people. If it got out about your money, it could give people ideas.”

“Ideas?”

“Aye, ideas like kidnapping you. Blackmail. Any sort of things that I really don’t want to think about.”

“I suppose you’re right. And we really don’t have a plan of what we’re going to do. Like stay here or leave. Okay, I won’t tell anyone about it. Money just seems to bring out the worst in people. I saw it first hand back home.”

He didn’t say anything, just took her hand and caressing it in sympathy.

“You are my family. No matter what Gemma or the club says. No matter what ends up happening.” She said.

He smiled at her conviction. “I was proud of ye’ tonight. You handled yourself with more grace than what those idiots deserve.” He kissed her, breaking for air, she yawned on him. He stifled the laugh at the sight of her fighting to stay awake.

“Come on, let’s get to bed. It’s been a long day. And I’ve got work tomorrow.”

“Hmph…” She garbled, her mind tired and working out what they were going to do with him at work. But she was too tired to think straight anymore. He dragged her up, washed up the bowls, setting them in the dishwasher. They were tucked into bed after brushing their teeth and changing.

He held her close as she curled tighter against his warm body.

"You had an interesting opinion on the muling. It surprised me.” He said.

"Hmm...well, you didn't ask me for my opinion before. Something is going on with Tara.”

“What do you mean?” He asked.

“I don’t know exactly. She was stationed next to me in the kitchen. The way Gemma talked and lorded over everyone. Tara’s a freaking neonatal surgeon. And she takes the snide comments Gemma dishes out. I couldn’t believe it. Lyla, too. She looked scared. But you can tell looking at her that she doesn’t have much self-confidence. It was just weird, I don’t know. Maybe I’m just seeing things that aren’t there.”

“I didn’t notice much different in Tara, myself. But I wasn’t paying much attention to her. Got the heavy sell from Clay and Jax over the muling. They were having their fun over me mooning over ye’. Teasing Tig with your reading of him. And well, you started going off on exploding stars and Juicey was all worried about the sun exploding.” He chuckled.

She groaned. “God, I was so high. I was floating, I’m surprised I was able to make any coherent sentences. I think I need more protein in my diet. I’ve been floating a lot lately.”
“Floating?”

“Yeah, in my head, I get latched onto an idea or concept and I just feel like I’m floating. And it’s not the pot. It happens without it, too. Like my head is expanding and the whole why and wherefores are laid out in front of me to see to whatever it is I’m thinking. A minute later, I’m snapped back in my head and aware of what’s happening around me. It’s freaking me out.”

“Okay, we’ll work on that. You mentioned a journal, maybe you should keep one here. See if there’s any correlation from what you’re eating and your abilities.” He suggested.

“Okay.”

“I don’t care what the club decides. You are more important than the club. We’ll play things by ear, see how things settle things up. Rather we stuck around a bit to give you time to get better.”

She hugged him tighter. Whispering in the dark, “I love you.”

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 31

Chapter Summary

First day back at work.

Chapter Notes

Thank you for sticking with my story. I know my updates have slowed down, school started up again.

Chibs is using a dolly to go under the cars he works on in the garage. I know he has a lift. My thinking is that he doesn't want her to accidentally hurt herself, forgetting the car being lifted up and such.

Early the next morning, they pulled into the TM lot. As they got off the bike, he saw Dog and Lowell already setting up for the day and Tig pulled up next to them.

She set her helmet down on the seat of the bike and finger-combed her hair back. Idly looking at the ends of her hair, time for a trim she mentally noted.

“This is going to be interesting.” Tig shot them an amused look, shaking his head.

“You have any better ideas, I’m open to hearing it. But until you do, you can keep your comments to yourself.”

“Fine, fine.” Tig threw his hand in the air. “Just be glad you left last night when you did. Dinner became a fucking nightmare after you two took off. Gemma was in a rare mood.”

“Did she pay you back, at least?” She asked.

“Yeah, Jax and Clay wouldn’t let me leave without her forking over the cash.” Tig said, lighting a cigarette. “Gemma was pissed.”

He ran a hand along his goatee giving Tig a serious look.

“What was the general consensus on her?” He asked, nodding in her direction.

Tig glanced at her and she shrugged.

“Gemma and Clay aren’t fans, as you can guess. Everyone else is somewhere between curious and clueless. But the majority are still willing to hear you two out. It’s not open arms yet.” He shrugged. “It’s like what we suspected would happen, nobody knows what to do with you.”

“And you?” Chibs asked directly.
Tig shifted on his feet at the question. “Fuck man, I’m in your corner. I know the shit that went down. And I gotta keep trying to get her to talking about what she saw in my future. Fucking giving me nightmares.”

Chibs grinned amused that some teenager could scare Tiggy. Tig caught what he was thinking and gave him a sour look. “Fuck you.”

Which only made Chibs laugh at Tig’s pout. She just shrugged. “What about your opinion on the muling? You still leaning in Clay’s direction?” Chibs asked.

Tig sighed, scratching at his goatee. “We need the money. Selling guns to the cartel, their deep pockets of cash. We’d get whole fast.”

“Yeah, but it requires muling coke that could send us back to prison for the rest of our lives. With our priors…” He didn’t have to finish the sentence.

“It’d be pretty much the same result if we’re caught with the guns.” Tig pointed out.

“Come on.” He sighed, giving up on fighting more about the upcoming vote. “We need to get to work.”

He led her to his bay of the garage, located right up against the wall to the office. Tig went over to Dog and Lowell.

Stopping at the small, battered desk along the wall that separated the garage from the office. There was a viewing window of plexiglass, peeking through it she saw the inside of the office. There was an air conditioner, the back end jutting out inside the garage. Seeing the piles of paperwork sitting on a desk, the wall next to the desk, covered in business cards and posters. Racy posters. There was a couch there as well. She couldn’t imagine any customers wanting to stick around in there waiting for their cars to be fixed.

“That’s Gemma’s office. She handles the paperwork and computer stuff in there.”

“Ah. I don’t think I’ve ever seen you or popped up with you in there from the dreams.”

He shrugged pulling a clipboard off the desk. “I don’t spend time in there. Just toss paperwork and back out here. Gemma doesn’t like to come into the bays while we’re working, especially when it gets hot. Preferring the air conditioning.” He detailed.

Turning her attention to him and the desk. The desk was littered with well-thumbed and grease-stained manuals, catalogs, random bits of paper, dirty mugs, tools, odd parts, a small printer, and God knows what else.

“I thought, maybe, you wouldn’t mind clearing some of this up. Set it up for you to use for your trading. You’ll need a laptop?”

“Yes, but it doesn’t have to be right away. It takes a couple of days for the money and accounts to be set up. Are these your tools and parts?”

“Some.” He grabbed up some of the tools off said desk, setting them on top of a bench in the back of the bay. The parts he took over to Tig and Dog telling them to keep their shit off the desk, pointing in her direction.

The guys giving her a look. She gave them a wave and they turned back to what they were doing, he coming back to her.
“I’ve got an easy day, mostly oil changes. I’ll come back and forth, maybe we’ll go on a tow run and get out of here away from the guys in the afternoon.”

“Okay. Just do what you need to do, I’ll try and stay out of your way.” She said.

“Don’t you dare.” He teased, pulling her into his arms, her hands resting on his chest. Classic rock music started up and the guys were talking, as he held her to him. “Ignore the rough talk. The guys aren’t the sophisticated variety like me.” He grinned at his own compliment.

She smiled back. “I don’t mind, I’d heard them before from the dreams.”

He sighed and leaned in for a kiss, which she granted easily. They swayed, gearing up for a difficult day. “Right, let's give this a go.”

She nodded and slipped from his arms and forced herself to turn to the desk. She saw a roll of garbage bags and grabbed one. She started organizing the papers, looking for what can be tossed and what should be saved. Looking around, she saw an empty box and used that to toss questionable items that the guys would need to go through.

Her time in the basement taught her to pare her possessions down to the minimum, not that she had much to begin with. Anything left strewn about was likely to be torn, tossed, or burned by her stepmother. Remembering when she’d inadvertently left her copy of Charlotte’s Web in the kitchen one morning, one of her only physical reminders of her mother.

She found it on her card table. A charred mess that fell apart in her hands, when she got home from school that day. After that, she’d learned to hide her things in out of the way spaces in the basement.

Chibs turned to the car in his bay and started working on changing the oil. He would come back to her after about five minutes, his face tense in pain, matching hers.

His hands grimy from the oil and grease, he scowled at himself, not wanting to get her dirty.

“Damn it.”

“Here.” She threaded her hands around his waist under his t-shirt, the two of them pressing their foreheads to each others. Once their headaches eased off, he’d kiss her and go back to the car and she to her cleaning.

“How’s it going with all that?” He asked at one point.

“Fine. Some of it, you’ll need to go through it. Not sure if its important or not.”

He nodded in response and gave her a kiss before turning back to his work.

She jerked back when several porno magazines were uncovered. She growled at the lewd pictures on the covers. Seriously? At work?

She went to Chibs tool monstrosity, poking in a couple of drawers, finding a pair of pliers that would work for her needs at the moment.

Chibs raised his brows at her odd behavior. She pulled out one of the magazines with the pliers. Unwilling to actually touch them with her bare hands. The pages were curled from some kind of questionable substance that she didn’t think she really wanted to know what substance exactly.

Turning so Chibs could see what it was she had found in her excavation. Sending him an annoyed
look, dropping the magazine into the box. “That’s not mine.” He asserted with a laugh, turning back to the car.

“Uh, huh.” She tossing more magazines into the box before returning the pliers from where she found them. Chibs winking at her as their eyes caught again, she rolling her eyes.

They managed a few more minutes when they needed another headache break.

“Those really aren’t mine.”

“Sure, okay, if you say so.”

He shook his head at her mocking tone. “I don’t need some skin rags. Certainly not to wank off here at work. Not exactly the most comfortable place to…” He stopped himself at her look.

“No really...keep going. You want a shovel to help you dig that hole you’re digging for yourself?”

He giggled at the stupid argument they were having. She tickled her fingers at his sides, making him squirm and giggle harder. “Gaakk. Quit that. Witch, is what ye’ are.” He groused.

She grinned at him but quit tickling him. Their foreheads resting against each others. Her hands sliding up his back, along his spine. He groaned and stepped closer to her. Their eyes connected, she gasped at the heat in his look. He grinned at her, knowing what he was doing to her. They shared a mutual heated smile. Forcing themselves to keep things PG while at work. She groaned as she battled to keep herself from attacking him.

Tig wandered over, interrupting their moment. “Shit, there’s a desk there? When did that happen? Oooh, Jasmine…been looking for her...” Tig quickly grabbed the Penthouse on top of the pile and walked off again, thumbing through the magazine.

She stared after Tig lost in the magazine. “Good thing I didn’t toss it outright, there might have been bloodshed.” Setting him off laughing at her observation, giving her a kiss before they went back to their separate jobs again.

It was about ten when Piney eyed her as he strolled into the office. She shrugged and kept working on organizing the paperwork and catalogs.

“Hey, are these papers for Gemma? For whatever she does to the paperwork here?” She asked him, he tilting his head from under the hood of a green car. Her free hand at his back.

“Yeah, just drop them on her desk in there.” He said with a head nod.

She turned into the office, Piney looking up at her from behind the desk. He was fiddling with his oxygen tank. “You okay, there?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Something you need?” Piney looked up from his tank to her, his bright blue eyes meeting hers.

“No, just found these on the desk out there. Chibs said to drop them over here for Gemma to handle.” She dropped the papers in a pile that hopefully was the right place.

“You okay, darlin’?” Piney asked.

“Hmm? Oh...yes. I’m fine. Sorry for freaking everyone out.” Realizing he was talking about reading Tig.
“You got nothin’ to apologize for. It was very...interesting watching you...listening to you.”

Her headache ramped up and she just nodded to Piney’s comment. “Well, sorry anyway, I better get back to it…” She stepped back and pointed back out the door to the garage.

“Sure thing.” He waved her off.

She escaped back into the garage, breathing a sigh of relief. She felt trapped in that tiny office, and it wasn’t Piney’s presence. The utter disorganization and obvious sense of ownership of Gemma permeated in there. Shaking the unease off, she focused back on the task at hand.

Chibs had swapped out vehicles while she was in the office. The phones had started ringing on a pretty consistent basis. The grease, stained phone on the desk rang with the other one located closer to Tig at the center of the garage along with the phone in the office. Tig took over answering the phone and Piney picking up when he didn’t. She thought maybe answering it, but didn’t know what to tell anyone.

She saw Gemma out of the corner of her eye as she tied off the full garbage bag. Gemma went into the office, not noticing her. Thankfully. After last night, she hoped that Gemma would have calmed down before they ran into each other again. She heard Piney and Gemma talking in the office but couldn’t make out the words. Ignoring them, she tossing more garbage out.

Clay pulled into the lot and Gemma came storming out of the office, beelining right for him. Piney stood in the doorway, watching Gemma and Clay.

Gemma was too far away for her to hear what was being said, but her body language was enough to tell her that she was pissed. The way Piney kept an eye on the two of them even as he walked from the office to the picnic table just outside the clubhouse, Piney must have said something that riled Gemma up. Her eyes going back to Gemma and Clay.

Gemma throwing her body confrontationally in Clay’s personal space. Clay trying to move away from her, but she reeled around and kept up her tirade at him. Clay swung her around, which was easy since she was wearing those stupid high-heeled boots of hers.

Their scuffle grew in intensity. Clay backed Gemma up against the metal railing, his hand raised as though to strike her. Her arm rising to block the potential hit. But he froze, a tense breath and he spun away from her, striding into the clubhouse. Gemma was left shaking, staring after Clay. Her hands smoothing down her shirt. She looking around to see if anyone caught their fight.

Seeing Gemma shaken and vulnerable like that, she didn’t think she would appreciate it if she was being watched by her.

Quickly turning back to the desk and her cleaning. But her head was pounding away on her. Chibs was trapped under a SUV he was battling, had him swearing. She knelt down next to him and put her hand to his belly, his shirt riding up.

“Oy, thank God.” He groaned at her touch.

“You doing okay under there?” She asked.

“Fucking hate exhaust systems.” He complained. His eyes catching hers with their weird body angles. Giving her a smile. “I’m fine.”

“Okay. Whatever this is you’re doing, its not worth you hurting yourself over.”
He grunted. “Not to worry, m’anam. I’ll get this beast beaten into submission.”

She sighed and shook her head, giving his belly a pat before turning back to her cleaning. Chibs banging away under the car.

Gemma gathered herself back up from her confrontation with Clay. Shaken and angry how he spoke to her, calling her just an old lady. Threatening to hit her for speaking her mind. The nerve of him.

All the sacrifices she’s made to get the club where it needs to be. She won’t let it be all destroyed by Clay and his stupidity. Thank God Piney told her about the drugs. She’ll have to make Clay see reason with this whole thing. Jax, surely, will side with her on this. He’d never do anything stupid like mule coke. Not after the near miss with Abel. Wendy and her weakness for a quick rush over her child. Stupid junky whore. She told Jax that she was no good, but did he listen to her? No, of course not. Now Tara’s back and engaged to Jax. She seems to have a good head on her, except for these mysterious letters...damn it.

She stopped abruptly. Seeing Chibs under a SUV while his teenager gash was cleaning off the desk next to his bay. The bitch making herself comfortable by the looks of it. Its one thing to set up house with one of the Sons, but entirely something else when they tried to impinge on her territory.

She didn’t like the girl. Embarrassing her in front of her family. Once Tig confirmed what happened in Oregon, Jax was all over her to pay Tig back. It was club money. It was her due. All the times she shelled out cash to the other old ladies to get food on the table when their husbands were in Stockton or Chino. Buying food for the clubhouse whenever something was going on and they went into lockdown.

The club owed her that money. Yet, she had to take cash out of her personal stash to pay Tig. Not letting him leave until she did. She was so angry. Looking to Clay and Jax to handle it for her. Wouldn’t even let her pay Tig later in the week, alone. Had to make a big production out of it.

Tig had to have told the girl what happened, it was the only way she could have known. She didn’t believe this psychic bullshit, at all. Jax telling her to keep away from her before he left the house.

The shock and outrage she felt when she learned that because of her so-called psychic abilities, that they would have to vote on her. That it was dangerous to have such a wild-card wandering around.

Later on, after everyone had left for the night, Clay bitching at her that she didn’t do her job to get the gash under their thumb. Clay telling her that they needed Chibs with his connections to the Irish. And now because of all this, everything they worked for was up in the air. She couldn’t believe that it was all coming down to this.

Everything was fucking running away from her. The note from JT’s Irish gash, letters that could blow up in their faces. She even felt Tara pulling back from her. With her boys. She had to find them before Tara gives them to Jax and he reads them. Piney telling her about the muling. Clay threatening her to back off on the club business, calling her an old lady that needs to learn her place. Raising his fist to do what he said he’d do unless she backed off. Now this gash is here at the garage. She and Chibs hanging off of each other as if they were lovesick teenagers. Chibs should know better.

This gash was messing with her club, her men. She has no idea what she’s stepping into. It was never good when one of her boys goes all stupid over a girl.
This was definitely something she can fix; no female ever crosses her, she’s the queen around here. The least she could do was rectify this. Convincing Clay over the muling will have to wait for another day. This club is not getting into drugs.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Gemma demanded. “You can’t be hanging around the garage while the guys are working.”

The girl startled, blinking up at her. Glaring hard at the gash for not answering her right away.

“Cleaning off the desk.” She said, with a point of her finger.

“I can see that. Who told you you could do that?”

“Chibs.” Her eyes flitted towards where he was under the SUV.

Gemma stepped closer to the girl, invading her personal space. “Look, I’m sure you’re a nice girl. But being with a Son, it takes more than a sob story and a tight pussy to keep one of them. So it just might be better if you went back home. Your vacation on the wild side is over, little girl.” Enjoying the blush coming over the girl’s cheeks. Yeah, she was not club material if she can’t handle the way they talked.

She stepped back from Gemma, panicked. “I...I’m with Chibs. I have to be. He has to be with me.” Horrified by how crassly Gemma was talking to her. And how close Gemma had snuck up on her.

“There’s no have to be here. Now just pack up your shit and get your ass home.” Gemma scoffed. Grabbing at her arm to propel her off the property.

“No, don’t.” She cried as she tried to evade Gemma’s hands. “Don’t touch me!”

But she was too late or Gemma was too fast. It didn’t matter, because the next thing she knew she was falling, drowning in Gemma. Memories, thoughts, emotions that weren’t her own flooded through her.

She fought for her sense of self but all she had was anger. Anger twisting through her for letting Gemma trap her like this. She didn’t even think about it, turned her hands and grabbed onto Gemma’s wrists. Letting go of her natural resistance, Gemma’s mind and soul crashed her senses. If Gemma was going to force her to take this reading, she was going to make sure to get it all.

Consequences of her secrets rippling out. All of them at risk because of what Gemma thinks is just and right. It wasn’t even for the club...it was for her. It just kept pouring in, so many secrets. The letters were the key. She felt sick at being forced to see Gemma.

Chibs frowned as his headache kept building, but he did his best to ignore it to finish fastening the new exhaust into place since he was almost done. He lost track of time in his concentration. He glanced towards where Nancy was working but saw another pair of legs next to hers. He recognized the boots. Fuck, Gemma again. He swiveled his head a little more and swore. Seeing Gemma trying to get her hands free of Nancy’s grip. Nancy rigid as she hung onto Gemma’s wrists.

“Fuck, Gemma! Let her go!” He yelled at her, dropping his tools and struggled to move out from under the goddamn SUV. He heard Tig jogging over at his yell.

“Gem, let her go!” Tig ordered as he ran up to Gemma.

“I’m fucking trying! God damn...she’s stronger than she looks. Get her off me.” Ordering Tig to
help her. Yanking on her hands back again and again, but the gash kept tight hold on her wrists. Like fucking handcuffs. But even more unnerving was the gashes eyes staring at her, her gaze rock steady on her own. She felt a strange slithering sensation crawling up inside her. Yanking her hands again to get her off her. Tig just standing next to her. Stupid idiot. Why wasn’t he helping her? “Get her off me!” She tried again.

“I can’t!” Tig swore as he looked at Nancy, her eyes seemed to fill with the purple of her iris, the gold and blue glittering under the harsh fluorescent lights. Rigidly, holding onto Gemma. Nancy’s glittering eyes stared into Gemma, they held such a force it sent shivers up his spine. He hadn’t ever seen that look on Nancy’s face. Even with his own reading, he could tell she was fighting to stay aware. But whatever she was seeing in Gemma...he wasn’t sure if he wanted to know. His lizard brain telling him to fucking run if she turned those eyes on him.

“Chibs! You need to get over here.” He yelled to Chibs.

Chibs still fighting and swearing to get out from under the SUV. His loose, work shirt catching on a wheel of the dolly he laid on. Cursing and rolling the fucking dolly to work his shirt out of the wheel.

“What’re you…? You’re right fucking here! Get her off me…” Gemma swore at Tig for failing her. Dog and Lowell had wandered over to see what the ruckus was about.

“Don’t fucking touch her, Tig! Nobody fucking touch her!” Chibs yelled from under the SUV, panicking at seeing Dog and Lowell’s legs.

Gemma glared at Tig, he sent her a worried look, the two of them heard a low, melodic voice and the two of them turned back to her. She jerked her hands so Gemma was forced to face her head on, eyes locking. She didn’t know what was going on, but suddenly she felt afraid. Small and afraid as those fucking purple eyes stared her down.

“Chiiibs!” Tig warned again.

He managed to get free from under the SUV, finally. Fuck. He was up and running towards Nancy before she took a header onto the floor.

“Queen of Lies. Full of horrors and deceit. Your words are your wounds.” Nancy said, irregardless of who was watching and listening. “Your blood is cold.”

She lifted her eyes off Gemma, up into the ceiling of the garage and screamed under the weight of all that was of Gemma. Her head splitting open as the pain and bloody consequences crashed into her, hearing the faint fall of letters all around her.

Her scream ripped inside him as her voice echoed throughout the garage. She going limp, that Gemma was able to pull her hands back. He caught her quickly so she didn’t hit her head on the concrete floor. But she started convulsing in his arms. Jesus Christ, he’d never seen her react like this before. Looked like a grand mal seizure.

He ran a hand over her pulse and found it thready but there. Her pupils were even. She seemed to be breathing okay. His heart hammering as he held her tight. Trying to absorb her pain that had her convulsing.

Looking to Gemma, she rubbed at her wrists and looked to be a little pale and shaken. It was the very picture of a victim. But compared to Nancy, Gemma was by no means a victim in anything that just happened.
“What the fuck did you do to her?” He growled dangerously.

“Nothing!” Gemma yelled back, standing up straighter. “It was her. The stupid gash grabbed me.”

He set Nancy gently to lay on her side on the floor, casting a warning look to Dog and Lowell. Standing up in a hot rush, he got up into Gemma’s face. “Bullshit.” He bit out at Gemma. “Nancy wouldn’t have touched anyone. You had to have initiated it. So, I ask one more time and God help me... What did you do!?”

“Nothing.” Gemma glared at him. He kept staring Gemma down, knowing she’ll crack. They all crack before him, eventually. “Just told her that she should be thinking about going home.”

“Jesus Christ, Gemma.” Tig groaned.

He was furious. After all the shit he and Nancy went through and Gemma decided for him that Nancy had to go. He hadn’t realized he moved until Tig body-blocked him from grabbing Gemma.

Tig eyes worried. “Chibs, don’t. Look after your girl. She needs you.”

He forced himself to stand back. Taking a deep breath to calm his rage, before he beat Gemma bloody for her attack on Nancy. He didn’t care if she was Clay’s old lady, Jax’s mother, or the de facto Queen of the club. Deciding for him what she thought she had to do. As if she had any fucking right to do so.

“Chibs, take care of her.” Tig repeated.

He went back to Nancy and pulled her twitching body into his arms. His eyes dark with fury, as he stood back up and looked back at Gemma.

“She is home and she’s not going anywhere. And if you refer to her as a stupid gash again, you’ll fucking regret it. I don’t fucking care who you are.” Chibs threatened, taking tighter hold of Nancy deeper into his arms, he stalked across the lot.

His rage beating at him to turn around and slap the shit out of Gemma. His eyes falling to Nancy in his arms, her body still twitching and shaking from her reading of Gemma. The hairs on the back of his neck stood up when he heard Nancy calling Gemma a liar. Dear God what did she see?

Rat was smoking at the picnic table, he jumped up and opened the door for him at the sight of him with Nancy in his arms.

Bobby was behind the bar with some paperwork, glasses on. Piney was already imbibing in his daily ration of tequila. They perked up as he tightened his hold over Nancy, giving them a hard look.

“What happened?” Bobby asked his eyes wide in concern at seeing him with Nancy passed out and twitching in his arms.

“God damn Gemma happened.” Chibs bit out. Bobby and Piney giving each other a heavy look.

He ignored them and moved to the apartment and gently laid her down on the bed, lying down with her. Keeping his hand on the side of her face as she continued to twitch and fight with the visions she was being assaulted with. He kept watch over her as the minutes ticked by. Praying that she woke soon.
Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

Tig and Gemma

Chapter Notes

Thought about doing one long chapter, but easier to break this up in smaller chunks. Not sure exactly how many it’ll end up being. A lot of characters are coming and going.

Aftermath and reaction to Gemma forcing Nancy to read her/trying to kick her out.


Gemma had slumped back against the desk Nancy had been cleaning. Pacing in front of her. This was a such a fuck up. God damn it.

“Tig...What the hell was that?” Gemma waved a hand at Chibs and Nancy’s departure into the clubhouse.

He turned to her angrily. “Gemma, that was you getting your ass handed to you. Fuck!”

“What? What are you talking about? She’s the one that passed out...She’s a crazy person. Chibs shouldn’t be mixing up with someone like that. The club can’t be mixed up with her, not with the Irish and the Cartel. I was doing my job.” She defended herself angrily.

“Gemma! It is not your job to get between Chibs and Nancy. It is not your job to do whatever it is you think needs to be done for the club! The Irish and the Cartel are club business. Not yours! And Nancy is not crazy. She’s psychic, we told you last night. I heard her tell you not to touch her, but you ignored her. Now...she knows everything you ever did or plan to do.”

Gemma scoffed so hard, he thought she’d cough up a lung. “There is no such thing as psychics. Even that idiot shop downtown, everyone in town knows its a scam. It’s the same goddamn thing. Did you see all the new clothes he’s bought her? That jacket had to be nearly eight hundred bucks. She’s just out for his money.”

“Oh my God. Where do you come up with this shit?” He groaned, running his hands through his hair.

“What? You think I don’t have eyes. She’s got you and Chibs all twisted up. Now she’s going to dig her claws into the club. No. That can’t happen. I won’t let it.”

He seethed as Gemma spouted bullshit, he couldn’t believe what he was hearing.
“Stop. Just fucking stop. One, those clothes, Chibs bought them because she needed them. She didn’t have a fucking coat. It was fucking twelve degrees and she’s walking back and forth for at least four miles each way to get to school and back. No winter boots. She had keds! I’d dare you to try and live her life for a fucking week. You wouldn’t last the fucking day. She fought Chibs on him buying her shit. He got her the bare minimum she needed to get back here. We had to ride across the goddamn country and she didn’t have any boots! How many pair of boots and shoes do you own? And that’s just for tooling around town. When was the last time you went on a road trip on the back of a bike? In winter? Long fucking time.” He answered for her, not letting her interrupt him.

“Two, Nancy really is psychic, Gemma! She’s been doing it since she was eight years old. She read me in front of the guys in Church the other day. She knows things that not even you know about me. And now she’s read you. Do you not get it!” He leaned into her personal space, hands clenched so hard, fighting to keep from throttling her.

“She knows every little dirty secret you have in your pretty little head. God damn it Gemma, you never listen!” He spun away from her in pent up frustration.

“You can’t mean to believe her, can you?”

He took a step back from her, seeing that Gemma wasn’t hearing him. Wondering what the fuck Nancy saw that had her calling his queen a liar. He knew things that not even Jax or Gemma knew. Now he was wondering what things Gemma knew that nobody else knew.

“She called you a liar, the queen of lies. What lies are you spreading, Gemma? What truth are you covering up?”

His questions brought her up short. He saw the wheels working in her brain. God fucking damn it. There was something she was hiding. He clenched on his jaw as Gemma squirmed under his look. He felt like he didn’t know her anymore.

“Nothing. I don’t know anything.” She snapped at him.

“That better be true.” He said. Leaving her behind as he told Lowell to finish Chibs exhaust job and going into the clubhouse to check on Chibs and Nancy.
Chapter 33

Chapter Summary

Chibs/Nancy and Tig

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nancy jerked violently in his arms. Her body rigid with awareness. Her eyes popping open.

“Mo chridhe, you’re okay. Breathe, you’re okay.” Nancy’s eyes locked onto him, saw the panic in her eyes.

She felt her stomach turn, she fought his arms, needing the toilet. Fast. Chibs holding her down. Trapped.

“Going to be sick. Let me go.” She cried. His arms loosening instantly and she was off and running. Heaving what little she had in her stomach.

Hot tears burning a path down her cheeks. Her stomach rolling over on itself. Her head pounding. Gemma’s life replaying inside her. Her body shaking as she tried to excise the memories and future from her. They were heavy and dark, clawing at her, drawing blood inside her.

Chibs wet a towel and laid it at her forehead. His body curled around hers. The headache receding with his touch. Nancy cried. “Why? Why am I like this? Oh God...I can feel her in me.” She shook with shock. Cringing as all the secrets and deeds Gemma has done and will do, all in the name of her perverted definition of love. She couldn’t stop shaking, Chibs holding her tighter and tighter, rocking her.

He spoke softly to her, nonsensical gaelic. His voice rumbling into her ear, skittering inside her. Fighting back the memories and sensations she overloaded on with Gemma. Trying to compartmentalize all the information. How entwined Gemma is in the club, in everyone’s lives. The very lives that are in mortal danger because of her illformed ideas and schemes.

Her body and mind eventually tired herself out, falling limp into Chibs body. Barely aware of what or where she was. Exhaustion dragged at her. His voice giving her something to cling to, to rebuild her own sense of self.

“Better, mo chridhe?” He asked wiping her face with the cool cloth.

“I don’t know.” She felt sore all over, like she’d been beaten up from the inside, and her head...she gave up trying to figure out if she even had a head anymore at this point. The cool cloth felt good though, tilting her head slightly, following the path of the cloth.

“Shh. You’re okay, I’ve got ye’. Come on, let's get up off the floor, aye?” She nodded letting Chibs help her upright. She felt lightheaded but found her footing after a moment. And she couldn’t stop shivering.

“Are you cold?” He asked, leading her back to the bed.
“I don’t know. Never felt like this before. So tired.” She just wanted to lay down, not answer questions.

He pulled the blanket over her as they settled back into the bed again. “Just rest, m ‘anam.” He hushed to her. She dropping off to sleep soon as her head hit the pillow. Even asleep, she kept shaking.

A soft knock came on the door. Tig came in without waiting for an answer. He looked down at her. “She okay?”

“What do you think?” He said harshly.

Tig grimaced an apology for his idiotic question. He took a breath to calm down.

“What’s going on out there?” He asked soon as he felt calmer.

“I’ve got Lowell finishing your exhaust job. Gemm’s in the office.”

He glared at Tig that he could care less about what or where Gemma was at the moment.

“I reamed her out. For all the good it’ll do.” Tig shrugged. “You need anything?”

“Ginger ale. See if there’s any crackers or something in the kitchen.” He requested after giving Nancy another quick look as she shivered next to him. “She tossed her breakfast after all that.”

“No prob. Be right back.”

“Thanks brother.” As Tig set the soda and crackers on the nightstand.

“Sure. Has she always done the shaking thing?” He asked.

“No. This is new.”

“You really should get her to a doctor.”

“She won’t go. And I won’t force her.” He said abruptly. “She was coherent earlier before you came in. I’ll check her again when she wakes up.”

“Fuck. Okay. I have to get back out there.”

“Aye, thanks Tiggy.” Tig waved a hand and left the apartment, shutting the door behind him.

He looked down at her, her face tense, battling some internal nightmare. The delicate skin under her eyes, looking bruised.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My heart = mo chridhe
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 34

Chapter Summary

Tig and Jax

“What’s going on? Why’s Lowell working in Chibs bay?”

Tig sighed and set down his socket wrench, as Jax came up behind him. “Fuck, shit went down.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Gemma, tried to kick Nancy out of the garage.”

“What?”

Tig shrugged at him. “Chibs was under the SUV. Nancy was cleaning off the desk over there. Really making headway on it, too.”

Jax sighed at Tig for his personal commentary.

“Next thing I know, Nancy’s yelling ‘don’t’. Look over and Gemma’s grabbing onto Nancy. Nancy twists her wrists and latches onto Gemma. It happened so fast, I couldn’t do anything to stop it.”

Jax stared at Tig in utter disbelief. “Are you saying that Nancy...that she’s potentially read Gemma?”

“No potentially, did. Just like what she did with me in Church. But much weirder. And before you go jumping conclusions, it was Gemma that laid hands on Nancy first. I saw it, I heard Nancy tell her no. But it was like soon as contact was made, Nancy made sure she finished it kind of thing. Wouldn’t let Gemma go.”

“What do you mean, wouldn’t let her go?”

“Just what I said. Gemma was yanking at her hands to get Nancy off her. Chibs is yelling at Gemma to let her go. Yelling at me and the guys not to touch her. He was on the dolly under the SUV, got caught under there. Swearing a blue streak. Gemma’s yelling at me to get Nancy off her, I didn’t know what the fuck to do. Kept yelling for Chibs to haul ass. Nancy’s eyes purpled out. Starts talking cryptic, like what she did with me. But fucking weirder, somehow.”

“Weirder?” Jax asked, his brow popping up.

He shrugged. “I don’t know. When she read me, I could see her fighting it. A resistance, I guess. I don’t know. With Gemma, there wasn’t any of that. Like I said, Gemma started it, Nancy was finishing it.”

“Jesus Christ. I told Gemma not to get in Chibs or Nancy’s shit last night before I left.”

“Yeah, well, it didn’t work. And I’m not fucking surprised. Gemma’s on some trip. You should have heard the shit she was saying. Like it was her right to step in and deal with Chibs and Nancy.
Even talked about the club.”

“What about the club?”

“Fuck, just pointed out the money Chibs shelled out for Nancy’s clothes, her new jacket. Thinking that she’s here for his money. And if she’s put into the club, that she’ll be after the club money. I really don’t know where she comes up with this shit. I really don’t.”

Jax ran a hand over his shorn hair, his frustration mounting with what Tig was telling him. That his mother was riding some fucking power trip. God fucking damn it.

“Anyway, Nancy, she calls Gemma a liar. Right to her face. Queen of lies. Doom and gloom shit. Something about her words are her wounds. Says her blood is cold.”

“Blood is cold?” Jax asked in thought.

“Yeah, why? It mean something to you?”

“It just...Christ, I think it’s out of Macbeth. I’ll have to look it up.”

“Since when do you read Shakespeare?” Tig teased.

“Not since high school, asshole.”

“Well, it didn’t sound like Shakespeare when Nancy was saying it. It was fucking creepy. The lighting here, her eyes were all glittery as she stared at Gemma. Gemma fighting to get her off her. Chibs finally got out from under the SUV, grabbing Nancy as she screamed her head off before passing out.”

Jax sighed and paced a couple of steps.

“Nancy went into some kind of seizure. She was still shaking when I went to check on them, not as bad, shivering, like she was stuck in a deep-freezer or something.”

“Fuck. Why didn’t Chibs take her to the hospital?”

“I don’t know. She won’t go.” He threw his hands up in the air. “Even when we found her, she wouldn’t go to a doctor. Freaked out. She always recovered after a reading. But they seem to be getting worse. Or stronger. I don’t know.”

Tig took a breath and shrugged.

“Chibs checked her out, even left her twitching on the floor at one point.” Waved a hand off to the desk area where all the drama happened. “Jax, Chibs was fucking crazed. Thought he was going to rip Gemma’s head off. Gemma claiming that Nancy grabbed her. Chibs going on that Nancy would never touch anyone like that. Demanding to know what happened. Gemma copped to it that she told Nancy it was time for her to go home. Called her a stupid gash in front of him. I had to get between the two of them. Shook everyone up.”

“Jesus Christ.” Jax seethed, his jaw clenched.

“Managed to get Chibs to look after Nancy and soon as Chibs went to the clubhouse, I turned on Gemma. Told her she was fucked. She still doesn’t believe in the psychic stuff. This is not what we need if we want to keep Chibs here.”

“Fuck. Does Clay know?”
“No, he’s been holed up in church. Figured, give everyone a chance to cool off. Had a feeling I should’ve stayed in bed.” Tig shook his head.

“Yeah. Okay. I’ll go check on them. Thanks, Tig.”

“Sure, brother.”

He gave Tig a grateful hug before going off towards the clubhouse. Tig turning back to the Sebring he was working on. While he stopped at his bike and pulled out a binder from the saddlebag.
Chapter 35

Chapter Summary

Juice and Clay. Bobby and Piney.

Juice knocked on the plywood door to Church.

“Come in.”

“Hey, Clay. I dug up what I could. It’s not much.”

“You find anything?”

“A lot of articles about her father and his wife, Claire. His investment company. The two of them are on several boards. Do charity work, that kind of thing.”

“And the girl?”

“Not much, just a couple of news reports regarding her mother’s death by car accident. Weather was a factor its said. By the pictures, she’s lucky to be alive.”

“You sure there wasn’t anything else?”

“No, she’s squeaky clean. There’s no paperwork on her. If there was anything, she was a minor up until this last year, so whatever legal shit or criminal activity would have been sealed. Nobody can get in sealed documents without a judge signing off on it.”

He handed over the papers he printed out to Clay.

“Okay, thanks Juice.”

“Sure.”

He quickly turned out of the room. Heading back to his laptop on the bar. Rat was wiping down some glasses behind the bar, Piney and Bobby were huddled together.

“What’s up?”

“Chibs and Nancy are in the apartment. Jax just went in there as you came out of church.” Rat said.

“Okay?” Confused why that had the three of them shaken up.

“Gemma tried to throw Nancy off the lot. Physically.” Bobby informed him.

It took him a minute to catch on what they were implying. “Shit. Everyone whole?”

“Define whole.” Piney growled as he took another shot of his tequila.

“Damn.” He absently closed the research he did for Clay. The only browser window open had the Wikipedia page on the sun. “She’s right about the sun.” He said.
Bobby, Piney, and Rat all looked at him when he spoke up. “It’s going to explode.”

Bobby rolled his eyes, caught Piney and Rat looking at him for explanation. “Dinner last night at Gemma’s. Nancy was talking about what classes she liked in school. She was high, like seriously high. Started talking about astronomy. How fascinated she was by how everything we are, the earth, the moon, us...all came from exploding stars. That one day the sun will explode and everything will change again. Idiot, over here, didn’t know about the whole five billion years it’ll take for that to happen.”

Piney and Rat eyed Juice who ducked his head. "I didn't fucking know that! Now, I do."

Piney guffed. “Sounds like I should’ve shown up last night.”

Bobby barked a laugh. “It was entertaining. Never saw anything like it. Found out Gemma nearly cut a guys dick off when she was trying to steal his car up in Oregon.”

“Found out? How does one find out?” Piney asked.

“Nancy read Tig.” Juice said.

“Yep, Gemma was in a rare mood, told Nancy that exploding stars doesn’t pay the bills or doesn’t help her survive the club. She asks what she's going to do now that she's here, like have kids. Jesus, the girl is trying to recover and Gemma has her getting knocked up already. Chibs lashes out at Gemma that it wasn't any of her business. Gemma telling him that she was just looking out for him...her family.”

“That’s when Nancy told Gemma off about how was it looking after her family when she stabbed a guy. That Tig had to pay the guy off to keep quiet about it. That Gemma didn’t listen to Tig or the club for her to stay put in the motel. Putting the club at risk with her actions. Not exactly looking out for her family.”

Bobby took a sip of his beer before continuing.

“Nobody knew what she was talking about until Tig and Gemma started fighting over him telling her about it. Tig yelling back at her that he didn’t. Gemma tried to say it was club money, but Nancy said no. It was Tig’s personal cash. Wouldn’t let Gemma get away with lying about it.”

“Really?” Piney asked.

“Yeah. Tig paid the guy off. Gemma never paid him back. Clay and Jax demanded Tig explain what happened. Nancy pipes up that Gemma owes Tig the five grand plus the three percent interest compounded monthly for the last two years. Did the calculations for the interest right there at the table down to the penny. Total Rainman shit. Chibs wasn’t kidding when he said she was smart. She and Chibs left after that. Wished I left with them.”

“Jesus. Did Gemma pay Tig back?”

“Yeah, wouldn’t let Tig leave without his money. Gemma made a scene about it. Kept saying that it wasn’t Tig’s money but Club money. Since it was the club that was hiding her. Jax and Clay were pissed at her.”

Their conversation stuttered to a halt when Jax came out of the apartment, heading out the door without bothering to look in their direction. His purposeful stride and angry eyes kept them from inquiring what was wrong. But it didn’t take a genius to figure out what or where he was going. Nor deciding to stay theuck out of it.
A knock came to the door, sees Jax standing in the doorway. At his look, Jax walks in, shutting the door behind him. His blue eyes taking in him holding Nancy’s shaking one.

“She okay?” He asked.

“Had a run in with Gemma.”

“Tig told me. She say anything about it?”

“No details, just said that she’s a liar.”

Jax leaned against the wall, ran his hand over his face, tugging at his beard. “Anything else?”

“No, she was having what looked like grand-mal seizures. Woke up enough to puke her guts out, and now she’s like this. So no, she hasn’t given me the intel of what she learned about your mother.” He sent Jax a scathing look for his idiot question.

He took a deep breath to calm down. “Fuck. Sorry, Jackie. I’m a bit upset.”

“No, I’m sorry. Shouldn’t have asked.”

He gave Jax a serious look, “Jax, the next time Gemma comes after Nancy….I’m not waiting for a pass from either you or Clay. What Gemma did, it was rape to Nancy. Gemma forced herself on Nancy, forced her to read her. Do you understand what I’m telling ye’?”

Jax’s eyes went wide at how serious he was. Jax nodded after a moment. “I’ll talk to Gemma, tell her to leave you and her alone. This won’t happen again, you have my word. Gemma was pissed last night after you two took off.”

“Pissed or embarrassed?” He questioned.

Jax sighed. “Fuck, I don’t know. I was just stunned that Gemma thought she could pull that over on us. And Tig not even saying anything about it. Covering for her.”

“Nancy apologized to me last night when we got home. Jesus Christ, Jax. I didn’t want to go to that fucking dinner. I knew it was a mistake. And she’s fucking apologizing to me for something that wasn’t her fault.” He glared at Jax. “But, if it weren’t for her, Tig would still be hurting for cash. He’s been living in the dorms since you boys got out. He couldn’t keep up his rent and bills. All the while, Gemma had that cash she owed him... What else has she been doing behind our backs?” He asked pointedly.
“Shit, I didn’t know. You know, I would have made sure Tig was squared away if I’d known.”

“I know, Jackie.” He pressed his free hand to his forehead, wiping at his eyes. “But that's not the point. She’s read Tig, Clay’s right hand. And now, Gemma. I’m working on her to talk to me. But fuck, Jackie, she’s had ten years of being abused for speaking the truth, for speaking her mind. And worse than that, just for existing, for surviving. I told her to stop hiding herself away. So any anger at her, should be directed to me. I told her to speak her mind. Rules or no rules.”

“I get it. And nobody is angry at her or you. It’s just unsettling...nobody knows what to do.” Jax waved his hands up in the air at a loss.

He shook his head. “I love you like you’re my own son, Jackie. I love this club. Your father saved my life. This club saved my life. But I have to think of her. And if Gemma makes any more stupid plays to get rid of Nancy or to try and beat her into submission, she’ll wish that I’d just kill her quick. Be glad that Tig was there in the garage.”

“Message loud and clear. I’ll put the fear of God into Gemma. I had no idea all of this was going down. Gemma’s always been a force of nature, you know that. I don’t know if its the cartel deal that’s getting her all riled up or not. But I’ll do what I can.”

He sighed, tiredly. “Aye, okay.” Letting go of his anger.

Jax looked at her with an assessing look. Her shaking seems to be lessening, but she was still out. Fuck, looked like she went twenty rounds.

Coming to a decision, he hands over the binder that he had tucked under his arm. “Here, Tara and Ope have read this already, should have let you read it, too. But too much shit was going down at the time.”

“What’s this?” He asked, leafing through it curiously.

“JT’s manifesto, his vision for the club. Read it. Let her read it, too. Maybe it’ll give her answers she needs. I think you’re right, we need her. JT tried, but he failed. I tried and failed. This deal with the Galindo’s. I don’t know,” he sighed, “maybe we’ll all go down if we don’t take a closer look at what we’re doing. I don’t like this deal anymore than you do, but the club needs the money. Fourteen months inside and not earning is weighing on me, all of us. And you know the Irish expect heavy volume out of us. Tomorrow is church. We’ll figure this out.”

“Aye, something has to be done.” Jax moved towards the door. “Hey, tell Tara the salad was good.”

Jax swung around with an amused look. “Christ, it was the only thing that was edible.” He agreed.

“How in the hell did you manage to survive her cooking? Seriously? You must have an iron stomach. And what the hell did she serve for dessert anyway?”

“Fuck, you really don’t want to know. Abel spent half the night puking his guts out. And her cooking wasn’t that bad growing up.”

“Yeah, sure. If you say so.”

“Fuck you.” Jax grinned as the tension loosened between them.

“Get out of here, go wrangle your mother.” He ordered Jax out of the apartment gruffly.
Jax walked out of the apartment. He settled in and started reading. Hearing JT’s voice in his ear. He missed his friend. The man who saved his life and helped him into a new life here in the States. His death still deeply felt in the club.

He was almost halfway through the binder when Nancy began to stir couple of hours later. Her shivering eased off after an hour into his reading. Setting aside the manuscript and focussed on Nancy. “How are you feeling, love?” Asking as she blinked at him.

“Better, more myself. Thanks.” She said as she stretched alongside him. “How long was I out? And did I hit the floor? God, I'm sore.” She grimaced as she kept stretching.

“No, I caught ye’. You've been out a couple of hours. But you had a seizure, were shaking and shivering up until an hour ago. You sure you're feeling okay?”

She frowned at him. “I'm fine. Shit, you missed work.”

“Don’t worry about it. The guys covered for me. Its what we do.” He shrugged off her concern. “I don’t want you losing your job because of me.”

“Mo leanabh, the garage isn’t my real job. The club is my real job. The garage just fills the hours when nothing else is going on. Bobby uses the garage books to clean up what the club brings in. Plus, its a hobby, we work on our bikes there. Don’t fash yourself over it.”

“Still.” She worried.

“Hey, none of that.” He kissed her. “Jax left us some reading to do. From JT. Thought it might help us.”

She looked down at the book.

“I know you’re hesitant or scared about telling me or anyone what you see, but I think you need to tell someone. This knowledge you’re getting, burying it inside. It’s too much for one person to hold. Nobody can hold the weight of it. Especially with you reading the club, the things we’ve done... I want you to trust me.”

Sitting up. “I do trust you. I’ve tried telling people before... And if I told you what I see, what if it changes the future, that it alters something that makes it all so much worse.”

“Was afraid of that. But we’re linked, bonded for a reason. It seems like to me, maybe I’m to help you with it all. And the beatings. That’s in the past. I’ll never let anyone hit you ever again. But it takes time to get over something like that. I took you out of one hellhole, I’ll be damned if only to bring you into another. Jax said he’d talk to Gemma.”

“Chibs.” Nancy said with wide eyes. “This is your home. I’m sorry, I’ll do better. I can’t let you break from your friends, not over me.” She fretted.

“Stop. There’s no better that ye’ could do. What happened, it’s not your fault. And my home is with you, no matter if we are here or not.” He held his hand out to her. She looked to him and saw his resolve in his eyes. She slid her hand into his.

He kissed her, her kissing back as they came to a better understanding. “Come on, let's get out of here.” She nodded and they walked out of the clubhouse. She pulled on her helmet, as Chibs made sure the binder was tucked safely in the saddlebag of his bike.
She shivered as Gemma stood in the doorway of the office, glaring at her. Chibs pulled her attention back to him and helped her climb onto the bike. He revved it and tore out of the lot.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My baby = mo leanabh
Chapter 37

Chapter Summary

Jax confronts Gemma.

Gemma and Wayne jerked as the door to the office yanked open and Jax entered.

“What did I tell you last night?” He leveled at Gemma.

“Jackson, I was only doing my job. She’s not fit to be an old lady, not to be here in the club. It can’t happen. She’s unstable and has all of you so inside out you can’t see straight.”

“Ma, I don’t care what you think your job is around here. I told you to leave Chibs and Nancy alone specifically. And you ignored that. Thought you knew better. Well, you don’t. Fucking attacked her instead.”

“Jax…” She started.

“Don’t. You lied to Tig and to Chibs with what went down. You lied and tried to steal from Tig. I’m not liking the pattern here. This club needs Chibs. You going after Nancy is pushing him to walk. She’s in the apartment passed out, looking beaten to hell all because of you. She is not to be touched. She’s fucking psychic and you forced yourself on her. To her, its rape. Something I’d think you’d sympathize with. And Chibs has been trying to get her to talk shit out. She’s been beaten and half-starved for over ten years.”

“What?” Wayne asked in shocked concern.

“According to Chibs, Tig, and her, she’s been locked in a fucking basement for most of her life. She’s practically a skeleton, you only have to look at her to know she’s had it rough.”

“Jack, you can’t be serious. This is all just a con. Wake up.” Gemma argued.

Jax leaned over the desk, getting into his mother’s face. “I am fucking serious. It’s not a con. You weren’t in the room when she read Tig. And now she’s read you because you think it was your right to try and boot her out of here. Called you a liar, what the fuck are you lying about I wonder. Any other secrets I don’t know about? I have any other siblings running around?”

Gemma jerked back. “No, you know I’d never keep anything from you. I love you.”

Jax glared harder at her. “I’m telling you again, you do not ever touch her again. Don’t stick your nose in shit that is not your business. This deal we have going on is too delicate to have you throwing your hissy fits and going rogue. Do I make myself clear? Because it won’t be Chibs you have to worry about, it’s me. And trust me, you’ll wish it was Chibs by the time I’m done with you. Stay out of their way, stay out of the club’s business.” He declared and stalked back out of the office. The door banging shut behind him.

She quickly doused her fear under the heat of her son’s anger.

“This is bad. There’s gotta be something we can do. Can you see if there’s anything on this girl?”
“Gemma!? I’m retired, I don’t have access to that. Even if I did, you said she was from Illinois, I wouldn’t have access to anything out of there unless it was federal. And with her so young, I doubt anything would pop up.”

She slumped dejectedly.

“I suppose I could go make an introduction to her. Feel her out.” He offered. He never liked seeing Gemma so unhappy or out of sorts.

Her eyes lit up at his suggestion. “That would be good. See what you can sniff out on her. I’ll keep working on my end.”

He gave her a concerned look. “Well, whatever you do, be careful. Jax didn’t look one bit happy about what you tried to do with her before. He gets wind of you working behind him, he won’t be too pleased.” Waving a hand to where Jax had stormed out.

Gemma scoffing and waving off his concern. “Jax, doesn’t know what’s good for him. It’s why I have to do this. To protect him and this club.”

He sighed and got up. “Okay, I’ll let you know what I can find. You said you needed my help over at the hospital?”

She stood up herself, going to the doorway, she saw Chibs and Nancy putting on their helmets and taking off of the lot. Vowing to find a way to boot that bitch’s ass out of here.

“Yeah, come on. Tara should be leaving her office for Jax’s for lunch. Gives us an hour to get the letters.”
Chapter 38

Chapter Summary

Chibs and Nancy read JT's book.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He felt Nancy clasp tightly to his waist, her slight frame leaning into his back. He decided that they needed to take a drive for a bit. It was mid-afternoon and he took off into the countryside. JT’s words still haunting him.

They stopped at an old crumbling cemetery, where they got off and walked around a bit. Neither felt the need to speak, simply enjoyed the agreeable weather and the quiet. Settling down against an old tree with broad leaves, his back to the tree and pulling her down next to him.

He pulled out the manuscript and carefully pulled the half he’d read already and handed them to her. He picking up where he’d left off. They read until the sun started setting, the light going out.

They walked back to the bike and rode back to the house. They showered and made a light dinner of salmon, wild rice and asparagus. Settling down on the sofa, they finished reading the manuscript.

He finishing first. Running his hand over his goatee as he thought of his friend. The struggle he harbored with the club. The assessment he had of the direction of the club. His fears and hopes. He grabbed a joint and lit it as he thought about what he’d read. He passed the joint to Nancy.

She took a drag and kept reading. He wandered into the kitchen and pulled out a couple of beers.

“JT is right. There is a cancer in the club.” She said, putting the last of the pages back in the binder, setting it next to her on the sofa. Taking up the beer he handed to her.

“Aye. Wished JT would have talked to me. Might have been able to help him.” He said sadly.

She breathed out the pot, staring at the plume of smoke in front of her as it wisped into the air. “Wouldn’t have mattered. Gemma and Clay were on a mission.”

He looked sharply at her. “What do you mean on a mission?”

“This book, its only half the story. JT wrote letters. The letters are the rest of the story. They are important. Very important. The truth they hold...” She broke off saying anymore. Staring off in front of her, seeing letters floating around her as she was sitting in Chibs house on his sofa. She rubbed at her eyes, it didn’t stop the letters from pushing at her. She could hear the paper twisting in the silent gusts of wind.

Worried if she should reveal this tidbit. Once that ball was rolling, there was no stopping it. But then, the ball was already rolling and they didn’t have any control over it. Maybe if they could take control...
She mentally chastised herself for thinking she could change the future. She knew from past experience it didn’t work. Just made things worse for her. And her place here was so tenuous as it is. Damn it. On the other hand, if she didn’t try, lives were at risk. Taking another sip of her beer.

“Do you know where they are? Who has them?” He asked carefully. She was talking to him and he didn’t want to spook her.

She heard the neutral tone in his voice. He was digging for information and wanted her to talk about what she saw in the readings. Maybe if she had help this time. It was that thought that made her decide to try once more to change the future. Jesus, she mentally sighed at her own ego just thinking that.

“Gemma found a cover note in Abel’s coloring books. Signed by Maureen Ashby. The letters are meant for Jax.”

He mulled over what she was saying. Recalling their recent trip to Belfast. A lot of shit went down, but he had an idea.

“Trust me?” He asked her.

“Yes.” She looked to him. He pulled his burner out and quickly dialed Jax.

He held her hand as he waited for Jax to pick up. “Jax. Read JT’s manuscript. Nancy, too. She said it was only half the story.” He paused as Jax spoke.

Shaking his head at whatever Jax was saying. “No, there’s more. Said there are letters JT wrote to Maureen Ashby in Belfast. That they were meant for you to find and read. Tara must have found them in your bags.”

He paused as he listened to Jax. “If I were Mo, that’s what I’d do. We were running from one fire to the next when we got back from Belfast. Gemma was on lockdown then house arrest. Tara had to be the one who unpacked your gear.”

She popped up on her knees as he talked to Jax. That suddenly things were moving really fast. The future, the horror was rushing right at her as if she’d stepped in front of a speeding train.

She grabbed at Chibs hand, getting his attention.

“Tell him to talk to us before he does anything. Chibs...Don’t...God. Make Jax promise to come to us before doing anything. He has to talk to us before he acts. Shit. I shouldn’t have said anything. God damn it.” She freaked out on him.

He gave her a concerned look as he half listened to Jax and to her.

“Jax, tell her to give you the letters.” He paused again.

“Jackie, they’re important. Nancy wants you to come talk to us before you do anything.” He frowned into the phone as Jax spoke again.

“I don’t know, but she’s freaking out. Whatever is in those letters...Jackie, I need you to promise me. Oath on your Reaper, that you won’t do anything without coming to us first.” He tuned to what Jax was saying.

“You wanted to know what she got from Gemma and Tig. You have to come talk to us before you do anything. I’m dead serious, I need to hear you swear on the Reaper, Jax.” He paused again.
“Yeah. okay.” He hung up. Nancy slumped into the sofa, hoping that things would be different this time.

“It’ll be okay, m’anam.” He reassured her.

She didn’t know what to say. Praying that he was right and that her trust in not just Chibs, but in Jax, too, wouldn’t bite her in the ass.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
  My soul = m ‘anam
He got up and turned on some music. The volume low in the quiet of the house.

The upset of the day still rattling around inside her. At least the letters stopped floating in front of her. She frowned at that. It was as if the universe was telling her that she was supposed to get this whole fiasco going.

“Did Gemma say anything to you? Why she grabbed you in the first place?” He asked settling back down next to her.

She sighed and studied the hem of her t-shirt, biting her lip as she thought of what to say. “Yes.”

His arm slung across the back of the sofa, massaging her neck.

“I missed how it was that she grabbed ye. I was under the car. Just wondered what she was playing at.”

“I don’t think it matters.”

“When I saw you and Gemma grabbing at each other, how out of it you were when you fell into Gemma, it scared me.” He took her hand in his, weaving their fingers together.

“I think I scared myself.” She sighed mournfully.

He looked at her, waiting for her to explain. “I was cleaning the desk. I didn’t hear her behind me until she was right there in my face. Yelling at me that I wasn’t allowed in the garage while you guys were working.”

Chibs sighed, rolling his head to loosen up his neck. Nancy gave him a shrug.

“She and Clay got into...a bit of a fight just before.” She explained. “Piney told her about the muling for the cartel. Clay told her that she doesn’t tell him what to do. That she’s just an old lady, its not her place. I saw him raise up his hand as if it hit her. It scared her, his reaction.” She paused, thinking over Gemma’s reaction of Clay nearly hitting her. “She wasn’t so much as scared...more
shocked than anything.”

“It was humiliating for her. Last night’s dinner. Piney riling her up with the drugs. Clay almost hitting her when she challenged him over the drugs. That you’d leave the club because of me unless the club figures out if I’m to be trusted or not. She was primed for a fight.” She shrugged as he ran a hand over his eyes as she filled him in.

“Jesus Christ.” He muttered.

“I told her that you okay’d me cleaning off the desk. But she just glared at me like I was the stupidest person on the planet.” She looked down at their hands intertwined, not able to look him in the eye. “Said it takes more than a sob story and a…a tight pussy to keep a Son.”

He gripped her hand tighter at what she was saying, what Gemma had dared to say to her. He forced himself to keep silent, listen to what she was telling him.

“That my ‘little vacation’ was over. It was time for me to go home. I couldn’t believe what she was saying. The thought of being taken from you.” She gasped, glancing up at him.

“Told her that I couldn’t leave, that we have to be. She just came at me, I backed up but I was trapped by the desk. I told her to stop. She said that there was no have to be. She grabbed me as if to throw me out of the lot like a piece of trash. I told her not to touch me. But she didn’t listen. She never listens.”

“It happened so fast, I was panicking, the thought of going back to that basement. And I was angry. Angry that I let myself get trapped by her. Gemma…the way she was talking at me…reminded me of Claire.” She paused to catch her breath. To try and relax as her body had grown tight as she recounted what happened.

“I…’d never just let myself go and let the fall take me like that. I don’t know if its new or has always been there. Add in my panic...soon as she grabbed me, well, you know the rest.”

“It scared the hell out of me. The lengths she’ll go. I was scared I’d be stuck in her. Tara is right to be afraid of her.” She finished, running her free hand through her hair in frustration.

He sighed in thought. “Tara’s always been kind of hands off. She always seems to be half-in and half-out of the club life most times. And I’ve seen Gemma before when she’s riled up. I’m not surprised you were panicking. Could it be you were pushing your panic on what you saw in Gemma?”

She stiffened as he tried to explain Gemma’s behavior, insinuating that she wasn’t seeing things right because of her own reaction. Like he wanted to give Gemma an out for what she did.

He looked at her when he felt her body go still. He must have seen her expression because he continued his cause.

“Hey, don’t look at me like that. I’m just trying to figure out what’s going on and explain Gemma and Tara to you, since you barely know them.”

“Don’t defend Gemma. Don’t ever defend her. Not to me, ever.” Her voice hardening.

“What? Why?” He questioned. He was honestly confused.

“Gemma knew exactly what she was doing. What she did...ignoring you and my warnings to keep her hands off me…” She breathed hard as she tried to keep her anger at bay. “She forced me to
read her. Do you not get it?” She stared hard at him.

“Aye, she ignored what we warned her not to do. But Gemma’s always pushed at the rules. We all kind of expect her to do it.”

“Oh my God. Don’t. Just stop.” She pulled back from him. His hand slipped along her shoulder as she moved towards the other side of the sofa.

“Hey.” He took hold of her hand, halting her escape. His fingers automatically massaging her fist. “Talk to me.”

“What Gemma did to me. It’s like fucking rape. I told her no. She didn’t stop. She forced me. The very definition of rape. And the fact that you are trying to get me to let it go. God.”

“I’m not telling you to forget about it. I already told Jax that the next time Gemma makes a run for you, I’ll fucking knock her on her ass. But Gemma ganging up on you, it’s pretty much her standard operating procedure whenever one of us hooks up with someone new. It’s like she can’t help herself testing the new girl. She fucking broke Cherry’s nose when she turned up on the lot for Half-Sac.”

“We talked about this on the ride here. I told you that I will not get into some bullshit catfight over my place with you. I’m not one of the club’s croweaters or porn stars. I’m not them. I’ll never be them.”

“Christ! That’s not what I want either. I’m just telling ye’...”

“I know what you’re saying. And I hate it. We just read JT’s book. That behavior in the club is exactly the kind of thing JT never wanted in the club. That you and the guys tacitly let Gemma do this shit. And I fucking read her I know her better than she knows herself. So don’t ever tell me that I don’t know her. Don’t defend Gemma to me ever again. In fact, don’t defend Gemma to anyone. Not even to Jax. All that explaining her behavior is part of why the club is in such deep-shit trouble.”

“What are you saying?”

“Chibs, Gemma is absolutely more dangerous than any of you realize. The Cartel...the Irish...the muling...the danger of one or all together, it doesn’t matter. It’s nothing compared to what Gemma has and will do. Her control over the club is that strong. You don’t even question her. Anytime she gets into trouble, all of you groan and fuss about it but you fix it because its her, your queen. When things don’t go her way of thinking, she will use every resource at her disposal to make things go her way.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s subtle most of the time. Little things built up over time. Once in a while, things get out of hand and she’ll be more direct.”

“I’m not understanding. Like what?”

She sighed and looked hard at him. “She used her rape to get what she wanted. And before you assume, it wasn’t to just take out Zobelle and Weston’s crew.”

“We went to war over that.”

“I know.”
“Are you saying that she asked to be raped? For...for some sick of way of controlling the club?”

“Nobody asks to be raped or attacked. But she didn’t tell the truth for a long time. People got hurt the longer she didn’t tell the truth.”

“It was a rough time. The club was at war. You can’t lay the blame at Gemma’s feet for all that. The club sells guns. We’re always one step ahead on shit just for that alone.”

“Like I said before, don’t defend Gemma. Not to me. I’ve been in every dark corner of her mind and soul. I know what Gemma is and what she is capable of. And yes, Tara is in very real danger. Not just from Gemma but from Clay, as well.”

“You talking about the letters?” He put together.

“Those letters scare the hell out of Gemma. She should be scared. She was an idiot and told Clay about their existence. Told him they might spill whatever secrets that will tear the club apart. She’s been turning Jax’s house upside down, even tossed Tara’s office to find them. Clay will search for them, too. Between the two of them, the wreckage in their quest to get the letters will lay waste to the club, the likes of which nobody has ever seen before.”

“Jesus. You called her out on it, called her a liar.” He prompted, sensing there was more by how she was huddled in on herself.

“She’s...she’s done evil things. And if she isn’t stopped or if she doesn’t stop what she’s doing, she’ll kill again.”

He went still at her soft admission. “Who? Who did she kill?” His voice tightly controlled.

She couldn’t speak the name, simply grabbed the book. Her thumb brushing over the author’s name, typed neatly under the title. Her eyes sorrowful as she pushed the book in his hands. He took it from her, his eyes dark with confusion, pain, and then anger.

“It’s in the letters, what she and Clay did.” She said softly.

He felt like a bomb went off as he put together what she was saying. His eyes going to the manuscript written by the man who saved his life all those years ago. To find out that he was potentially murdered by Gemma and Clay.

“He...he was killed by a semi. It was an accident.” His voice wobbled as his ears rang. She just looked at him sadly, that the tale told to the club for years had been a lie.

“That ‘accident’... should have been investigated as a homicide. Wayne’s part in the lie. Gemma used him, stringing him along just like the rest of the club and all the men in her life.”

He didn’t know what to do or what to think. He got up abruptly and started pacing. His mind racing with the information she was telling him. And it wasn’t even all of it, just the way she was talking, he could tell there was more. Never even brought up Tig and what she got from him.

Fuck, this was bad. He looked to Nancy again, her face pale as she curled up on the sofa. Her eyes glancing at him quickly only to fall back to her twisting hands. Fuck, she thought he was going to hit her.

He wanted to hit something for the years of abuse she had to endure that made her so skittish, hit someone for the murder of his friend, hit someone for the lies they’d been told for years.
But his anger cooled harshly under the sight of her fear. And the knowledge that the information she had about the club...things that could break the club. And by Nancy’s reaction to reading Gemma, if any of the things she’s said is true...fuck. It scared the crap out him.

She stared at him, her eyes glittering at him. “You ask me to trust you, I’m asking you now to trust me. Gemma doesn’t know the meaning of love.” Her voice soft and lilting that helps him calm down but her words cranks up his worry. “She thinks she does, but she suffocates the people around her. Jax is her goal and victim. Having Jax at the head of the table, she’s been working on that for a very long time. Nothing will deter her from that. And now with Abel and Thomas, she’s got her eye on them, too.”

The silence gnawing on her as she waited for his reaction, her emotions panicking the longer he didn’t say anything. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to go on like that, I know Gemma’s a big part of the club. I’ve read some really sick people. She’s done a lot of evil. Will do a lot of evil and nobody sees it, until it’s too late.”

He frowned as she apologized.

She shook her head as she thought out loud. “By telling Jax to read the letters...we started something tonight by calling Jax. We need to get Jax on board. What I saw in Gemma, she’ll give them to him much later, and she won’t give him all of the letters. Only her approved letters. Lying again. Shit, if Jax doesn’t work to change the club, we may really have to go. I’m sorry.”

“Have ye’ ever been wrong?” He asked.

“No.” She admitted.

“Dear God.” He breathed. His eyes flashing to hers. “Don’t apologize.”

He saw the pensiveness in Nancy’s eyes and her want to trust him but still not sure if he could handle all that she sees. Again, wondering what else she’s learned and not telling him for fear of reprisal or simply not being believed.

“I told Jax. I told him that this club needed you. If you are right about all this, what Gemma and Clay did...it will rip apart the club.” He breathed and took a moment to think, his eyes sharpening on her again.

“You said ‘will kill again.’” His eyes looked to her following up his logic of what she’d let slip. “Who?”

She winced and took a careful breath. She’d let the proverbial cat out of the bag.

“If she doesn’t change the path she is on, she’ll be a one-woman wrecking ball. Her drinking and drug use will increase exponentially. She’ll get blackout drunk, sleep with random men and women. She’ll almost get Abel and Thomas killed because she’ll be behind the wheel high. She’ll set Clay up to be killed, wants Jax to kill him.”

He grew pale in front of her as she spoke. She thought she should quit there to save him from the utter destruction that was barrelling down on the club. But for some reason, she couldn’t stop. She needed him to hear her. To believe her.

“She’ll kill Tara. Believing Tara has turned on the club, turned on Jax. Gemma’ll be high and in a rage, but she doesn’t have all the information. She convinces herself that it had to be done, to save Jax, to save the club. She’ll continue to lie to Jax and the club to protect herself from what she did to Tara. Fingering an innocent man to take her guilt and give Jax someone to work his rage on. But
she doesn’t realize the consequences of her actions. The very depth of Jax’s need for revenge. War will break out, between clubs, even within the Sons, the charters will turn on the Redwoods. Blood will be spilled. Piney, Opie, Juice, Bobby and many others will fall because of Gemma and Clay’s lies. It all stems from what the two of them did to JT all those years ago.”

“It’s in the letters and what they do to get them before the other does. It’s already started, Gemma has the cover note. Told Clay about the letters. What exactly did JT write to Maureen about? What secrets did he spill? Gemma and Clay fight each other for control over the letters. She’ll even pull a gun on Clay. And that is just the tip of the iceberg. What she did to Jax... Gemma should be getting professional help.”

“Jesus Christ.” He said as he thought out the ramifications of what those letters held. He paced, running a hand over his goatee.

“Sorry.” She offered again. Mentally kicking herself for going too far.

He glanced at her, annoyed with her apology. “I know.” She raised her hands to him. “Stop apologizing. But it really is habit and I really am sorry. Probably shouldn’t have said all that. Or tried to find an easier way of saying it.” She said with a sigh.

“You definitely should be saying all that and more. I can take whatever you have to say. I don’t want you hiding anything from me. You’re not alone here. You don’t have to take the hits like ye’ did back in that shithole.” He ordered at her.

She couldn’t help the wry grin at his directive. Like he wanted to order the sun not rise in the east but the west. But she had to have a soft spot for him trying at least.

He rolled his eyes as he caught her amused reaction to what he’d told her.

“What the hell is the matter with me? Maybe now that I’m getting better physically, my abilities are getting stronger, too...” She questioned to herself. “Just on the way it felt to read Gemma, how fast and deep I went. I never felt that back home.”

She sensed Chibs staring at her and she looked up at him.

He nodded with what she just said. “It’s possible.”

“It’s not like I have a manual I could crack open and check to see if what is happening to me is normal or not.” She complained. “I know, I looked.”

“Okay, there isn’t much we can do until Jax gets the letters.” He said with a determined decision. “Until we know what it is we’re dealing with and have a chance to talk with Jax, we’ll keep an eye on Gemma and Tara. Jax, too.”

“Tig and Opie, as well. This club is a mess, that’s just from reading Tig and Gemma. Jesus, the mess you guys put yourselves in. Jax must be a mensa candidate, coming up with schemes to get the club out of trouble.” He sent her a mild glare. “Worse trouble.” She corrected.

“Fine, Tig and Opie.” He conceded as he sat down, taking her hand again.

“But all that is club business. What’s going on between us. I don’t want you to hold back out of fear or what you think I can or can’t handle. I won’t give you up, no matter what. I find you amazing. So fucking strong and smart. I love you. I don’t see you as weak or only good for your body. So get that garbage Gemma threw at ye’ out of your head. The only opinion that matters is yours and mine. And I’m not into threesomes.” He grinned as she grimaced at the thought of being
in bed with Gemma.

“You’ve a wicked sense of humor and god, I just love being around you. And its not the headaches, I just...feel good around you. Good like I haven’t felt in a very long time, like there’s a bigger purpose to my life...to our lives.”

She gave him a small smile at his admission of his feeling for her. “Okay, I’ll try. I can’t promise anything. I don’t know what’s going on with me. My ability to read people, it feels stronger lately. I’m seeing things now, too.”

“What do you mean?”

“Um, well, when you were going to heat up some chili before, I said it was too spicy?” His eyes turned concerned. “It was just a flash, but I saw a human head in a large pot of chili. And the words too spicy just came out of me. I didn’t mean to say it.”

“So you had what? A vision?” He asked.

“I don’t know, I guess.” She shrugged tiredly. “Just knew there was no way I was eating that chili. It just feels like something is coming. I can’t explain it any better than that.”

“Okay.” He raised his brows. “Let me know if anything else comes up. I was looking forward to that chili.” He groused.

“I thought we were hating Gemma’s cooking?” She asked with a rueful look.

“Most food Gemma cooks, yes. But her chili is great. Even she can’t screw that up.”

“Come here.” He pulled her and she swung her leg over and straddled his lap. His hands at her hips, her arms around his neck, her fingers automatically carding through his hair.

“I love you, mo ghaol. Never doubt that. I know its fast. But the way I feel with you, I can’t imagine my life without you.”

His eyes darkened, his thumbs edging around her waist, feeling her skin. Their heads leaning into each others, foreheads resting against each others. Their breaths mingling as they enjoyed the quiet moment, the music playing in the background.

“I love you.” She admitted. “Think I’ve loved you since I’ve seen you in my dreams. How you live your life. How you find the joy in it, even in some of the most crap moments. I don’t think there would be another person on this planet that could handle whatever it is that’s happening to us. I just knew. I knew you were meant for me, as crazy as it sounds.” She gave a soft laugh.

But she turned quieter with the depth of what she felt for him. “I’d given up on having a normal life, was pretty much prepared for my death. When you showed up, when I realized I could touch you, that you were real. Have a hard time sometimes even now, believing I’m here, with you. Us together.” She breathed.

“I have hope, a future. What that is, I’m not sure. But I know you are in it. We are meant to be, I know it.” She looked into his whiskey eyes. Holding his eyes for what she was asking. What she needed, not just for her. But for him, too. For them. It was time. “Just love me, please.” She said in a tremulous voice.

She watched her words affect him. His body stiffened under her, hands holding her tight as if she’d fly away from him. His eyes darkened and breathing deepened. Seeing the very second he broke
and kissed her. His hands pulling her ever closer into his hard body. She letting go of her fears and doubts and just let him fill her with his love. Gasping as they broke for air, she felt fundamentally changed. Some deep knowledge that this was meant to happen. Feel her body grow heavy and open to his heat and intense energy.

His heart raced at her admission. The feel of her in his arms. Her scent soft and addictive. He groaned and kissed her. His tongue flicking at the seam of her lips, her gasp allowing him entrance and he took it. Her body pressing into his. His body shook as she held onto him. Her hands pulling at his shirt. The sound of her mewls spurred him on.

They were sinking onto the sofa and he instinctually protested. No. Not here. He needed room, he promised himself that he’d treat her right. Wait for the right time, until she was ready.

He quickly stood up. She gasped in shock at his pull from her. Her eyes going to his in question of what he was doing. His eyes pinned on her wide ones. Holding his hand to her.

Hers slipping to his and he pulled her into his arms again, walking and stumbling to the bedroom. Clothes being unzipped and unhooked as they went. She gasped as he nipped at her neck.

They fell onto the bed and he pulled himself up off her, caging her in his arms. His lips moving to her ear.

“Are you sure, mo ghaol? Wanted to give ye’ time. Go out on some real dates.” He groaned. “Oh God.” Her hands sweeping his shirt up his chest. He stared into her eyes as she leaned in and kissed his chest, over his heart. Fuck. His hands took hold of her head, bringing her eyes to meet his. “Are ye’ sure?” He demanded of her again.

Her eyes finding his as he waited for her answer, his heart pounding, his body straining to hear her answer. He had to be sure, staring into her glittery eyes. Fuck, he was so fucking fucked.

“Yes. Please, yes. I love you.” Her words muffled as he pressed another kiss to her. His hands pulled her t-shirt from her, dropped to the floor without thought.

Her hands hesitated to cover her breasts from his view.

“Don’t hide, you never have to hide from me.” He purred. His lips moving to her breasts. In the back of his head, he was pleased that she was filling out. Her complaint of being flat chested was no longer an issue in his opinion.

Her hands held by his against the bed alongside her head. Her back arching under his kisses and suckling at her nipples. Their fingers weaving and holding each other.

“So beautiful. Let me love you.” He moaned as he shifted back to her lips. His hands sliding down her arms, gently stroking the sides of her rib cage.

Cupping her breasts in his firm grip. His thumbs and fingers peaking her nipples, shooting down her nerves, beelining to her clit. She blushed as she felt a wetness between her legs. Twisting her knees together in reaction.

He watched her, his eyes dark as he picked out her every response to what he was doing to her. She brought her hands to his chest, fingers spanned wide, her thumbs playing with his flat nipples, giving them a light twist and pull as he’d done on hers. He shivered under her attentions. Giving him a soft smile as she saw the pleasure on his face.

He kissed her again, her hands sliding to his shoulders. He slid down and knelt before her, his
hands at the waist of her jeans. gently pushing them down her hips, Nancy shifting and helping as he pulled the jeans from her. Quickly shedding her socks. Kissing the inside of her ankle making her giggle. Grinning into her skin as he moved. His hands stroking her legs, taking in the toned muscles.

She hummed under his massaging touch. Leaning over her, kissing her navel. Hands at her hips. His lips butterfly kissing her along her waistband of her panties. Her hand coming to the top of his head, he looked up into her eyes. Silently asking if this was all okay still. Her fingers combed his hair and set goosebumps along his scalp, her lips curling in a smile. His hands pulling her panties off, tossing them aside. Fuck she was gorgeous. She blushed under his intense stare. Moving up to kiss her again. Her hands fell to his hips and pulled at his jeans.

He shifted back from her reach and she pouted at him. “Let me take care of you, mo ghaoil.” He said in explanation. He was happy she was invested in this as much as he was. But she was still a virgin yet. He didn’t need her to flip out on him. Had to take control for both their sakes. He had to make this good for her.

She nodded, he kissed her again grateful for her trust. Stoking their desire and lust. He delved into the cradle of her shoulder again, his hands taking in the baby smooth texture of her skin. A hand falling to her breast, his thumb flicking over her rock hard nipple. She arched in his arms. Her legs wrapping around his hips. He breathed her in. Her body so natural and instinctive to his touch. A primal groan fell from his lips at her soft cries. He slid down her body again, laying kisses as he went. His tongue delving over her navel. Her legs spread around him and his hands moving to her hips again.

He glanced up at her and gave her a wink. Her eyebrows popped up and she groaned as his lips and tongue moved over her soft folds. Carefully spreading her open under his attention.

Her taste exploded across his tongue, salty honey that he couldn’t get enough of. Her clit was engorged and pulsing from his circling touches. He tilted to the side, his thumb circling the sensitive organ in front of him. His eyes looking up at hers. “Let go, mo ghaoil, I want to see you fly.” He moaned to her.

Her head falling back as her hands covering her face. Awed by how much she was trusting him. Trusting him to take care of her. He turned back to her slick folds, his hand shifting down, circling around her entrance. His lips covering over her clit.

He felt her tense up under this new sensation. His finger gently moving inside her. He flicked her clit with his tongue and he promised to himself to never let her down. To be her protector, her shield, to lay his life down for her, to see her happy and satiated to his very last breath.

He felt her clamp down on his finger and groaned. Fuck, she was tight. His cock was heavy and was becoming increasingly uncomfortable inside the tight confines of his jeans. He knew if he wasn’t wearing them, there was nothing he could do to stop himself from burying himself inside her. God he wanted that. But he had to keep his head. This was her first time. A virgin. He needed her to relax. He wanted to feel her climax before he took her. before he took his pleasure.

His lips and tongue worked around her clit, teasing it, licking and sucking on the tiny bit of flesh. His finger easing back and forth inside her. The ease of his finger showing him her wetness making the action easier. His eyes looking up her heaving chest. He saw her hands still at her face. Saw her fighting to stay still and let him do this with her. He lifted his head, his thumb moving to her clit.

“M ‘anam.” He said hoarsely.
She looked down and saw him reaching a hand to her, her eyes on his.

“It’s okay. Take my hand. Trust me.” He crooned to her.

She slid her hand into his, their fingers dovetailing together. He carefully introduced a second finger at her entrance, she was so wet. His lips went back to her clit as he worked to stretch her. Letting her get used to the feeling. He increased the intensity gently biting down on her clit, sucking harder.

His fingers moving easier now, and he stretched up just a little more and felt the soft spongy area deep inside her. He felt her jerk as he found it, moving his fingertip over it again while pulling harder at her clit.

Her breathing hitched as she convulsed in his hands. Wetness gushing from her as she hit her orgasm. Her internal muscles clenching down on his fingers with a vice like grip as he kept pushing her over the edge. She screamed out his name, her other hand coming to head, her legs locking him in place over her. Her body jerked and convulsed as he pushed her over again.

He backed off, easing back off the intensity, knowing she’d be too sensitive. He kept gently massaging her inside. His thumb carefully circling her clit and through her folds. Her legs relaxed their grip around him he was able to kiss his way back up her body, tasting the salty perspiration. He paid homage to her breasts again.

Her eyes dark and hazy as she flew but was coming back to him. His eyes on hers as she regained focus on him. She pulled him to her, kissing him. Her lips and tongue delving into his mouth, tasting herself and he groaned and deepened the kiss for a moment longer.

His forehead resting against hers, he looked at her. “Okay?” He asked gently.

“Yeah.” She shook with the aftershocks of what her body was still processing. He smiled at her.

“So beautiful, my goddess.” She smiled back at him.

“You make me beautiful. Graim thu.” She kissed him again. Her hips moving under his hand and he couldn’t take waiting any longer. The pressure inside him filled his cock. Thought if he didn’t do something, the damn thing would explode and that’d be counterproductive.

He gently pulled his hand from inside her, giving her clit another caress. Her eyes shuddering at the loss of his hand.

“Why are you still wearing your jeans?” She complained. Her hands moved to his waist and tried to help him out of his jeans. Her hand moving over his throbbing cock as she navigated his zipper. Making him groan at her touch. Fuck, barely a touch and he thought he was going to lose it.

“Don’t. I’m too close.” He said shakily, stilling her hands.

“Sorry. Did I hurt you?” She asked concern in her eyes, her hands and body freezing in place afraid she’d hurt him. Christ, she was cute. He laughed.

He grinned giving her a quick kiss. “No, I’m trying to keep my control here. I’m liable to cum like a horny teenager if you keep touching me like that.”

“Oh. Sorry?” She automatically apologized as he rolled his eyes and worked his jeans off finally.

He huffed at her apology giving her another kiss. Turning to the nightstand drawer, he searched for
a condom. His hands shaky but still managed to put the rubber on, bloody hell, he felt like a fucking teenager as he fumbled with the condom. Hissing at himself in annoyance.

She watched what he was doing, her hand over his heart. Her lips on his neck, making him shiver at her caresses. He pressed back over her. Her legs coming around his hips.

He wanted to just dive right into her. But he forced himself to slow down and breath. His cock nestled in her folds, his eyes finding hers, he kissed her again. His hips rocking and shifting, hers following his lead.

“Keep breathing, I don’t want to hurt you. I’m so lost in you.” He groaned. Her hand coming to his cheek. Her eyes softening as he tried to prepare her.

“I love you. Just love me.” She soothed to him. His hips shifted again and he felt himself at her entrance and with steady pressure slowly pressed himself inside her. Her muscles relaxed from his prep work, tightened around his much thicker cock though. Hearing her hiss.

He paused and pulled back and to press back in pushing more into her. “God, I love you. Relax for me love. Pleeeeeaaaase.” He keened.

Her legs tightened around his hips, pulling him into her. It was a moment, he felt her muscles relax again and he rushed inside her, he gasped as he felt himself break through inside her.

Christ in Heaven! She stiffened again as he was now completely inside her. She yelped, her hands gripping tight at his waist. He froze, waiting for her to get used to his size. His body coiled and straining to wait for her.

“Mo ghaol, sorry, m’anam.” He whispered to her soothingly. Her eyes tight with pain as she breathed and experimentally moved. He groaned as he still fought with himself to wait for her.

“Chibs.” She cried to him. His heart pounding inside him as he still waited for her signal. “Oh God. Move. Please.” She pleaded.

With her request, his brain completely shut down and his body took over. His hips pulling back and pushing inside her. His lips finding hers. Her hips moving with his, he felt her shudder. Her breasts heaving into his chest. All he could sense was her.

With every push inside her was a long awaited welcome home. Her arms and legs wrapped around him, her body accepting his as he fell deep into his rut, pushing them both. His hips snapping against hers as he kept trying to fit more of himself inside her. His spine curling and twisting as he tried to climb ever deeper inside her.

Her head thrown back, his lips at her neck as they flew over the edge. Her muscles clamping down on him in vice like grip. Holding him deep inside her. Tears fell from his eyes as his heart burst over him.

His cock finally jerking and releasing his seed inside her. He felt completely turned inside out, never felt this intense before.

He caught her eyes again and saw her love for him. She gripping him tight over him. His mind, his heart, his soul, expanding over them as they floated over a golden haze.

He captured her lips for another kiss in that golden haze. His hips still locked inside her, small gentle sways they rocked together. Her grip tight on him as they both drifted. He folded his arms underneath her cradling her in his arms. He wanted to stay like this forever. And felt like he could
do it, too. He saw her looking at him. Her hands at his cheeks, her thumbs sweeping away the tears he didn’t realize he had spilled. Twisting his head he kissed her palms in benediction. Her body loose and relaxed under him.

“You okay?” He gasped for air, coming back to reality.

“Think so. You?” She asked back with concern for him.

He chuckled and then groaned as he felt her tighten around his cock again. He kissed her and carefully eased out of her. Keeping hold of the condom. She hissed a little at the loss, and he pressed another kiss to her in apology.

His body cooling, he saw her wince as she shifted.

He pulled a blanket over her. “Stay here, be right back.”

“Mmph.” Was her reply.

Going to the bathroom on shaky legs. He disposed of the condom. Setting the stopper in the tub, he added lavender scented oil into the warm rush of water filling the porcelain tub. The bath became warm from the heat of the water. Turning back to the bedroom, she was curled into a tiny ball under the blanket.

“Come on love.” He crooned to her. His arms taking hold of her and he whispered gaelic in her ear as she stiffened and hissed in pain. Her hands at his neck, he carried her to the tub and gently set her down into the tub. She groaning in relief as he slide in behind her. Her back resting to his chest, his arm holding her upright. She groaned again as her muscles unlocked.

“How is it you know how to take such care of me?” She asked into his neck, twisting into his arms. His hand moving to her temple, tracing her jaw and the shell of her ear. Brushing her hair back.

“I just love you.” He said softly.

Her eyes opening to his. And again, his heart leapt as he saw his world in her eyes. “I love you.”

“Graim thu, mo ghaol.” He said pressing another kiss to her lips. Her body relaxed again. He took the loofah and ran it over her body, cleaning her gently. Using his fingers over her folds and around her entrance. He saw her eyes take in his hand taking care of her private parts. Her cheeks blushed.

“It’s okay, mo leanabh. You’ll be okay. No more pain.” He kissed her reassuring her silent question in her eyes.

She breathed. “Sorry, I... You’ve probably had much better...”

“Stop it. Thought I was going to be turned inside out with how we are. I loved it. Never felt like I did when we made love. Don’t doubt yourself. I love how you let yourself go, how you trust me to take care of you. I cherish that. I love you for that. Can’t wait to do it again.” He grinned at her suspicious look.

“Really?” She asked, her voice going high at the end.

“You know, these doubts of yours are a bit of a blow to my manhood here.” He complained lightly. His grin widened as her eyes narrowed on him. Chuckling at her flare of anger.

Her eyes turning dark again. Her desire flaring inside her as she looked into his eyes. Her hand
taking his, pressing a kiss to his palm. “No danger of that ever happening.” She purred. He jerked as he felt his cock stir to life again under her seductive voice and caresses.

“Witch.” He playfully groused at her. Settling her against him again. He searched behind some soaps and found a joint along with a book of matches.

He lit it and took a drag and pulled her toward him to shotgun her. Kissing her as she breathed the smoke. Her eyes hazy and her body relaxing. They smoked the rest of the joint and when the water cooled off, he shifted and got up. She watched him as she settled back in the tub. He dried off, giving her a kiss.

“Stay here, I’ll change the sheets. Don’t fall asleep in here.” She hmm’d at him and he grinned at how she continued to trust him. He had no idea what he did that the gods blessed him with a woman as her.

He quickly stripped the bed and remade it. He had an odd urge inside him to save these sheets. Shaking his head at the errant thought, he went back to the bath and pulled a fresh towel.

She grumbling at him for pulling her from her tub. He took her admonishment easily, pointing out she was getting all pruney. Noting his observation, she graciously relented and allowed him to carry her back to bed again. Sliding in next to her, she nestled against him, drifting off to sleep he following not long after.

A level of contentment settled inside him he didn’t realize one could feel.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
My baby = mo leanabh
I love you = Graim thu
Chapter 40

Chapter Summary

The morning after

Chapter Notes

I got the night off from my Java class, yea snow day! I present you with a new chapter. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He shifted as the morning light filtered through the bay window, Nancy nestled into his side. Her hand across his chest. He moaned in a contented state. His brain free of his headaches, his body relaxed. He hadn’t felt this relaxed in so long.

Caressing her hand, looking at how the morning light played with the glow of their skin. His hand larger and beat up from his life in the club and work at the garage. Hers smaller, the skin silky soft, she clipped her nails in neat ovals. Foregoing the wicked nail extension claws that the croweaters favored. He always hated those. Couldn’t understand why they thought it was erotic. He never let them touch him with those nails. Too many tender bits at risk.

He frowned as he felt an itching over his back. As soon as his attention was brought to it, it became a little more intense. Confused he got up and went to the bathroom, relieving himself and stretching his kinks out. He shuffled to the mirror and twisted to look at his back, wondering what was bothering it. It didn’t hurt all that much, just itched.

“What the…” His eyes popped wide as he saw the colorful ink. It covered the entirety of his back. "Fucking hell.”

He swiftly moved to the mirrored closets and turned again, adjusting the doors to get a better look at his new tattoo. It had the head and wings of an eagle, front legs were talons, the body and back legs were of a lion. The tail feathered at the tip, curved over the musculature of his back. He looked at the image and realized it was a griffin. His couldn’t stop looking at the tattoo.

Something this size would have taken several days to be put on. But here it was, done overnight in his sleep. He didn’t hate it. It was fantastic work, looked like it was going to leap right off his back. He just didn’t know what the hell happened. How he came to have a tattoo put on him. His headache was coming back and he went back to Nancy who was starting to stir.

She looked at him with a smile, but it faded as she saw his expression. “What’s wrong?” Her eyes on his, but she twisted herself, looking to her back. He saw she had ink on her back, too. But with her twisting around he couldn't see what the image was.

“What is that?” She asked, twisting to see down her back, but not able to see the entire image. Her hand going to scratch at it.
“Don’t scratch it.” He said, holding his hand to her. “Come here.”

Helping her out of bed and turning her into the mirrors. Pushing her hair out of the way they finally saw the complete picture on her back. Her eyes popped wide open, her jaw dropping.

“Oh my God. How?” She stuttered as they stared at the tattoo across her back.

Hers was of a tree. The roots wrapping around her lower back and hips, the trunk thick and twisting with gnarled detail up her spine. The branches spreading out across her ribs and shoulder blades. The crown of the tree extending up into her nape. She sent him a questioning look if he had any ideas of what happened.

He shrugged. “I don’t know. I’ve got one, too. He turned and she gasped as she saw the griffin on his back. Her hand traced the tattoo and he flinched under her touch.

“Sorry, did that hurt?” She looked up at his eyes. He looking over his shoulder to her.

“No, just itches. Like how a regular tattoo would when fresh.” He shrugged again, turning to look closer at her tattoo again.

Noticing that the skin wasn’t red or irritated as it would be with a normal tattoo. Hers was amazing. The detail was incredible. As she moved the branches and leaves shifted, making it look like you could touch it and feel the tree, feel the wind that rustled those tattoo’d leaves. He kept staring at it. Blinked and studied it again.

“What are you…?” She moved, but he quickly held her still. His hands at her hips. Continuing to look at her tattoo.

“Shite.”

“What?”

“Could’ve swore I saw it filling in more as I was looking at it. Not sure.” He straightened up.

“Do you feel different?” He asked.

“Itchy. I don’t know...now that I know its there, feels like a solid weight on my back. I’m probably just imagining it.”

“What about you?” She asked.

He thought about it. “Feel sharp. I don’t know how else to say it. Just sharper somehow.”

She turned and he folded her into his arms for a hug. Both of them careful with their backs. They looked into each other's eyes. Momentarily forgetting the tattoos, he traced her face, his thumbs brushing over her cheeks. Her hands running up his chest. Their eyes locked. He grinned at her. She raised her brows at his grin. “Hi.” He said to her breathlessly.

She grinned and blushed at him, realizing they were both stark naked. She thought maybe she should be embarrassed by that fact, but she wasn’t. She just felt so good. Itchy, but good. Gazing up at his whiskey eyes. “Hi back.”

He leaned in and kissed her. He felt her quicken in his arms as she remembered their lovemaking last night. Her kiss turning more forceful and he deepened the kiss, following her lead. They swayed and kissed taking their time enjoying the feel of each other. Connecting once again to each
other. He pulled back for air, Nancy panting herself.

He stepped back and led her towards the walk-in shower. She quirked a brow at him and he grinned wolfishly back at her, catching her in his arms. “Come on, mo ghaol. Let’s break in the shower, aye?” He rumbled into her ear.

She huffed amusedly at him as his lips captured hers, his eyes glinting in humor. His hand blindly finding the valve and setting the water temp. He pulled her in with him, the glass door shutting behind them. He twisted and turned her, so they were under the warm spray.

They pulled back from their kiss again. He grabbed the soap, lathering his hands and started washing her. She raised her face to the spray, her hands combing her hair back. He ran his hands over her breasts, her nipples turning rock hard. She slipped her hands to his shoulders for balance as he teased her body.

He took a knee and washed her feet, coming up her leg and switching to the other, taking care to wash between her toes. He leaned in and kissed the inside of her thigh. Her eyes dark under his magical fingers. He slid a soapy hand up to her pussy, gently washing her tender folds. Softly circling her clit, which throbbed with his ministrations making her gasp as her desire ramped up.

“How are you feeling here?” He asked thickly with concern. Watching her face for any signs of pain.

She frowned, forcing herself to pull back from what he was making her feel to actually think. God why was it so hard to think? He pressed slightly harder and her breath hitched at the slight pain. But it eased off after a bit. “Sore.” She admitted. “But a good sore.” Easing his worry, her heart swelling inside her at his tenderness. Her hand caressing the crown of his head.

He kissed her hipbone for her honesty, his fingers tracing her folds, her clit, her entrance, gently massaging her. He looked up at her as his fingers worked a little harder, her hips moving with his hand now as she chased her orgasm. He leaned in, his lips and tongue working her clit while his fingers pressed inside her. “Okay?” He asked.

He found that small area inside her that set off fireworks in her nerves. “If you stop now, I’ll hurt you.” She threatened as he kept chasing her to the edge. “Holy Christ.” She gasped.

He grinned at her threat but kept up his ministrations. Adding his mouth to her clit. Sucking hard on her clit, she screamed as he pushed her into her orgasm.

Her body limp, he quickly shifted an arm to support her. Her back resting against the cool tiled wall. Gasping for air as she floated on her endorphin rush.

He surged upright catching her lips into a deep kiss. Her leg slid over his hip pulling him into her. His cock thick and heavy, straining for her. He was leaking as he ground himself into her pelvis. He captured her lips into another kiss. Their bodies sliding against each other. Heat filled inside him and pool in his groin. “Gods, I know we should stop, you’re probably too sore. But I can’t…” He broke off when she twisted her hips, clutching at him.

“Chibs....” She groaned, her eyes slitted as she looked to him. “Please, I...”

He didn’t hesitate, his hands quickly sheathing himself with a condom he had the foresight to stash in next to the shampoo. Lifting her up, her legs wrapping around his hips, her back against the tiles, her arms wrapping around his neck and shoulders, helping him with their balance. He slid her down filling her. Her hot channel, squeezing and accepting him inside her.
He cried out at the intensity of their coupling. She looked down into his eyes, his locked onto her, her fingers carding through his hair. Their hips moving until he had sunk completely inside her.

He paused, just trying to fucking holding on, trying to let her have a chance to get used to his girth and length. And for him to find a way to keep control. He wanted to cum. The need rose inside him like a tidal wave threatening to drown him.

She whimpered and shifted and he swore as he felt himself slip just that last millimeter deeper into her and his body just fucking took over. His hips rocking, pushing and pulling inside her. She gasped as he twisted on one push inside her. Her voice was a tuning fork that sped through his nerves, jolting him with deep knowledge of her. Testing this knowledge, he automatically moved as before again again.

She gasped and keened, her internal muscles tight and welcoming, clamping down on him, trying to hold him inside her. He wanted to crawl inside her, his brain shutting down as he fell into the rut. He bent his head to capture her sensitive neck with his lips and teeth. She cried out at the sensations.

Tipping her into her climax. Her muscles bearing down on him and he pushed ever more inside her and he felt like his body wanted to rip apart as he came inside her. His nerves jerking as he fought to just fucking stay here, in this moment.

The outside world fell away and all he cared about was her. He soaked her into his pores, she invaded his senses and he yelled as he felt her in his heart, pounding and expanding inside him. Straining to contain this overwhelming feeling, sealing their joining with another deep kiss. And with the kiss, he felt his mind expand and contract. His awareness was her, only her.

He cradled her in his arms, refusing to let her go. He didn’t think he could let go if he wanted to. Breathing hard like a racehorse after a hard race. His cock began to slide out of her, deciding for him that it was done for now. Fucker. He complained to his cock. She whimpered at the loss and twisted her hips. He pressed a soothing kiss to her jaw in sympathy.

His wrist and forearm burned but he ignored it, keeping his eyes on hers. Letting her down to her feet, finally able to give her some space. His hand going to the shower wall to help hold himself upright, after tossing the condom off. His other hand at her waist to help steady her.

“Bloody hell. Thought I was going to keel over. You okay, mo ghaol?” He gasped into her neck. He felt her nod and grip onto him. Their breathing coming back to normal, they were able to separate a bit.

His wrist and forearm which had started itching now along with his back again.

“Uh, babe? I’ve got another tattoo.” She said, staring down her body.

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph. So do I.” He said, looking at his arm.

Taking another step back, he saw an ivy vine winding around her right ankle and up her leg, curling around her hip. Matching the same ivy vine around his wrist and forearm.

She gasped as she caught sight of their new tattoos. Looking up at him, her eyes filled with questions. But he didn’t have any answers. He sighed and shrugged his own question to her. Trying to find an answer will have to wait. The shower not exactly a place to hold a theoretical or metaphysical debate, he decided.

Tipping her head back into the spray, he grabbed the shampoo working it into her hair. She sighed
and relaxed under his ministrations. Moaning as his fingers slid and massaged her scalp and down her long hair.

She returned the favor, washing him and his hair. After a final rinse, he turned the spray off and wrapped a towel around his hips. Grabbing a second towel he began gently drying her. He missed this. This intimacy with a partner. Taking care of each other.

Blotting carefully at the new tattoos. He wasn’t sure, but it looked like her tree tattoo had become even more defined in the lines, the dimensions of shading deeper. He suspected his own griffin probably had the same enhancements, given how itchy it felt.

After she’d wrapped her hair up in a smaller towel, turban style. She returned the favor, grabbing a spare towel and patted him dry. Caring for him as he cared for her. He saw her curiosity with his body and let her explore. But the itching was driving him crazy. He saw her grimace and twist, trying to keep from scratching at her own tattoos.

“Hold on, love.” He broke from her to rummage through a drawer next to the sink. Thank fuck, he still had some left. Finding the ointment he used for his tattoos. He didn’t think they had to worry about infection, but the cooling effects would be welcome from the itching he hoped.

“Come on.” Leading her back to the bedroom, she grabbing her comb. Quickly putting on a pair of jeans, he waved her to sit on the bed after she had slipped on a fresh pair of panties.

“What’s that?”

“Turn around, it’s ointment, should help with the itching. I use it when I have a new tattoo put on or redone.” She did as he asked.

“Oh God, that’s good.” She sighed in relief. Spreading the soothing ointment generously across her back and down her leg with the vines.

She took the ointment from him and did his back for him. He leaned back into her, breathing in her scent at her neck as she worked the ointment into his forearm and wrist. She loved how they took care of each other. These small moments meant so much to her. “Do you think we’ll get a tattoo every time we have sex?” She asked.

He huffed, he’d just been thinking that himself. “Don’t know. Do you mind the tatt’s?”

“No, they’re beautiful. I hope that’s the last of them, though. We’d end up like circus freaks all covered up in tattoos.” She sighed.

“I’d love you anyway, mo gràidh.” She smiled with a blush. He chuckled and kissed her quickly. Leaning his forehead to hers, “Sure you’re alright?” He asked.

“Yeah, feel good. Feel loved. Well loved.” She said softly and pressed a kiss to his curling lips. "How about you? You okay?” She asked. Her hands tender on his neck and shoulders.

“T’m loved and well loved.” He purred into her lips, capturing hers, drawing out the kiss. Whining when they had to break for air.

She unwrapped her damp hair and towel-dried it some more while waiting for the ointment to do its job before putting on jeans and a shirt.

He grabbed her comb and settled her between his knees and he combed her damp hair. His fingers running through her thick locks, his fingers weaving her hair, taking care of his girl. The guys
would go into shock seeing him braiding her hair. But he didn’t care. She rested her hands against his thighs and let him play with her hair. He tied off the ends of the braid and hugged her. She raising a hand to his cheek as she leaned into him.

“I love you.” She said.

He squeezed her tighter, “Graim thu, mo ghaol.” He hummed into her ear as he swooped down and kissed her, she twisting to meet his lips. He felt his body prime up for her again. Groaning he pulled back. Nope, she’d be too sore. He didn’t want to hurt her. But glad to see that she was annoyed as he was.

“Okay, breakfast, work, we’ll go shopping for a laptop for you. See if maybe Jax got the letters. Then back to the clubhouse for Church. Big day.” He laid out their schedule.

She sighed. “Yeah. Okay. We can’t hide here forever. Just hope that Gemma won’t be around.”

“Don’t worry over her. She won’t bother you again.” He said as she pulled on a clean pair of jeans and deciding to go without a bra, put on one of his t-shirts that fell past her hips.

She smirked. “Famous last words.” She joked darkly at him.

Seeing her in his t-shirt, he mentally made a note to take her clothes shopping. Rolled his eyes at her humor, he dragged her with him into the kitchen to show her how to make pancakes.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My love = mo ghaol
My darling = mo gràidh
I love you = Graim thu
Chapter 41

Chapter Summary

Wayne on the case...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He drove his cranky truck up the secluded road where Chibs had his place. He always liked this part of town, quiet and had some nice sized houses and lots. He was surprised Chibs had decided on buying a house this big. Most of the guys either bunked in the clubhouse or had apartments. Their lives can be so transitory a lot of times.

He'd called Eglee yesterday afternoon after helping Gemma look for the letters. Eglee ran the girls name and what little else he had but not surprising that she didn’t find anything. Like Gemma not finding the letters, remembering her scathing glare when he found Margaret Murphy and Gemma talking in Tara’s office. Gemma seated behind Tara’s desk with a thick medical book that even the most gullible person would know that it was a ruse.

Hopefully, he could find something on this girl to redeem himself at least after the failed retrieval of the letters, he thought as he pulled alongside the edge of the road.

Giving his truck door a good swing for it to latch closed. Damn it...he was going to have to get a new truck soon. Like his own health, the damn truck was falling apart on him.

The lawn was fresh cut and the flower bed in front neatly weeded and maintained. Knocking on the door, he stood back a bit looking around at the cheerful flowers by the front door. Hearing footsteps from inside the house heading to the door, he looked up as the door opened.

Chibs cracked the door open, surprised to find him there no doubt. He saw the gun in Chibs hand, as Chibs opened the door wider.

“You always answer the door with a gun?” He asked with a wave of his hand.

Chibs glared at him but set the safety, tucking the gun into the back of his jeans. He was shoeless and shirtless, the necklaces he wore swung across his chest. The sight of how fit Chibs was made him slightly envious of his lost youth and health, the cancer ravaging his body from within.

“What the fuck you doing here?” Chibs demanded.

“I was in the neighborhood. Heard you had a girlfriend, thought I’d stop by and introduce myself.” He said with a smile and nod.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs swore, not believing a word he just said. Chibs eyes narrowed on him. “Was it Clay or Gemma who asked you to pay a social call?” Chibs questioned.

He shrugged helplessly, no sense in denying what they both knew.

“She’s worried.” He offered as an excuse.
“Aye, she should be worried.” Chibs said under his breath.

Before he could question that comment though, Chibs stared him up and down. His dark eyes so intent, he thought he might have forgotten to zip up or something as he glanced down at himself.

“You eat breakfast?” Chibs asked abruptly.

“Cancer drugs. Can’t keep much down.” He grimaced.

“Get in here. We’re making blueberry pancakes.” Chibs backed up to let him in, closing the door behind him.

“Uh...You don’t have to go to any trouble.” He said, a little surprised that he’d been invited in.

“Shut up.” Chibs rolled his eyes. ”There’s plenty. Then you can go running back to Gemma and tell her to keep out of our business.”

“Chibs? The batter is bubbling, what do I do?” A female voice came from what he guessed was the kitchen.

Chibs turned and stalked off to deal with the bubbling batter. He caught sight of the huge tattoo on Chibs back. Looked fresh. Shit. He didn't remember Chibs having that or the vines on his arm.

Slightly confused, he took his time going deeper into the house. Noting the comfortable sofa and chairs. Coffee table littered with Harley magazines and books. The wall across the room was filled with stereo equipment and a large TV attached to the wall. More books filled the shelves mixed in with vinyl records and CD’s.

Following Chibs and a woman’s voice he found the kitchen down the hall. The cherry cabinets and black equipment offset the cream granite counters that gleamed under the morning sun.

Chibs had an arm around a thin girl. Very thin. Jax wasn’t kidding about that. Dressed in jeans and a large t-shirt. Her lilac eyes flecked with blue and gold as she watched Chibs, flip the pancakes.

“How do you know when this side is done, there won’t be any bubbles like before.” She asked Chibs, staring intently at the pancakes. A stack already done were piled on a platter with a cover to retain their heat.

“Ye’ just get a sense of the time when cooking. Each batch is different with the amount of oil, the heat into the skillet. The first couple pancakes are test ones.” Chibs explained, buzzing the girl’s cheek with a kiss. She giggled with a grin.

Wayne’s eyebrows popped up as he listened to them.

They both looked up at his presence. “Nancy, this is Wayne Unser. Former chief of police. Friend of the Club. Wayne, Nancy.”

“Hi. We weren’t expecting anyone? Were we?” Nancy glanced from him to Chibs in question.

“Oh...uh...no. I was in the neighborhood. Thought I’d drop by and say hello. Welcome you to Charming.” He offered with a grin and a nod.

Chibs smirked at Wayne’s pathetic excuse. Pulling out a joint and lighting it. Handing it to Nancy, she taking a pull on it.

“Really? Smoking at nine am?” He couldn’t help his astonishment.
Chibs shook his head and plated the pancakes from the pan, adding them to the platter. Nancy looked to Chibs not sure what to say. Chibs kissed her again, before leveling him a warning look.

“Mo ghaol, grab the plates. We’ll eat out on the patio.”

“Okay.” She handed Chibs the joint back. He tucking into his lips as he worked the range, turning off burners. Nancy stepping out onto the brick patio. Soon as she was out of earshot Chibs glared at him.

“What?” He asked under that intense glare.

“She needs the pot to be able to eat. And don’t be throwing stones at glass houses. Everyone knows you smoke.” Handing him the joint for a hit.

Sighing that Chibs was right, he took a hit. Jesus, that was strong and smooth weed. He couldn’t afford the better grade of weed like this. Gemma’s contributions were hit or miss in supply and quality.

Chibs set the condiments on a tray, handing it to him. “Take that out would you?”

“Sure.” He said meekly, passing the joint back to Chibs.

Nancy walking back into the house as he walked out. She waited for him to clear the doorway before going through herself. Flinching back from him when he stepped through. That was odd.

Looking back, he saw the two of them sharing a kiss. Chibs passing the smoke of the joint to her with the kiss. Jesus, she was young. Seeing them separate, he quickly turned and set the tray down on the table.

Looking out over the large expanse of the backyard, just as neat and taken care of as the front.

Chibs and Nancy came out with the food and tea.

“You got a nice piece of property here.” He said as they all sat down.

“Thanks.” Chibs said, focusing on the food. Plating up a couple of pancakes, setting it down in front of Nancy. While she smoked the last of the joint.

He watched the two of them. Their chairs nestled up against each other. Leaning into each other. His years as a cop he recognized all kinds of body language. It’s what kept him alive all these years, reluctant to draw his weapon when talking could ease down tensions.

Watching Chibs with the girl, it had all the signs of a deep relationship. Kind of relationship that lasted. Chibs had always been on of the silent ones. You couldn’t read anything off him unless he wanted you to see it. Watching him now, he was relaxed and attentive to the girl, whatever walls he used for everyone else were down for her.

“So where do you hale from?” He asked the girl.

Chibs rolled his eyes at his attempt at a conversation. Nancy answering his question with a question of her own. “Do you visit every new resident, even though you’ve retired?”

“Gemma sent him.” Chibs informed her.

“Of course, she did.” Nancy sighed sarcastically. Chibs shaking his head at her amused by her reaction, putting a plate of pancakes in front of him. Nancy passing the syrup, as Chibs poured tea
for all of them.

“You have coffee?” He grimaced, years of being a cop he lived and breathed coffee.

Chibs glared at him, again. “Tea is better for you. Give it a try.”

He shrugged, but gamely gave it a small slurp. Wasn’t too bad. Not like the instant tea he’d had in the station house a couple of times. “Good. What kind is this?”

“Loose leaf, Irish, black tea. Fiona sends it to me. Teas here in the States are blended down too weak.”

Chibs turned his attention back to Nancy. Watching her as she took up her fork. Chibs own food cooling on a plate in front of him. But Chibs watched Nancy instead of eating himself. That was odd, too. Probably wanted to make sure the girl ate. Maybe she was bulimic or something. He mentally questioned.

He dug in himself. It was good, the blueberries fresh. He was taking a third and fourth forkful before he knew it. The cancer was beating him up lately. Now with both Clay and Gemma pulling him back into Club dealings, he felt even more exhausted.

He watched Nancy as she finally took a mouthful of pancakes. Chibs pressing a kiss to her temple before taking up his own fork. They all ate in silence for the next few minutes. Watching Nancy eat slowly and methodically. Nancy set her fork down, only half her food eaten. She sat back to sip on her tea.

“Something wrong with your pancakes?” He asked curiously.

“No. They’re perfect. I just can’t eat anymore. I’m stuffed.”

He looked to Chibs and saw the worry on his face.

Nancy smiled back at Chibs, her hand coming to the side of Chibs face, her thumb sweeping along his temple. Chibs shuddered at her touch, swaying into her hand. Chibs turned his head and took her hand, kissing her palm before going back to his own plate.

He was starting to wish he hadn’t showed up. Felt like he was interrupting something.

Chibs and Nancy pulled back from each other. She taking up her tea. Chibs polishing off his plate, to taking her leftover pancakes to his own plate to finish.

“I’m from Naperville, Illinois.” She answered his earlier question. “But then you know that already. Gemma had you do a search on me. Called to one of your former employees to do a check on me, as a favor.”

“How do you know that?” He looked up at her in shock.

“Because I’m psychic and I read Tig and Gemma.”

“Psychic? Like telling fortunes?” He asked with a healthy dose of disbelief.

“No. I only need to touch you and I’ll know everything you have ever done and what you will do. But just from reading Tig. I know that he and Piney came to you at your office. Told you about Hale and his bid for that block on Liberty Street. You told Piney and Tig that there wasn’t enough evidence to go up against such an upstanding citizen who was running for mayor.”
Chibs snorted with a grin at her description of what happened couple of years ago.

He sat back and looked at her. “Tig could have told you about that meeting.”

“You were the first one to find Gemma at that utility house when she’d been raped. Gemma refused to go the hospital, forced you to take her to Tara’s dad’s place instead. Made you cover for her. And before you ask, Gemma didn’t tell me that. She’s looking to kick me out of this town. Out of her club. She would have no reason to tell me anything about what she’s doing. Gemma forced me to read her. I told her not to touch me. But she didn’t listen. She never listens, does she, Wayne?”

Chibs watched him under his hooded eyes. He squirmed under the hard looks between Chibs and Nancy.

Nancy sighed at him. “It is nice to meet you. It truly is. I only wish that you had come here of your own volition without Gemma tasking you. But I know what it is that you’ve done for both Clay and Gemma over the years. Convincing yourself and anyone its for the good of Charming. And I’m sure that is true for the most part. But that is not your job anymore. Nothing of what they are asking you to do...is your job anymore.”

“They’re my friends. You help your friends when they ask for it.” He defended himself.

“Jesus.” Chibs groaned, running a hand through his hair. Nancy sharing a look to Chibs. Some silent conversation going on between them.

“What?” He asked.

“Gemma and Clay just hosted a dinner the other night. Why weren’t you invited? The guys were there, Tara, Lyla, the kids. Even Bobby’s girlfriend was there. Yet, you weren’t invited? If you are such good friends with Clay and Gemma...why weren’t you invited?” Nancy tilted her head at him. "Something to ask Gemma when you see her later."

He frowned at the sudden questions being asked. Questions that he didn’t have answers for. “I…” He stuttered.

“You’ve invested practically your entire life for them. Yet they failed to return the favor. Instead telling you to run a check on me. A teenager that they suddenly have a ‘problem’ with. Where is the friendship in that? When was the last time Gemma fed you? Not for a long time. Let you isolate yourself up at your trailer in the middle of nowhere.”

Chibs took up Nancy’s hand, their fingers weaving. He saw her breath hitch at whatever thought was going through her head. “I know what it is to be alone, Wayne. What it does to your mind and emotions. With your health issues...They are not your friends. That’s not what true friends do. Take what time you have and live your own life. Go travel. Go see your kids. Do something that isn’t revolved around Charming or the Club.”

He blinked at the girl. Shocked that she was speaking to him this way. Questions flooded his brain as he stared at Nancy.

Nancy stood up and gathered up some of the plates. “I’m not here to hurt the club. I’m not here to create problems. Tell Gemma that I’m with Chibs. Nothing she says or does will take me away from him. If he doesn’t want me, Chibs will tell me himself.”

“Not fucking happening, m ‘anam.” Chibs broke in gruffly. Nancy gave Chibs a quick smile.
Chapter End Notes
Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 42

Chapter Summary

Some shopping and research

Chapter Notes

Once again, what was supposed to be a quick short chapter turned into a thirteen pager. I don't know how this keeps happening.

I keep getting confused if I should be capitalizing church and club. And my sentence structure is iffy, still. Doubt I'll ever get that right. Just go with it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Soon as Wayne left, he turned and headed into the kitchen. Finding Nancy drying the skillet. Running his hands along her waist, burying his face into the curve of her neck and shoulder. Her head tilting as she leaned back into him. He felt her breathing hitch as he kissed her bared skin.

The smack of the skillet on the counter was the only warning he had when her hand slid up along his cheek and her fingers combing through his hair. “God...How do you dooo that?” He grinned wickedly into her neck as she groaned.

Giving her another kiss, he pulled back giving her room to turn around and face him. Her hands settling on his chest, fingers playing at his necklaces. He shivered at her touch. “You keep doing that and we’ll never get out of here…”

She grinned at him. “And that’s a bad thing?”

He snorted and stole another kiss. Pulling back to catch his breath, leaning his forehead to hers. Their eyes locking on each other. “You want to tell me what it is that had you going at Wayne like that?”

Her eye contact broke with his question. “I was pissed he did a background check on me. He could have just asked.”

“Aye...I get that. But what about the friend thing?”

“Because it’s true. What Gemma knows and thinks of Wayne...she’s not his friend. She uses him.”

“Like with what you said over JT’s death. He helping covering it up?”

She just shrugged as an answer.

“Okay. We got to get a move on. I’m due back at the garage. We’ll take off at lunch and get you a laptop. How’s that sound?”
“Yeah, sounds like a plan.”

Chibs went off to pull on a shirt, while she took another look at her tattoo in the mirror. Sighing at not having any answers or ideas of why the tattoos appeared bothered her. But there wasn’t anything to be done about them, she thought as she brushed her teeth.

She pulled on her leather jacket and walked out of the house with Chibs, he locking up after her. She couldn’t stop thinking about their mysterious tattoos. Just another thing to worry about on top of the information she learned from reading Gemma. If Jax would read the letters, what he might do once he did. Add in that the club had to vote on the muling and her. She clutched at Chibs waist as he made the turn into the lot. Thankful that he was such a rock to all that was happening in such a short amount of time. It felt as if they couldn’t catch their breaths. She really needed to do some research. There had to be an explanation for what was happening to her and Chibs. There just had to be.

Climbing off the bike, she followed Chibs towards the garage. Dog and Lowell were drinking coffee and chatting as they joined them. The two of them looked warily at her, their conversation turned silent and stilted.

Chibs rolled his eyes at them. “It was a one off, yesterday. Just don’t ever touch her.” He ordered them. Dog and Lowell shared a look and shrugged at Chibs.

Lowell scratching at his scruffy jaw. “You okay?” He asked.

“Yeah, sorry for the drama.” She shrugged, not sure what else to say to them. They didn’t seem convinced but with Chibs glare, sent them scurrying back to their own work areas.

Chibs rolled his eyes as they turned back to his bay. He gave her a kiss before going to get the car next on the schedule, she back to her cleaning.

She found some cleaning spray and sprayed down the top of the desk. Cringing at how black the paper towels quickly became. Spraying and wiping the top several times until the towels didn’t pick up any more crud and dirt.

The task chair squeaked with every move she made as she quickly cleaned out the drawers. Organizing more papers, she cleared out the drawers. Tossing wads of kleenex, old gum, used-up pens, keeping anything that was still usable.

Chibs and she coming back and forth to each other as they worked. She was hoping that a side effect of them having sex would have helped with the headaches, but no, of course not. But she didn’t mind having her mini-breaks with him. She grinning up at him as she wiped away a grease stain from his forehead. He grinning back at her, stealing kisses that stole her breath away. Why did they leave bed again? She complained lightly to him, he laughing at her ire. Kissing to make up for it.

Luckily, Gemma wasn’t around. Opie and Bobby ran back and forth from the office dealing with the running of the office and the ringing phones. Juice and Rat were on the tow, bringing in more cars either from repo’s or repairs called in. Things were too busy for them to pay her much mind. Glad that she wasn’t the center of attention, she reorganized the catalogs and manuals alphabetically and by year, on the beat-up shelving unit next to the desk.

She’d just finished with the last of the manuals when Chibs came to her again. Joint already lit. Taking the shotgun kiss from him she twisted his wrist so she could see the time.
“You ready to get something to eat?” He asked, looking around at what she’d accomplished.

“Yep. Everything is all organized and cleaned.” She nodded, breathing out the smoke.

“Already told Bobby we were taking off.”

They shared the joint as they swayed together, their hands clutching at each others. Chibs leading her back to his bike. She thought he’d take her to a local Charming diner or restaurant, but instead he hopped onto the highway heading into Stockton.

They did stop at a diner, but it was more upscale than the ones that they’d eaten at on the ride home. Their legs tangled under the table, hands meeting, fingers dovetailing as they waited for their food. Looking to each other, she blushed under his intense eyes, his lips curling. His thumb, tracing a pattern on the back of her hand. She couldn’t stop her goofy smile as she remembered the night before and the morning in the shower. He grinned back at her, the heated knowledge in his eyes that he was remembering, too.

“You’re so pretty.” She said breathily.

He snorted. “You’re high. And you’re pretty. I’m handsome.”

She huffed, affronted he would argue with her opinion of him. “You’re that, too. Pretty and handsome. Hand some...” She tilted her head as her brain tripped over the word. “I have to look up that word. Such an odd word...handsome.”

He shook his head at her, his amusement played across his face. Seeing him relaxed and happy, made her feel happy and bubbly inside. The waitress sliding their plates down in front of them.

“Eat, you.” He ordered with a mild glare.

She grinned but took up her club sandwich, giving him a wink as she took her first bite. He rolled his eyes but satisfied she was eating. Taking up his burger.

After lunch, they rode off to an Apple store. The inside of the store was buzzing with people going back and forth. The noise level rose as the glass door shut behind them. She huddled behind Chibs as he grabbed one of the teenaged salesman. Walking him and her to the table with the laptops sitting on it. People pulling back as they moved through the store.

Chibs asking, err no, more like interrogating the kid, questions about the various models. He lifting and looking all over the laptops, messing around with the keyboard and trackpad. Following what the salesman was timidly pointing out on each one. Eventually deciding on the most expensive one they had. Adding in software that she doubted she’d ever use.

“Chibs?! I don’t need the bigger screen. Or the extra multimedia stuff...whatever you told him to pack into this thing. And it’s highway robbery what they want for this one. Especially, in light of Apple’s cash hoard sitting in their overseas accounts, tax-free.” She said with a hard look at the gulping kid. “If Apple wants their products in more people's hands, they could easily do it by lowering their price points on all of their products.” She concluded.

Chibs glared down at her. Several other people near them, heard her and looked their way.

“This one would be fine. Or even a different brand, probably.” She said pointing to the smaller, cheaper laptop.

“Go get the one I picked out.” He pushed the teenager off to do his bidding. Once the kid had
disappeared, he turned to her. “M ‘anam. You’re getting this one. It has enough memory and speed
to last a long time. Trust me, you can watch TV and movies on this one.”

She frowned at him, but shrugged in defeat when she saw the determination in his eyes. “Fine.”

He hugged her and stared down at her. “Graim thu, m’ anam.”

The teenager came running back with the laptop he’d chosen for her. Chibs had him open it up and
get it set up. Even paying for the extended warranty on the thing. She was going to argue over it
again, but thought if it did break, which was highly probable given the rambunctiousness of the
Club, it’d be good to not have to worry about being without a laptop.

Chibs picked out a case for it. At least she got to pick the color. There were two choices, a pink or a
silvery blue. She teased him about the pink one. Seeing him cringe slightly at such a girly color,
she picked out the silvery blue.

“Thank God.” He breathed.

Giggling at him, he retaliated by pulling her into a bone-melting and mind-bending kiss. As she
recovered, he paid for it all and they were out the door and back on the road before she could blink.
Shaking her head in amusement, she tightened her hold around him.

“Meant to get you to a clothes shop, too. But ran out of time. We’ll figure out a time later.” He said
as he held her hand, walking back to his bay.

“You do too much.” She chastised.

“No. No, I don’t do enough. But I’m changing that. And you expect too little.”

“No, I don’t.” She argued.

“Aye, you do.” Chibs said turning around to face her. The two of them standing in the middle of
the lot. “You expect to give more of yourself to others and don’t expect them to give back the
same. You deserve nice things. Things to wear that fit. That you have a choice of what to wear
based on your mood. Not because its the only thing available. I want you to fill that fucking closet
to the brim with clothes and shoes. I want to trip over them when we get home.”

She was stunned with what he was saying. Not sure to believe him. “You realize that you’re going
to have to come with me to buy all the clothes and shoes you think I need, right?” She questioned
the logistics of what he was wanting.

“Even better. I can make sure you get your fill of shopping. And to see you have fun doing it.
Picking out clothes that make you feel good. Clothes to drive me mad with want of ye’. Not that
that’s hard to do, you could be in a burlap sack and I’d want ye’.”

“Really?” She asked, her voice going high with her question. Looking up at him to see if he was
serious.

He gathered her up, staring down hard into her eyes. “Really.”

She wasn’t sure what to say to that. “Well, okay, then. But can I get used to the computer first?”

He grinned at her plea. He’d never run into anyone who fought so hard not to spend money. “Fine.
For a couple of days. That’s it, though.”
She sighed as she gave in. Kissing her again, her brain turned mushy and they were walking again to the bay. “Oh, before I forget, could we stop at the library? I want to get a card.”

Chibs slapped a hand to his face. “No. You don’t need a card.”

“But…”

He turned her around again when they reached the desk. “Once you get set up on that laptop, you’ll go to Amazon’s site and buy yourself a Kindle. It’ll hold all the books you could ever want to read.”

Chibs yelled for Juice.

“Buy? But why? Going to the library is free.” She argued.

“Oh my God. Nancy, the library here sucks. I’ll take ye’ there if ye’ want. But you’ll see it’s no good. Get the Kindle, buy whatever you want.” He argued back.

Juice had joined them. “What’s up?”

“Get her laptop set up for the wifi here. Make sure there’s virus protection and whatnot on it. I gotta get back to work.” Chibs turned to get a car to work on.

Juice looking to her curiously. “Let’s see what you got.” He prompted.

She looked from where Chibs disappeared to, to Juice. “He’s very stubborn.”

Juice’s brows lifted up. “Yeah, he can be.”

She handed over her new laptop and Juice got to work on it. Locking in the password to the wifi at the garage and clubhouse. Telling her how to add more for when she gets home.

“Does this printer work?” She asked him.

“Think so. Let me get the driver downloaded. I think the cable is in the office somewhere.”

Juice tapped and clicked away. As the driver downloaded, he went in search for the printer cable. Coming back out with cable in hand. Plugging in the power cord and hooking the laptop and printer together. “Shit, forgot paper.” He muttered.

“I’ll get it.” She went into the empty office and took a handful of paper from the copy paper box on the floor at Gemma’s desk.

Juice had opened the document program and typed gibberish as she figured out how to load the paper. Juice clicked to print and they both watched the printer hum to life and spit out their test page.

“Okay, you’re all set. You should also password protect your laptop, if its going to be out here. You don’t want the guys to stumble on it and start downloading porn.” He suggested.

She gave him a baleful look. Juice just grinned and shrugged. “Can’t help it, we’re horndogs.” He joked as he ran off back to work.

Thinking over what to use as a password she settled on one that Chibs will remember. She logged into her Yahoo email account and saw that Alison’s friend at TD Ameritrade had emailed her with instructions regarding her new account. That she should be getting a set of checks and a credit card
to use in the mail. Along with a slew of pdf files of their various products that she could invest in. For a fee, of course.

Logging into her new brokerage account she noted that the money was still tied up in the liquidation process. She filled out the forms needed so she could trade futures and options on futures, emailing it back. She studied what the market has been doing the last few days, everything going on has been a whirlwind that she hadn’t had a chance to even check the spoo’s.

She decided to do some research. Try and find some reason for these tattoos. Or maybe the meanings behind them. Anything that will give them a clue. Printing out what she found, most of it just informational and honestly, not anything scholarly. It was all conjecture. Possibilities of what people on the web thought about tattoos and their meanings in any given historical period. Making mental notes to go deeper into some university history department sites, maybe they’d have more information.

Chibs and she took their headache breaks, she mostly going to him as he worked.

“How are you liking the laptop?” He asked at one point.

“It’s very nice. Thank you. Sorry I was being a pest about it before.”

He just gave her an inscrutable look and kissed her. “There’s nothing to be sorry about. And I had fun arguing with ye’.”

She rolled her eyes. “Hmph. Love you.”

“Graim thu, mo gràidh.” He said before swooping in for another kiss and letting her go to finish his work, leaving her to collapse into her chair again. The man is lethal, she decided.

Settling back at her laptop she did a search for the local paper in Naperville on a lark. Wondering what had been going on there since she’d left.

Holy shit...her heart stopped at the headline jumping out at her from the screen. Scanning the article she couldn’t believe it. Printing it out re-reading it, the hard copy allowed her to believe this actually happened. She didn’t think it would happen so soon.

There a couple of pictures of her father and Claire. One of their stock photos from their business site. And the other, the two of them being led off in handcuffs from the office building. In the background, people were coming out with a ton of boxes. All marked with evidence tape. Her father and Claire had been arrested for embezzlement, his company under federal investigation. She didn’t know what to think.

She’d seen Claire in trouble with the law, not her father though. And given how much was in the trust, that money might have saved his business. Or, at least, kept the authorities at bay. The article was vague in the exact amount it was that they’d stolen. But she never signed the trust over. She drew a shaky breath as she thanked the gods for her resistance from his demands.

Quickly, she folded the paper, tucking it in her pocket to show Chibs later. Closing out the window on the browser. The lot had been filling up with more bikes as the afternoon turned into early evening. The guys coming in to socialize before Church. The sound of male voices rising as the men greeted each other. She stood up and pulled the printer cable from the laptop. Organizing her research on their tattoos.

Chibs sighed as he took her chair, settling her into his lap. Her heart leapt at the sudden move. Looking into his dark eyes, she was thankful that he came for her when he did.
She shook with her unanswered questions, Chibs eyes turned concerned and she shook off her worry. There wasn’t anything to do about it now. She was here across the country safe. She gave him a smile. His hand traced her cheek, brushing back some loose hair that had gotten free of the braid. His touch sending molten heat through her. She felt so connected to this man as she clutched at his jacket. He tilted his head at her silent urging and they kissed. Smiling and kissing at each other. Their headaches easing back.

“You done with work?” She asked.

“Yes. What’s all this?” He asked noticing her printouts.

“I did some research on our tattoos.” She said, handing him the paper. “Thought there might be a reason these tattoos, these images. They must represent what our purpose is or is supposed to be. I don’t know, it could be just random. And I got all this from the web, who knows if any of this is based in any scientific or historical fact. Probably only has any powers or meaning just on what we decide it holds, if any.”

“Aye, at least I wasn’t given something ridiculous like a rabbit or a fish across my back.” He said absently as he looked over what she found. “I know in celtic lore, trees are huge with them. Told Jax you had the sight. You mentioned you felt more grounded with it this morning. Maybe it’ll help somehow for your reading. If I have to watch you pass out again it’d be the death of me.”

“And if this is correct, your griffin translates to wisdom, strength, and vengeance. Something you already do with the club and the Irish.” She eyed him as he scratched at his goatee.

“Anything with the ivy?” He asked quizzically.

Shaking her head. “No, not really. Perhaps its just a symbol of us together. We’re bound like you said before. A physical manifestation of that bond maybe.” She ventured. “I’ve got some other sites I want to check.”

“Okay, sounds reasonable.” He sighed, checking the time. “Come on, mo ghaol, let’s get some dinner. We have Church in an hour.” Chibs said.

“Okay.” Powering down her laptop. Dog and Lowell both clocking out with the timeclock on the wall next to the desk.

Chibs took her hand, stopping to lock the laptop and her research in his saddlebag for safekeeping, before going into the clubhouse. Lighting a joint as they walked, handing it to her. She taking a pull on it just to hand it back to him.

“Still feeling loopy from the one at lunch.” She explained at his questioning eyes.

Chibs greeted several people as they entered the clubhouse. He led her back to the kitchen and made up sandwiches. Settling at a table off in a corner of the room, Chibs placing her so that he could protect her if anyone approached the table. Chibs looked to her and she saw the question in his eyes, realizing he’d asked her a question. “Hmmm?”

“Your birthday is coming up Saturday. Anything you’d like or go?” He asked.

She blinked in surprise. “Oh...I’d forgotten about that. You don’t have to go to any trouble. It’s just another day. And after all you’ve done for me these last couple of weeks, you don’t have to do or get me anything.”

Remembering her prior birthdays of being locked in the basement with only a used paperback
book. Those were the good ones. Sometimes Claire and her father would try and bribe her with a 
fancy birthday cake or colorfully, wrapped gift boxes, telling her she could have them only if she 
signed over the papers.

When she was younger, it was hard to give up on the promise of that cake and those gifts. But the 
sound of her mother’s plea kept her from doing anything her father and Claire wanted of her. She 
worked to make it so her birthday meant nothing. No better or worse than any other day of the 
year. But no matter how much she worked at that it still tripped her up a little. Making her wonder 
what her life would have been like if her mother were still alive. But it was no use dwelling on it. 
Things happened and she had to accept that. The least she could do was keep her promise to her 
dying mother.

She knew Chibs saw some of what had to endure. Just as she wasn’t around for all of what Chibs 
was doing, he couldn’t have been around for all of hers. And she didn’t want to bring that horror 
into her new life...into her and Chibs relationship now and in the future. Him bringing up her 
birthday, celebrating it, she didn’t know how to handle that. She took another bite of her sandwich, 
mulling over the hotbed of mess he’d inadvertently overturned in her mind. It wasn’t his fault, he 
didn’t know.

Studiously ignoring Chibs dark stare of disbelief. His hand toying with her fingers. His rings 
brushing against her skin. She thought of her grandparents wedding rings, wondered if Chibs 
would agree to wear it. That would mean marriage. She wasn’t sure they were ready for that. 
Everything seemed to be moving at warp speed. But with the tattoos, their need for each other, it 
felt to her that they were married already. Committed to each other by the Gods themselves. Which 
was crazy, she acknowledged given they’d only just met a couple of weeks ago.

“It’s not just another day.” He argued, pulling her attention back to his question of her birthday. 

She looked to him and saw the conviction in his eyes that they were going to celebrate her birthday 
whether she liked it or not. She jerked as a flash hit her. A sense memory. The feel of his arms 
around her, his heated skin and scent as they swayed in a dark bar. A live band playing their songs 
to everyone’s delight. The sight of Chibs delight in the band and their outing.

His grip on her hands snapped her back, blinking she saw his concern as she had checked out for a 
second. She squeezed his hand again that she was okay. “Okay, we’ll do something. Maybe go see 
a band?” She suggested.

“None of that Bieber crap.” He negotiated with a harsh voice, after thinking on her idea for a 
moment.

She laughed. “No Bieber. Promise.” She kissed him to finish the conversation. He grunting at her 
that he’d make sure she never subjected him to any Bieber-esque music.

She saw Jax and Opie walk into the clubhouse, greeting their brothers as they walked deeper into 
the room. Opie checking in with his father who was sucking down his tequila at the bar. Juice and 
Tig were talking with Bobby at another table, they were having an intense conversation. The three 
of them flicking looks at her. She flushed as she realized they were talking about her.

They pulled Jax into their conversation when he reached their table. She watched Jax’s expression, 
gave a contemplative look at their idea. He looked to her again. Yep, definitely talking about her. 
She didn’t know what it was and let it go. They’d tell her or Chibs sooner or later. No use worrying 
over it. Checking Jax once more, he didn’t seem upset or about to kill Clay so maybe he hadn’t 
read the letters yet. Wondering if Tara refused to give them to him.
She took another bite and passed the rest of her sandwich to Chibs who scooped it up heartily.

Soon as their plates were clear, a croweater grabbed their plates for them, she jerked as the girl leaned a little too close to her. Chibs gave the croweater a hard look for unnerving her. He pulled out his pack of smokes and lit a cigarette as he worked on finishing his beer.

Gemma was holding court at one of the tables. Oddly, she wasn’t surprised that Gemma was here. Needing to know the minute church ended what the club had decided. The croweaters flitting back and forth, doing Gemma’s bidding. How in the world did the guys not see what was going on with her. She huddled behind Chibs to stay out of Gemma’s line of sight. Or tried to. She groaned when she caught Gemma flashing her a dark look from across the room. That can’t be good.

“So did you order you Kindle?” Chibs asked.

“Uh, no. Not yet. Got an email from TD that my checks and credit card should be in the mail. Soon as those show up, I’ll order one. I’m going to pay you back for the laptop. It’s just taking some time for all the regulators to settle the account and the funds.”

He sighed next to her. “Fucks sake, don’t worry about the money. I can afford it.”

She breathed and looked hard at Chibs. “I told you from day one, I don’t want the money to be a thing between us. You...who you are...that is more important to me that what shit you can buy for me. So quit that thinking right now. And if you think that you’re scot-free on my trust money. You got another thing coming. Half of that is yours.”

“Oh my God. No. Christ.” He growled in frustration. “All that money is yours. Do what you want with it. Go out and buy all the gum you can with it, if you want. I don’t care about the money. And you have to remember to let me do and buy things for ye’. And it’s not out of obligation, but because it makes me feel good. Okay?”

She studied his determined eyes. She still didn’t like it, and knew they’d be revisiting this conversation again. But willing to let it go for now. “Okay.” The two of them relaxed again. “Still not a fight yet?”

Chibs huffed a laugh, running a hand through his hair. “Haven’t thrown any shite at me yet. So, no, not a fight.”

She grinned and shook her head at him. He captured her grin in a deep kiss.

“Hey, Chibs.” A woman’s voice interrupted their kiss. Looking to the woman, she saw a porn star with blonde hair that she was teasing with her clawed fingers, jaw smacking the gum in her mouth. Her face painted up. Clothes barely there on her body. She doubted she could sit down without flashing the entire room. The undersides of her boobs were bare, so she wasn’t wearing a bra to support her large boobs. Dear God...why did she even put clothes on?

Chibs frowned at the porn star. “What do you want, Ima?”

She sighed and let Chibs take point on this. She didn’t remember seeing Chibs ever going off with Ima.

“Thought maybe you’d give me a ride after your meeting.” Ima said with a pouty grin. Code for take me home and fuck me silly.

“No.” Chibs hissed shortly. Ima frowned at his rejection.
"Why not? I’d be ever so grateful." Ima tried again.

"Are you fucking blind, you bint? I’m with her." Chibs cocked a thumb in her direction. “And you haven’t looked at me for years. Now, you’re flashing your rank pussy at me?”

"Her? You’re hooked up with some no-nothing girl? I doubt she can even give good head. Not like I can.” Ima said proudly.

That was it. “Are you kidding me?!” She couldn’t help her astonishment. Her eyes glaring at Ima. Not liking how she valued herself with how good she was at sex. “You equate your self-esteem with how good you are at giving good head? What is the matter with you?!”

The people closest to their table were watching with sudden interest. The attention spreading through the clubhouse. She caught Gemma watching with a satisfied smirk.

"Ima, I don’t know what got up in your empty head of yours, but my old lady is sitting right here next to me. And I never wanted ye’. I never will. Nancy is mine and I’m hers. So fuck off.” Chibs ordered.

Ima finally caught a clue and glanced behind her to Gemma, swiveling her head back and forth. Chibs growling as he caught on to what was happening. “I don’t understand. Gemma said…”

Chibs stood up and gripped Ima by the arm. "Ow, you're hurting me!" Ima complained as Chibs force marching her over to Gemma’s table. Slamming Ima’s face down on the table, making the glasses and plates rattle. "Ow! Let go of me!" Ima yelled. Gemma rearing back at the suddenness of Chibs retaliation.

“Go ahead. Tell me what Gemma said to you? Tell me what Gemma said to have you coming over to me and flash your used-up pussy in my face, in front of my old lady. To disrespect my old lady and me in my clubhouse. Go ahead. I want to hear this.” He said loud enough for the entire club to hear him. Gemma glancing around the room at suddenly being called out.

“Chibs...this is uncalled for.” Gemma snarled before Ima could say anything. Her eyes flashing a warning look at Ima who was squirming under Chibs grip on her. Her skirt too short and she didn’t have the wherewithal to put on a pair of decent panties to cover herself up.

“No! What is uncalled for is you sending this piece of rancid gash to try and play some idiotic game with me and Nancy. Trying to throw Nancy off the lot didn’t work. Sending your lapdog to our house this morning, that didn’t work. Now, you thought I’d fall for this...Ima’s not the only one without a fucking brain between her ears.”

"Oh my God." Jax groaned in the background.

“Hey!” Ima yelled as she realized she was being insulted finally.

Chibs pushed Ima out of the way, Ima scrambling to keep from falling to the floor and pushing her skirt back down at the same time. Ima stalking out of the clubhouse haughtily, nobody stopping her from leaving. Chibs leaned over the table and pointed a finger in Gemma’s face. “Stay out of my business, Gemma. Nancy is my old lady, she’ll be my wife one day soon. Stop...whatever fucking game you’re playing at.”

Chibs stalked back to her, sitting down. His body tense as he realized what he’d just said. Eyeing her to see what her reaction was going to be.

The noise of the clubhouse resumed and it was as if the blowup between Chibs, Ima, and Gemma
“Wife, huh?”

“Aye.” He replied tensely.

“Can we...maybe...possibly...get through my nineteenth birthday first?” She asked easily.

“Don’t worry. I intend to ask ye’ proper.” He laughed shortly, his anger letting him go with that laugh. “Get at least that done right.”

“Okay. But just so you know, I’ll say yes. So...no pressure or anything.” She assured him lightly.

“Good to know.” As he pulled her into another kiss. His hands grabbing at her hips, pulling her into his lap. She giggling as he settled her where he wanted her, her arms sliding around his neck. “Graim thu, m ‘anam.”

“Love you, too.” She sighed.

Jax brushed past with Gemma in tow, walking her out the door of the clubhouse. Gemma ripping her elbow from Jax's hold. Jax's eyes hard as he made sure that Gemma left the building. He nodding back to them as he reentered the clubhouse.

Chibs hand shot out and grabbed Jax's arm, halting him. Giving him a dark look. "You okay? After our call last night?"

"She's getting them." Jax said. "Later."

"Okay. Keep your oath." Chibs reminded him.

"I will." Jax reaffirmed, going back to his table and taking up his beer.

Clay stepped out of the conference room, drawing everyone’s attention to him. She jerked as she had another flash. Seeing blood coming from Clay's chest.

Chibs squeezed her hand, his eyes sharp on her in concern. “You okay?”

“Yeah. I’m fine.” She ran a hand over her eyes, as she snapped back to herself again. This was getting annoying.

Chibs frowned at her distress. Bringing a hand to her cheek, his eyes searching hers.

“I’m okay.” She repeated.

“Church.” Clay ordered across the room then disappearing back into the office.

Chibs groaned, “Christ, I just want to go home.”

She sighed. “I know. I do, too. Faster we get through this, faster we can get out of here.” She offered as incentive, hopping up out of his lap. Their hands still holding each other and he stood up, twirling her under his arm as they moved towards the conference room.

Tig manned the doors, where the guys dropped their cells. Chibs let everyone go first and led her into the conference room last so that everyone was settled in their chairs before navigating the tight space of the room with her.
She let Chibs maneuver her into his lap, she kept her eyes on their hands. The room was silent as Tig closed the doors and sat down himself. She forced herself to remain calm under the weight of everyone's eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
My darling = mo gràidh
My love = mo ghaol

Trader lingo:
spoo's = the S&P 500 futures price.
Chapter 43

Chapter Summary

Church

Chapter Notes

Holy Christ...this is a massive chapter.

Forgive me for taking so long to get it up. Had to edit and change a few things. I'm sure I missed details and things could have been tighter. But if I didn't get this up today, I was going to tear my hair out.

The next chapter or so will be just as massive. Just a heads up on that.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Okay. It’s time to decide what we’re going to do with her.” Clay lit a cigar, puffing away at it. “Anyone want to say anything?” His voice challenging for anyone to possibly contradict the established laws of the Club.

“I think I can live with her being in here, at the table. She’s brought up interesting views on how we handle things.” Bobby said with a thoughtful tone.

“Even so, old ladies aren’t allowed in church.” Kozik pointed out. “Not even Gemma is allowed. No women at the table, it’s been a tenet since the start of this club. All clubs.”

“From what I’ve seen, she and Chibs can’t be apart physically or they have debilitating headaches. What happens when we have to go on a run or have to fight?” Opie asked.

She bit her lip as she listened to what the guys were thinking these last couple of days. This was the first time she heard their unadulterated opinion of her from their own lips. Not through the filter of Tig. Chibs was tense as he held her hand. His thumb sweeping over her knuckles.

“She rides with me. She’s my responsibility. There’s no leaving her behind, not for me.” Chibs declared.

“She won’t hold us up when we ride. And with her being psychic, she already knows who we are and what we are up against.” Tig backed them up.

She noticed Chibs scratching at his wrist and forearm. The guys at the table shifting and mulling over what Chibs was saying. The majority of them looked from them to Jax and Clay. Still taking their cues from their President and VP before committing to anything. Damn it.

She tried to look harmless, doing her best to ignore her own itching tattoo on her leg. Her fingers
scratching at it through her jeans.

“Your’s itching, too?” He asked her.

“Yeah. Just this one, not the other.” She said back to him.

Jax’s head twisting towards them, noticing the ink and confused with what they were talking about. “Chibs, what’s with the new ink?” He asked sideling the conversation a bit with this bit of oddity that snagged his attention.

Chibs gave her a questioning look. She shrugged. The guys all straining to see his forearm that had Jax’s attention.

“It’s not just this.” He waved his arm. “We...well...its hard to explain. Woke up this morning my back was itching. Looked in the mirror and…I couldn’t believe it.”

She stood up so he could get up and some room as he shrugged out of his kutte and jacket. Handing them to her to hold. Tig wheeling his chair back slightly with their sudden need for space.

“Ohh...striptease?” Tig joked. “Let me get some music going. Set the mood.” Clay and a few of the guys chuckled.

Chibs glared at Tig as he scratched at his forearm now that it was free of his jacket sleeve. The guys all leaned in to peer at his arm. But instead he stripped his t-shirt off, letting it fall to the table. His necklaces fell to his chest as they broke free of their cotton barricade of his t-shirt. The pendants of his necklaces swung across his chest, mesmerizing her. She sighed feeling her blood start to race at the sight of his taut muscles. Chibs must have heard her, his dark, whiskey eyes caught hers. The corners of his lips curling in amusement as he caught her thoughts. Grinning that she was so taken with him.

She bit her lip as she forced herself to peel her eyes away from him. Gods, he must model for an artist one day. Frowning at that thought. No...She didn’t want anyone to see him. He was hers. She looked back into his eyes, he’d been watching her think, his eyebrow quirked up. Well, maybe if the art was only for her eyes. But why need a piece of art when she had the man? She couldn’t make up her mind.

Pressing a hand to her eyes. Now was not the time or place to oogle her man. Trying to get herself back to business and not start thinking about hauling him right onto this table and....Damn it! She mentally screamed at herself. He leaned in and kissed her, obliterating her defensive walls. Damn it. She dropped her hand and glared hard at him. He just chuckled at her.

“What is that on your back?” Happy asked, he the closest to Chibs. Happy’s head twisting around to try and get a better look. “Holy fuck.” He said. Happy’s question had her and Chibs reluctantly pulling back from their silent conversation.

“What? What is it?” Jax and Kozik questioned at Happy’s stunned reaction.

“Here. Woke up and this was on my back.” He turned and showed the table his griffin.

“Holy shit.” Jax said. The guys all standing and leaning in closer to get a good look at his new tattoo.

“That’s primo work.” Happy said, with an appreciative nod.
“Jesus Christ, the detail. The eyes on that griffin looks like its staring right at you...and the feathers.” Bobby breathed in awe.

Chibs turned around. The guys all groaned at not being able to see the tattoo anymore. Tig and Happy leaning back to see it more for themselves.

She didn’t know what Chibs had planned as he grabbed her, turning her so her back was to the guys, his hands lifting the back of her shirt. She stiffened and stared up at him in shock.

“Its okay, mo gràidh.” He reassured her, one hand going to her braid, flicking it over her shoulder and his other hand lifting her shirt to expose her tree tattoo to the guys.

“Fucking hell. That had to take at least a week to do.” Opie said. They all crowded closer around her. Looking intently at her tree tattoo. She shook under the scrutiny, her fingers curling at his chest.

“Look how when she breathes and moves, the branches and leaves move as if there were a wind blowing through them. That is fucking fantastic work. Shit...her scars, too, are adding to the tattoo. That's fucking good work.” Jax said with a hushed voice.

“Who’d you go to?” Tig demanded. “Irish Freddy do that?”

“How’d she get a tattoo if no one can touch her?” Opie asked, bringing up a very good question.

Chibs put her shirt back down. The guys all backed off with a collective whine. Chibs slipped his own shirt and kutte back on. Sitting down, pulling her onto his lap. The guys taking their cue, sat themselves.

“Told ye’, we woke up and these were on our backs. Nobody tattooed us. It just was there in the morning. Then later...” Chibs voice trailing off giving her an uncomfortable look. She shrugged and a half-smile. Steeling herself for the rude comments that were sure to come. “...about a half hour later, we were in the shower...” His eyes heavy with meaning.

“You two had sex!” Tig blurted out, pointing a finger at them. “Jesus, about fucking time.”

She felt her face turn red in embarrassment in and anger at Tig. Chibs glared at Tig, but grateful he brought it up at the same time. The guys all smirked and barely suppressing their amusement.

“We were in the middle of it and I felt a burning on my wrist and arm.” Chibs gave them a hard look. “I looked and saw the vines appear. Nancy has vines going around her ankle and up her leg.”

“Did we fall into the twilight zone or something?” Clay asked suspiciously.

“Fuck, if I know. But the gods, the universe, the powers that be, is using us for their purpose. For what we’re not sure.”

“Must be some epic sex going on to get tatt’s like those.” Tig joked gleefully.

She glared at Tig. “Careful, or I’ll tell everyone why you’re freaked out by dolls.” She threatened before she could stop herself. The table fell silent and she flushed as everyone’s attention turned to her.

She slapped her hand over her eyes in frustration and sudden embarrassment. Chibs snickering under her, she spread her fingers and cocked an annoyed look at him. Which seemed to make him grin wider at her. Great. Who knew she could provide the comic relief. She mentally argued with
herself.

Tig cocked his head curiously. “I don’t even know why.” He said.

The guys all perked up at finding out more about one of Tigs eccentricities.

“This is your fault. Telling me to talk more.” She groused at him. Who just grinned wider and pressed a kiss to her temple. “God damn it.” She sighed.

“And you were only weeks old, you wouldn’t remember.” She directed to Tig. Hoping everyone would just drop it.

Avoiding everyone’s eyes, looking at all the signage around the room, jiggling her foot in annoyance at herself for opening this door.

“You know what happened when I was born?” Tig asked disbelievingly.

“Tig, I know everything about you.” She said exasperated, waving her hand at him.

“Now, we’re all curious, come on tell us why Tiggy is freaked by dolls, pretty please?” Bobby egged the conversation on with a biggest grin she’d ever seen. The other guys leaning in with varying looks of amusement for more details. Even Clay looked expectantly at her.

She glanced at Tig and he didn’t seem angry only curious. “Are you sure? Here, now? In front of everyone? You weren’t happy with me when I spilled the beans on Gemma at dinner the other night.” She tried to reason with him.

“I don’t have anything to hide from them. And well, yeah, for a minute I was pissed. But it got me back to even with my cash. Come on, you’ve got me all curious.” Tig encouraged, batting his eyelashes at her.

“God, fiiiine.” She whined in defeat. “You have a sister, Elizabeth.” Tig nodded. ”She was three almost four when you were born. She, like most children who’d been the only baby in the family that had been garnering all the attention from your parents, was jealous when all that attention shifted to you when you came along. The new baby in the family. Kept crying and waking everyone up.”

“I’d be crying, too, if Tig was my blood brother.” Kozik snarked. Tig waved Kozik the finger. The guys laughing at the continued sturm und drang between Tig and Kozik.

She rolled her eyes and kept going. “She was...cranky and in retaliation...she put all of her dolls in your crib. She had like a couple dozen of them. Your parents thought it was cute, her looking after her baby brother. Not realizing you were freaking out by being stared at twenty-four seven. A few of them had glow-in-the-dark eyes, too. Lizzy would come in your room and press a doll right in your face sometimes.”

Tig’s eyes went wide. “Fuck!” The guys started laughing at Tig’s conniption.

“Don’t be mad. She probably doesn’t even remember doing it herself.” She tried to placate.

“Like hell she doesn’t! Lizzy has the memory of a fucking elephant.” Tig rattled off.

His hand going to his jeans pocket, looking for his phone. Only to realize he’d left it with all the others in the cigar box outside the room. He got half-way out of his chair, eyes on the doors when he remembered where and why he was in the room. Plopping back down in his chair with a huff.
Which sent the guys into another laughing fit.

“Fuck you...God damn it...” Tig glared at his laughing brothers. His eyes turned to her again, blaming her for his current predicament.

“You wanted to know.” She shrugged off his ire.

Clay rolled his eyes. “As entertaining all this is. We still have business to deal with here.”

The guys finally calmed down at Clay’s reminder. She saw Jax eye Juice and Bobby. The three of them having some silent conversation. Jax and Bobby both nodded to Juice to speak up. Gearing herself up for whatever it was they were talking about.

“I had an idea, it’s stupid, got it from some of the gaming sites I go to and its probably nothing.” Juice brought up with a nervous bob of his head as everyone looked at him.

“What idea is that?” Chibs asked with narrowed eyes.

“I just wondered if you were holding her or touching her while she was reading someone, you would act as a sort of anchor for her. So she wouldn't pass out.” He shrugged.

She looked back at Chibs, their hands tangled together. The feel of the tree on her back. Her research on Chibs’ griffin. Representing strength, wisdom, and vengeance. Hers for vision beyond this world. The more she thought about it the more it felt right. She saw Chibs thinking and seemed to come to the same conclusion.

“Only way to know is to try it out.” He said to her, similar thoughts running in his eyes as hers.

“We’ve tried everything else. And if I had to go it alone again…” She shuddered in his arms.

“I think we’re getting off point, how are we going to be able to conduct business with her, a non-member.” Clay said testily.

Jax leaned in, his eyes capturing the guys attention. “This situation is undoubtedly new territory for us...for any club. I think we can agree on that. None of us want to see Chibs leave. Not over this. And I’m not talking about his connections with the Irish and our supply line...but as a trusted member of this club. A brother...to all of us.” Everyone nodded gravely.

Jax looked at her with a glint in his eyes. “I suggest that we make her a member.”

She stared at Jax in surprise. Not expecting that to be thrown out onto the table. Her own surprise reflected around the table. She looked to Chibs for his reaction. Finding him to be thinking about it.

“Yeah, right.” Clay scoffed so hard, she thought he’d cough up a lung. “How do we know she’s not going to go off to the Feds or go back home.” Clay scoffed to Jax. “Not to mention the other charters will question our leadership letting some teenaged...girl at the table. We make prospects spend a year doing shit work before they even get patched.”

“She’s not going to go back. I’ll leave the club before that happens.” Chibs said harshly to the table. Directing his threat to Clay specifically. “I’ve told all of you before. I meant it. If I stay, she’s with me. I have half a mind to leaving anyway regarding this coke mule.”

“We aren’t discussing that yet. We have to decide on her before we can vote on the muling.” Clay ordered.
Chibs stared at Clay, anger and disapproval over how things were going.

“It’s not just her we’re deciding on...it’s Chibs. Are you willing to risk our gun supply over his girl?” Jax reminded Clay.

“Maybe we should look at that. Give up the guns.” Bobby said. Piney nodding his approval. Clay sending Bobby and Piney death glares.

“We have already voted to sell guns to the Cartel. There is no going back on that.” Clay squashed Bobby’s suggestion.

Everyone shifted uneasily in their chairs. The die was cast regarding the guns.

“We already voted the guns as you state, it’s true. We have yet to decide on muling their coke.” Chibs spoke. “But in either case, I cannot get scooped up and put in jail over this. Things have changed for me. We still have headaches when we go too long without the other. I’ve already taken her out to learn how to shoot. Jax and Opie were there. She knows enough not to accidentally shoot herself or one of us.”

The guys glanced to Jax and Opie who nodded to what Chibs was telling them. “I’ll keep teaching her how to handle the weapons. That burden is on me. I don’t expect any of you to stand protection for her if things go sideways.”

“And what I’ve been told...” Chibs shot Clay and Jax an annoyed look. “...this deal with the cartel is low-key and profitable. I don’t know if that is truth or not. Given most of our past deals, nothing has ever gone according to plan when we set out on one. And while we’ve managed to work around problems. If things go south, I will leave if things get too dangerous. I won’t risk her life or me getting put back inside while she’s out here alone. No. Not happening.” He looked at Clay and Jax directly.

Clay seethed, as he clenched and unclenched his fists. Quite the box everyone was trapped in, she mused. The guys shifted in their chairs as they pondered the potential loss of Chibs to the club. Ultimately, it boiled down if they could trust that she’d keep her mouth shut about the club to anyone outside of the club and that she wasn’t going to go running home. She mentally huffed at that. There was no way that was ever happening.

Glancing to Chibs before turning back to the men around the table. “Look, I get it. I don’t want to tear Chibs away from all of you just because of me. I really don’t. You took him in when he needed help. You are family to him.”

“M ‘anam..” Chibs broke in.

“No. It’s true. I came from a place...where family didn’t mean anything except how much money you have and what your social status was. It would kill a part of me to tear Chibs away from you. It would kill me if he couldn’t go see his daughter graduate or to walk her down the aisle. To have her or Fiona be able to call or fly over just to visit. Gemma thought that I’d be selfish in any amount of money or time he spent with them instead of me. She accused...she didn’t know me and thought the worst of me.”

“Shit. She did that?” Jax asked, appalled.

She gave Jax an annoyed look. Jax and Opie glanced at each other.

“Whatever, it’s not the point.” She let go of her annoyance that Jax nor Opie knew what happened in the kitchen of the dinner.
“To tackle your concerns about me...the Feds and potentially going home. Wherever Chibs is, that is my home. Naperville...it can burn itself to the ground for all I care. In fact, it’s already starting.”

“What are…?” Chibs and Tig shot her questioning looks.

She pulled out the article she’d printed out earlier. “I was going to show this to you later...after Church.” She explained to Chibs speculative eyes. Her actions and the unfolding of the paper drew everyone’s attention.

Biting her lip, eyes scanning the article again. “I found this news piece earlier today. My father and stepmother have been arrested for running a Ponzi scheme. His business is under investigation. There is no life there for me, anymore.”

She handed Chibs the article and he quickly scanned the few paragraphs.

“Fucking bastard.” He muttered as he passed the note to Tig. The note passed around from person to person.

“Did you know that was going to happen?” Chibs asked her.

“It was a strong possibility. I can’t believe he’s managed to keep it up for as long as he did. I knew he was a fraud like two...three years ago. I was going to show it to you later at home.” She paused as a dark thought hit her. Fuck.

She gasped when the connection hit. With her dead, the trust would have been given to her father as her only blood relative. He just needed her to die. The looks he gave her...he was mentally guessing how much longer it would take for her to starve to death.

The amount in the trust would have either made a small dent in what he potentially stole all these years, or given him enough money to flee the country. Shit, why didn’t she see that before, she mentally railed at herself.

Chibs noticed her thoughts racing, concern running over him as he watched her thinking.

“What is it, mo leanabh?” He asked in concern, his eyes catching her fear.

She shook her head as she realized that she couldn’t tell him in front of the club. “Later, I’ll tell you, later.” He gave her a hard look, but let it slide for now.

Bobby had put on his reading glasses and was studying the article. “It doesn’t say how much was stolen.” He said when he finished, passing the note to Opie.

She shrugged. “Given the people, organizations...union pension funds he’s had invested in the company, it’ll hit millions, at least. Maybe more. But the point is I only have bad memories of that place. I knew as soon as I laid eyes on Chibs....I knew I was going wherever he was taking me. And I have no regrets about it.”

Turning her attention back to Clay. “I don’t want a vote. I don’t want a share of your money. I don’t want a seat at your table. It makes no difference if I’m in the room or not, I’ll find out what is talked and decided about in here anyway. And not because of Chibs telling me.” She cut Clay to the quick on that argument.

“Yet, you’ll be here in the room. Listening to our private discussions. Hearing information and plans of what we will be doing and why and to whom. Information the Feds, the ATF would pressure you to rat. And if the Feds track you down over your father’s business, they’ll be looking
for you for information. What guarantee do we have that you won’t go talking to the Feds about us?” Clay asked and his threat came through loud and clear. She felt Chibs stiffen under her at that tone he was using on her.

She frowned at Clay for his idiotic need for a guarantee. It was a question only a child makes and expects it to be held. “Guarantee? There are no guarantees except in death and taxes. Jesus, I wonder if my father didn’t pay his taxes too all these years. Idiot. I wouldn’t be surprised if the IRS comes down like a ton of bricks over his head.” She digressed, as she took the article Happy had finished reading.

Bobby snorted with a grin. Clay glared back at her not amused by her humor. She sighed and tackled Clay’s questions and worries.

“Besides, who would believe an ‘unstable teenager’ would have any vital information about the inner workings of the Sons of Anarchy,” Raising her hands to emphasize her point. Jax and the guys nodding with her reasoning.

“And with news of who I am, my reactions when I’ve read Tig and Gemma…” She paused and looked at Clay and Jax, “...rumors run rampant already. I walk in the clubhouse and people stop and stare at me. Wondering what I’m going to do next, if I’m going to have an episode and pass out from touching someone. Even Dog and Lowell are freaked out by me. Not exactly a reliable witness, am I? Certainly not to the Feds or any courthouse. Lawyers would have a field day with me if I ever found myself in a witness stand.” She took heart seeing Bobby and Jax nodding with what she was saying.

Running a hand over her forehead, leaning into Chibs, he put his hands on her waist under her shirt, he leaning his face into her shoulder, offering comfort to her. Thinking over her assessment of her standing within the club.

Jax, Tig, and Bobby looked abashed as they realized she was right and ashamed that club members, family, and friends of the club will believe the rumors. A club filled with misfits and outlaws that clung to the edge of what is normal to the society at large. That she was being outcast by not only from normal people, but by them as well. It made him angry that she was being treated so poorly by his friends, people he considered his family.

She huffed a bitter laugh. “But it would never get that far. Soon as the cops or Feds put their hands on me, even just a handshake, I’ll know them. I’d run circles around them. By the end of their ‘interview’ they’d be wondering why the hell they were questioning me in the first place.”

“Jesus Christ. This isn’t some game here. We deal with hard core outlaws and they won’t appreciate your verbal skills.” Clay complained.

She narrowed her eyes at Clay. “I know exactly how dangerous you are. I could go all day, never answering a single question asked of me.” She snipped at Clay.

“You ask me how I’d defeat the Feds or the cops. It’s no contest. Soon as I read them, anyone, I can annihilate them. If it was Tig going up against me, I’d use his own knowledge and experiences against him. I could steal his identity and ruin his finances in less than five minutes. And that’s not the worst I could do. Psychologically, I could turn Tig into a quivering pile of goo on the floor by the time I was done. And he would have no clue as to how I did it.” She waved at him dismissively.

“Shit, she’s a walking, talking hacker without the computer.” Juice said in a hushed tone, staring at her in awe.
“Hey!” Tig complained. “There is no way you could turn me to a pile of goo. I’m a hard-ass outlaw biker.” He ranted to defend himself.

She swiftly looked him in the eye. She knew him. All the secrets and emotional triggers that could break him down. Triggers, that he himself, didn’t realize were there. A lot had been taken out of him in his military and outlaw life. But a few still lingered.

“Really? You want to go there?” The silence built as she stared down Tig. And Tig not one to back down on a challenge, leaned in towards her. A smirk gracing his lips.

Leaning slightly in towards him, holding his eyes to hers. Her voice dropped in pitch as she enticed Tig with the truth. “I know why you are so fascinated by corpses. Why you find yourself in the most ridiculous situations. Really? That livestock trailer in Oregon?” Tig jerked back in his chair, his eyes breaking from hers. “You haven’t cleared up that bond issue, by the way.”

“Jesus.” Piney muttered from his end of the table. The guys all sharing astonished looks at her and Tig.

“Quit that! God, you have the freakiest eyes I’ve ever seen.” Tig complained, rubbing at his eyes, only to glare back at her. “And if you could do this, then why did you stay with your asshole parents? All those shithole classmates of yours that bullied you?” Tig countered, pleased with himself for coming up with an argument. Deflecting the guys from asking her to divulge more information about his quirks.

She slapped her hand to her eyes at his stupid question. Glaring at him comically. “Seriously? I told you this on the road! Here! I was freaking eight years old, Tig! Where would I go? How would I survive? I was reading people left and right. Passing out and puking my guts out. My father and Claire telling everyone it was from the accident. That they were trying to help me, just to garner sympathy for them in having to deal with such a ‘difficult child’. They used my physical condition from the readings against me. By the time I had a chance to get a sense of what was happening it was too late. Teachers, police, neighbors nobody believed me. I needed time to grow up, learn, and try to figure out what the hell I was going to do. And by then, it was just survive the day and live to see the next!” She tried to calm down, her breathing erratic in her rant. “You think I didn’t try to get away? I did...several times...ended up back in that Godforsaken basement!”

Tig flushed as he realized he did know all that, regretting his accusation. Damn it. She didn’t mean to make a spectacle of herself or tear into Tig like that. She took a hard breath trying to calm herself down.

“I’m sorry for yelling. I’m sorry for attacking you like that Tig. It was uncalled for. I’m still trying to find my footing here, my abilities are getting stronger. Now the tattoos. Chibs protectiveness over me. Feeling like I’m snapping in and out of my body and mind. Realizing that you’re actual people. That this is even happening, it’s surreal.”

Chibs lit a joint and handed it to her. “Calm down. You’re fine. Nothing to apologize for.”

She nodded and smoked, taking a moment to gather herself. Ignoring the subtle threat Chibs was glaring at his friends.

“Yesterday, you read Gemma. You know her like you do Tig?” Piney broached. Clay and Jax leaning into the table.

“Yes.” She said shortly. Realizing that this was going to come up. Damn it.
Everyone hanging on edge as they waited for her to start talking. Chibs hands tightened around her, a warning she didn’t need.

“What did you see that made you call her a liar?” Jax asked, his and everyone's eyes weighed on her.

Taking another hit off the joint. “It was Gemma’s reading. If she wants to know why, she will have to ask me herself.”

She saw the frustration in Jax’s eyes. Clay was angry...but then he seemed to always be angry with her. More of the idea of her she mused as the effects of the pot took hold on her.

“You threatened my old lady and you won’t tell me why?” Clay leaned in, trying to intimidate her by his size, his pointing finger hitting the top of the table.

She turned her eyes to him angrily. “Gemma is not just your wife. She is a person in her own right. She has a path all her own. You share that path...for a time. Just as JT did. I will not discuss what I saw in her for you. For all of you. I get everything. I don’t have a choice. If Gemma wants to know, she can ask me herself. I will not talk about someone’s reading just to satisfy your curiosity. You want a reading? Take my hand and I’ll give you your truth. The future that is waiting for you. Warts and all.”

Leaning in towards her, pointedly ignoring her hand. “Information in this room, in this club is dangerous to everyone outside of it.”

“I know.” She sniffed at Clay’s threat. Taking another drag on the joint as she pulled her hand back from Clay’s direction. “Tara, as a doctor has doctor-patient confidentiality, I treat my readings the same way. I don’t divulge anything unless I absolutely have to, if someone’s life is in mortal danger, only then will I try and stop them.”

“And besides, what right do I have to dictate anything in anyone’s life. Just as nobody has that right over mine. Whatever I say to someone about their readings, it’s for their benefit to use or not. Not for anyone else to use. My father and Claire tried to break me, to use me to their advantage. I refused. The longer I refused, the worse their treatment became. I carry every person who I read inside me. From the first to the last. I worry about them. I can’t help it. And most of them, don’t deserve the energy of my worry to them.” She took another hit on the joint, feeling herself get more upset.

“Jesus, we know some of the shit Tig gets into.” Opie said with his calm humor. Tig waved the finger at Opie in protest. The joke deflating the tension in the room. She let it go to focus on the insult to Tig.

“As depraved and twisted you think Tig is...” She looked to Opie. “...he is nothing compared to some other people I’ve been forced to read. At an age that a child should never witness or experience.” She replied gravely. The guys all took a moment to really listen to what she was saying.

“How did you stay sane?” Jax asked. And with him asking that question, she knew that she had him.

“At times, I thought I was crazy. When I woke up from the coma, I was on a lot of medications. I thought it was that was making me the way I was. But it kept happening. And when I was brought home, my hell really began. I thank God, that my father and Claire let me go to school. Just being able to leave the house was a relief. I was able to study and learn as much as I could. I learned to
live with my circumstances. It was adapt or die. And dying was giving up, was letting them win. There are truly evil people in this world. But when I read them, they utterly believe that they are in the right. It’s how psychopaths and serial killers can go for years without getting caught. They are very good actors on the outside, you’d never know it looking or talking to them. But inside, they can’t hide their true selves from me. So no...” She looked to Tig. ”...Tig, for as weird as you can be, there are much worse people out there.”

“You’ve read serial killers?” Bobby asked her. Chibs holding her tightly.

“Couple of them. One...he was still cooking yet. He was already torturing and killing pets.”

“Who?” Chibs asked worriedly. “How old were ye’?”

“A kid in school, he transferred out his sophomore year, I was fourteen at the time.” She shivered as she forced herself to stop thinking about that boy. “He really liked that I was so freaked out by him. The other...we thwarted him when we were on the road coming here.”

The table fell silent. Chibs gripped her harder as she sighed and leaned into him. “I know I’m a complication, and I’m sorry for that. But I can’t help what I am. I really can’t. I would’ve stopped doing it if I could ages ago. Who would want to live like this. To see the past and future of someone’s life and know that most likely, nothing you do can change a damn thing about it. Even though the kids at school were complete assholes to me...going to school...it kept me from falling into the abyss.”

She felt Chibs hug her tighter, his lips finding the curve of her neck. His touch reminded her that she wasn’t in that darkness anymore.

“She’s too dangerous for us to not vote her in. The information she already has is enough to send the entire club to jail. We’d be smart and use her abilities to help us rather than against us.” Bobby said.

“There’s one way to shut her up forever.” Clay said.

Chibs pulled his gun and she quickly put a hand over his on the gun, forcing him to lay it flat on the table. Her eyes on Chibs, watching him struggle not to kill Clay.

“Clay! We don’t kill women or children.” Jax seethed at Clay. Opie and Bobby glaring at Clay for his faux pas.

She stifled her indignant huff at Jax’s rebuke to Clay. Because she knew that Clay would kill her. Just like he ordered the hit on Opie, only to get Donna killed by mistake. He might have felt bad about it, but soon as he realized what happened, he moved on. She gripped Chibs hand as she felt him stiffen. His eyes burning at Clay for suggesting it.

“Plus, if she dies, what will happen to Chibs? You saw him before he left for her. What if he goes back to that? So stop threatening her, because to threaten her is to threaten a brother, a member of this club. If it weren’t for her hanging onto him right now, Chibs probably would’ve shot you for even saying that.” Jax said to Clay. The tension tight over the table, until Clay shrugged off his earlier suggestion.

“I’m just saying there are other ways.” Clay said easily, with a grin and shrug. As if threatening her life was a big joke. She didn’t buy it for a minute. And by the looks going around the table, the guys didn’t buy it either.

“We’ll need a reason for you being in here. It’s true that the charter doesn’t allow women to the
table. People see you in here, they’ll question it.” Bobby said trying to find a solution and redirect the table back to what to do with her.

She sighed exhausted by all of this, she pressed a kiss to Chibs cheek, his attention drawn to her again instead of staring down Clay.

“Needs to be something that will hold weight with the other charters, not just the old ladies.” Piney said, picking up Bobby’s thread of thought. Another ally.

“Advisor to the club?” Jax suggested.

“She’s young, it’ll be a hard sell. Advisor for what? What information would we need a teenaged advisor for at the table?” Opie debated.

“Not an advisor...she’s a seer.” Chibs said with a contemplative voice, his body relaxing a little under her. His hand around his gun not so tense. Jax and the guys all shared a look between them.

“With the rumors already in place, there’s no way people would believe she’s an advisor, as if she were a financial or legal advisor.” Chibs continued his thought. “No, we build on the rumors. Only we know its actual truth. She is a seer. Build up the mythology. Easier to tell the truth than try and stick to a lie.” His eyes caught hers. Smiling up at him. She liked seer than psychic as she thought about it. It was a good idea.

The table went quiet as they thought it through. Clay was annoyed with this whole thing, throwing himself back in his chair, rolling his eyes. Probably had Gemma in his ear to make sure she was tossed out. His brain trying to figure out how to make that happen, but the shift of the table to support her and Chibs was too great.

“Could work, sort of like how we made Alvarez play dead for a day so we could get Tara back.” Kozik said with a grin as he liked the idea more.

“And if people question it, and find out she can actually read them...” Jax said his voice contemplative as he stared at her. “Would you be willing to read people for us?” He asked.

She frowned at that. “I just told you that the readings isn’t a game for me.”

Jax frowned. “I get that. I do. But, you said that if there’s imminent danger to someone, you’d break that code. All I’m asking is you to do that for us if it ever came about? Help the club. You’re asking us to let you in at our table. That is a big ask. Everyone in this charter and everyone outside the charter, other clubs will question our decisions because you are inside. We’re the ones that will have to support you to everyone.”

“I don’t like it. We shouldn’t have to explain ourselves to anyone. Nor rely on her to make shit easier. I made her a promise she’d never have to read anyone again.” Chibs argued.

“Chibs...” Jax pressed. “Think of the leg up we’d have on our business. We might be able to work this deal with the cartel without any problems cropping up.”

“If she could read the Sheriff, that’d be useful information.” Opie chimed in.

“Look...” Interrupting Chibs and Jax’s argument. “...if this idea of Juice’s doesn’t work. Reading people, it takes a lot out of me. And it seems to be getting worse. Based on how I was when Gemma forced herself on me. I can’t function until I wake up from them. I won’t read anyone without a damn good reason for it. I’m not some toy you can whip out and play with.”
She pointed at Tig swiftly without looking at him. “Don’t.” She warned him to keep his idiot humor from this.

Tig pouted that she cut him off.

“I’ll do it.”

“No! M ‘anam...no.” Chibs argued.

She twisted to look at him. “I knew when you said that I wouldn’t have to read anyone...I knew that was a promise you could never keep.”

He made to argue with her but she cut him off. “I’m a seer, like you said. Why I can do what I do. You said it yourself, there’s a reason I’m here. Why you were driven to find me.”

“I don’t like it. I don’t want you to...It’s too much.” He choked up.

“I know. And I love you for that. But I can’t hide what I am. You telling me to talk more...this is it.”

Chibs hugged her tight. His body shaking as he fought with himself.

She leaned into his ear. “Graim thu. Just be there to catch me.” She whispered in his ear.

“Always.” He said back to her. His eyes fierce on hers.

She turned back to Jax and the guys. “I’ll do it. But it has to be a last resort. And only after you’ve exhausted your usual methods. And I’ll know if I’m being played, so don’t try and weasel your way over this. There are things in life that one must experience on their own. I’m not here to make things all rosy and picture perfect for you.”

“Okay. That’s fair.” Jax nodded.

“I want her to be able to voice an opinion at the table. Her take on things, a fresh set of eyes on business could be valuable going forward.” Bobby added.

“You talking about giving her a vote?” Happy questioned.

The guys all paused and mulled it over. Clay at this point had been completely run over in running this meeting. She thought over the idea of having a vote, twisting the complications it could become.

“No. I won’t vote. I meant what I said. I don’t want a cut of any money or have a vote.”

“Why not?” Piney asked, seriously.

She shook her head, thinking through her line of reasoning. “I’ve read Tig, who knows if I’ll end up reading more of you. I’ll have inside knowledge of that person or persons. None of you would trust me, thinking I’ll be biased based on what I’ve picked up from the readings. I don’t want that. I’m neutral. Consider me Switzerland.” She scratched at her leg again.

“Jesus, just you saying that, I want you to have a vote.” Kozik said.

“I’ll advise if you ask me. But the decisions for the club...for yourselves...it’s all on you.”

The guys all nodding, looking to Clay for his take on what they were proposing.
Clay collapsed in his chair, defeatingly. “It’s so fucking out there, it just might work.” He said with a deep sigh. “While we meet with anyone outside of this charter, you do not talk.” He tried to lay down that rule.

“No. If she’s with us, she gets to have her say. If she’s asked a question, she’s allowed to answer it. Just like the rest of us. We all have a voice at this table. That includes her.” Chibs growled at Clay.

“Clay, it’s the best we can do right now.” Jax said to Clay. Clay glanced at Jax hard, only to give up under Jax’s reasonableness.

“Will she have a kutte? A rocker?” Opie asked.

“If she’s at the table...going on runs, she’ll need it.” Tig answered.

“If she’s wearing a kutte and rocker, she should have a vote.” Piney said.

“No. I don’t want a vote. I meant what I said.” She disagreed.

“Out of any of us, you’d have the most clear head on issues. Seeing things with a fresh eye.” He countered.

“I’ll have that regardless of having a vote or not.” She reminded him. Piney leaning back in his chair, pouting at her refusal. Jesus, she’d never thought a man Piney’s age would be pouting at her.

“God damn it. Can we just vote this already. I have to call my sister and give her the riot act.” Tig whined.

Nobody voiced an opposition or suggestion to be negotiated, signally to Clay to call the vote.

“Fine, proposal to bring Nancy on as Seer...” Clay paused just saying the word not believing he’d actually have to say it. “...of the Sons of Anarchy, Redwood Original.”

Tig was the first to give her a yes vote. Around the table, grins and nods mixed with hard looks at her, they all fell in with yes votes. Whether it was her or to keep Chibs in the club and their supply of guns available. She didn’t care. All she cared about was that they were giving her a chance.

Though, her thoughts turned wary as Clay stared at her. The last to cast a vote. Everyone looked at him, and she saw the wheels grinding in his head. Weighing what the fallout might be if he was the only no vote. His standing with the club or with his wife at home. He looked at her hard, his silent message not to mess with him. He was trapped and he didn’t like it.

“Clay?” Jax prodded.

“Yea, motion passed.” Clay said swiftly with a bang of the gavel.

Bobby got up with a grin and went to the closet in the back of the room. Rummaging around in there. The guys all grinning, knowing what he was looking for. Eventually, pulling out a black leather kutte. Bobby took a hard look at it and nodded to himself.

Walking over to her, he handed the leather to her. “Should be small enough. I’ll order a Seer patch. Welcome, sister.” Bobby frowned again. “Shit, I’d hug you but Chibs might tear my arms off.”

Chibs and Tig both huffed a laugh. The rest of the guys realizing that they wouldn’t be able to hug her like they did each other.

She smiled at Bobby’s realization. The oddity it was going to be for them of not hugging a
member. She looked up at Bobby with a wry grin at his quandary. “Thank you.” She said heartfully.

Bobby grinned and walked back to his chair.

The leather was new and stiff in her hands. The Sons of Anarchy reaper stitched into the back along with the rockers. She was overwhelmed. She never thought she’d be given this opportunity to be adopted into a family such as this. To be called sister. Tears slipped from her cheeks.

She looked to Chibs and he wiped at his own eyes, only to stand her up. Helping her put on the kutte. The men around the table all banged on the table, yelling their approval. Calling her sister. Chibs hugged her for them.

The guys settled down once more as Chibs and she retook their seats. She hugged the kutte around her. Silent as everyone looked to Clay for the next order of business. Chibs held her hand, his thumb running across her knuckles. She knew that the real work was to begin. She looked to Jax who had been watching her, his head nodding in approval before turning his attention to Clay.

“Next is the vote for the muling. You’ve all had time to think it over, talk it out. Anyone have any final thoughts they need to say?” Clay asked.

“I’d like to hear what our Seer’s opinion. Officially, for the table.” Piney said, his eyes heavy on Clay, reinforcing her position within the club. The guys looked at Piney and swiveled their attention to her.

She didn’t think they’d want her opinion so soon like this. But then Piney wasn’t at the dinner and probably hadn’t heard what she’d said regarding the muling. Or maybe he did hear about it by the way Piney and Clay were glaring at each other. The rest of the guys all looked from Piney to her, waiting for her to speak.

“Some of you have already heard my opinion on the muling. It makes business sense to fill the truck up with something for the haul back. I don’t agree that it should be drugs. Half of you are on parole, the local sheriff is watching you. There is no short time if you’re caught. You could very well end up in jail for the rest of your life or the morgue.”

She felt herself floating again. Confused at what she was feeling, the guys all squirmed as they listened to her.

“We’re outlaws. We take the risk every time we go on a run. We know the sacrifice when we patch in. It’s nothing new to us, girlie.” Clay sneered to her.

She felt Chibs stiffen under her. He didn’t like how Clay was speaking to her. Shivering into Chibs body, distracting him, she felt snapped back inside her own head again.

“Seer.” She corrected him. “That may be. But is this muling good for the club? Or for you? It never pays to be greedy.”

Picking up the article about her father’s arrest. “My father and stepmother were greedy, they will pay the price for it and lose everything for it. Only time will tell if this deal was the right choice. How you vote now will affect the future of this club for years to come. And it may not be the future you are hoping for right now.”

“Anyone else?” Clay cut her off with a roll his eyes. “I vote yea. Tig?”

Tig shot her a nervous look and then looking back to Clay, who had glared at him. “Yeah.”
Proving his loyalty still lay with Clay.

Chibs sighed next to her. “I don’t trust them. I vote no.”

Happy, Piney, Bobby, and Juice voted no in quick succession. The second to last vote fell on Kozik. How he votes will decide if the muling passes. Everyone’s eyes on him, he hesitated but calls out a yes. Supporting his VP and President. Everyone already knew Jax was a yes. It was done. The club was muling coke for the Galindo Cartel. God help them.

“Six five, vote passes.” Clay snaps out and bangs the gavel. Giving her a satisfied look.

Jesus, if they’d given her a vote, it would have been tied. She looked to Jax, Bobby, Opie and Piney, everyone realizing that fact. She shrugged, relieved that they didn’t kick her out, at least. That Chibs and she could stay. The rest they’ll figure out. Somehow. Hopefully.

“Come on mo gràidh, let’s go home.” Chibs said helping her up.

“Yeah, okay.” She looked back at Piney and saw him and Clay staring each other down. Chibs pulling her from the room. Along with the others as they filtered out of the room.

Tig had grabbed his phone and was yelling into it. His free arm waving, punctuating his words. “Don’t give me that ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about, Alex.’ You know what you did.” Tig’s voice growling into the phone. The guys laughing after him.

“Hey, Seer, so why is Tig turned on by corpses? That’s what I’ve always wondered.” Bobby asked.

“I think Tig has enough on his plate right now.” She said to Bobby, as Tig moved out of the clubhouse, sending the guys the finger as he walked outside. Turning her eyes to Bobby and the few who had leaned in to hear her. “And I told all of you, that information is for Tig. Not you lot.”

He steered her towards the door. The music cranked up and the croweaters had multiplied while they were all in church. They sauntered around, handing out drinks and offering comfort to some of his brothers.

As they passed, eyes turning to Nancy. The quick scan of seeing her in a kutte and the confusion of what she was doing wearing one. He sighed and just started walking, leading Nancy through the bar to get to his bike so they can get home.

He saw Jax escape out the door. Clay watching from the plywood doors, as Piney passed them heading to the bar and back to his tequila.

Swearing at how crowded the clubhouse became, they’d somehow gotten in the middle of the fucking scrum.

He twisted around when he felt Nancy’s hand slip from his. Saw her freeze, her hands up against her chest her eyes wide in fear. A croweater didn’t move fast enough out of her way and bumped into Nancy.

“Fuck! Move!” He pushed another croweater and Chucky out of the way for him to get to her. He saw her shiver as the croweater who had bumped into her backed off with an automatic apology. Nancy looked to the girl. “Get to a clinic and get yourself tested.” Nancy told the girl before stumbling, her hands thrust out to catch her fall.

He scooped her up in his arms from where she fell. Her breathing erratic as she fought to stay aware. “M ‘anam, you okay? Talk to me.” He asked desperately as everyone was staring at them.
Give me a second. Shit.” She gasped.

“Sorry. I’m sorry.” He ran a hand along her cheek, brushing the loose hair back from her face as he tried to assess her condition. “You going to puke or pass out?”

“No. I think I’ll be okay. It was fast and I didn’t get deep in her.” She looked up at his worried eyes. “Not going to spew on you. But I am pissed off.”

“What?” He asked as she pushed herself on her feet again.

She ignored his question as she searched across the room, her eyes landing on Happy. “Fucking idiot. It’s the last thing we need right now.” She muttered as she stalked to Happy anger riding her along with disgust. Chibs moving with her, his eyes sweeping the room, warning people not to get in their way.

Happy sat up as they approached, his eyes settling on hers in question. She gave him a disgusted look.

“Stop it. Stop reusing condoms. Miser should be your name.” She hissed in a low voice, only carrying to Happy. But Bobby and Juice were sitting next to Happy. Bobby and Juice both mirrored her disgust when they put together what she was accusing Happy of.

“Dude…really…still?” Juice questioned groaningly.

He saw the change in Happy’s expression. He didn’t think, just moved. Pulling Nancy behind him and pulling his knife, setting it at Happy’s throat. Happy freezing suddenly.

“Sit down.” Chibs growled. “I won’t say it again.” His accent thickening.

Happy silently stood there, testing Chibs command. Chibs presses the knife, the edge nearly breaking the skin. Happy looks into Chibs eyes and sees that Chibs would do it. He’d cut him if he didn’t do as he said. His eyes locked onto Chibs as he silently backed down and sits again.

“Bobby, if you’d be so kind to educate Miser here about STDs. He seems to have missed that lecture in health class.” Chibs said as he folded his knife away as Happy’s threat abated.

“I don’t need no lecture, keep your kid on a leash.” Happy argued his eyes glaring at her.

Again, Chibs snarled but drew his gun this time. So fast, it was pressed to Happy’s forehead. Bobby and Juice leaned pointedly away from the potential mess. A deadly silence stretched over the clubhouse, as everyone stopped what they were doing and stared as Chibs held his gun to Happy’s head.

“She is the Seer of this Club. You will address her as Seer or by her given name. And she was voted in. You voted her in.” He pressed the barrel of the gun harder as he spoke. “And she is mine. Do not ever threaten her again. Especially when she is trying to save your life. Do I make myself clear?” He demanded. Happy’s head forced back by the hard press of the gun.

“Yes.” Happy admitted.

She kept her eyes downcast, silent at Chibs side, letting him protect her. Knowing he needed to do this. To show dominance over Happy. And given the silence of the bar and everyone’s rapt attention to what was happening, she acknowledges that this will serve to build her mythology up. Other charters will hear of this incident, fueling the rumors. She’s just sorry to have riled Chibs up like this.
“Get yourself to a clinic and checked out. I want to see a doctors report that you’re clean. I won’t stand to have a STD epidemic in this club. We have bigger problems to deal with than your dick. I expect that report by the end of the week.” He leaned slightly harder into Happy. “Do we have an understanding?” Growling in Happy’s face.

Happy gulped, his eyes wide as he stared at Chibs. “Yes.”

He pulled back, his eyes focussed on Happy, making sure Happy truly got the message. Satisfied, he put his gun away.

Taking a step back. “Come on, mo ghaol. Let’s go home. Its been a long day.” He brogue thick, taking her hand and bringing it to his lips for a kiss. His eyes on hers. Eyes filled with dark promises that made her shiver. Letting him lead her out of the bar. People moved out of their way, the silence following behind them as they hit the door.

Riding fast towards home, his blood raced through him as he was still riding the high of threatening Happy. He felt the gentle touch of Nancy’s hand against his stomach as they rode in the night. He took comfort in her touch as he processed what he’d just done.

He pulled into the drive and helped Nancy off the bike. He climbed off himself and Nancy pulled him into a hug. His body relaxing into her arms.

“You okay?” She asked, her eyes checking him over.

He huffed. “Aye. Thanks love.”

They walked into the house, and settled down with her ice cream and he with a glass of whiskey and the sound of the news on the television. She smiled as even Chibs was swooning from drawing on Happy, he still managed to take care of her.

“Want to talk about it?” She offered after she’d set her bowl aside.

He pressed a hand to his head with a sigh. “I can’t believe I pulled on him. It..I saw his face change when you confronted him. The threat was a microsecond in his expression. And a flip switched inside me. I was hyper-aware. Never felt that strong or focussed before.” He paused as he thought about it some more.

She waited, letting him think and process. “I was ready to kill him. If he didn’t back down, I would have done it.” He looks to her. “You need to be careful in who you confront. My need to protect you...”

“I know, I’ll try and do better; realized it soon as you pulled on Happy. I just slipped into her, it was a split moment. I saw her and Happy having sex. He reuses his condoms. God, its the most stupid thing. To have someone who just fucks up on something so small and easily fixed.” She sighed. “Sorry.”

He pulled her into his lap. Breathing in her scent, relaxing finally. “I know. I appreciate that you didn’t yell at him from across the room. You had some sense there. If it was Gemma or even Tara, they wouldn’t have been able to contain their fury at Happy. Probably would have dragged his ass to the nearest tub and scrubbed him down with bleach.”

“Humph. Learning curve.” She huffed, thinking over what anyone else would have done.

He gave her a questioning look.
“With my reading, our need to touch, the headaches, the bonding, your possessive need to protect me, the tattoos all in such a short time. God, we’ve only been together for what two...three weeks. It’s lot to get used to in such a short time, a learning curve.” She shrugged as she explained her thinking.

“Aye, learning curve.” He grinned at her. She rolled her eyes as he joked with her. They held each other for a few more moments relaxing into each other. “You sure you want to take up the kutte?”

“Kind of late to turn it down. I wasn’t expecting that to happen. But it kind of makes sense. Hopefully, it’ll make things easier when I start showing up at your meetings with the other clubs and such.”

“I didn’t want this for you. This responsibility of being a member.” He sighed.

“Well, I’m with you, already being a full-fledged member. Kind of pointless to argue if I’m a member or not. If this makes things easier, fine.” She shrugged. “I like the title thought. Better than psychic.”

“How are you feeling about the muling?” She asked.

He sighed. “I hate it. But it’s passed, now its a matter of making sure we get out of this alive. JT’s probably rolling over in his grave with all this going on.”

She held his hand. Nothing she could say would ease his mind, so she just sat there with him. Shared in his worry.

“Gods, what a day. Let’s watch some telly. Aye?” He snapped out of his dark mood.

“Okay.” She agreed, letting him gain some normalcy before things went haywire again. She had a feeling it wasn’t going to be long before that thread unraveled.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
My baby = mo leanabh
Chapter 44

Chapter Summary

A visitor arrives...

Chapter Notes

This is just the beginning of the inspiration I was hit with...for this entire story. It's a long section, I really don't mean to end this chapter on a bit of a cliff-hanger. And I'm not sure if I might have written myself in a corner while editing. So apologies ahead of time. I don't think I did, but just in case.

This is the same night/day as the vote on Nancy becoming Seer and the muling passing.

Enjoy...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A rainstorm had started after about a half-hour into watching the second episode of 'The Sopranos'. A show that was on the list Chibs and Tig had been creating. She wasn’t sure if she liked it or not. But she was giving it a try.

A heavy knock on the front door drew their attention off the television. Chibs got up and pulled his gun, peeking through the side window. “It’s Jax.” He said setting the safety back on, as he unlocked and opened the door for Jax. She grabbed the remote and hit the power button, turning the television off.

Jax’s shoulders hunched as he shivered under the cool night air and dripping from the downpour. His face pale and drawn, blue eyes filled with a mix of anger and pain.

“Jackie?” Chibs asked concerned at how downtrodden Jax looked. “Tara and the boys okay?”

Jax hung his jacket up on the coat rack, as he kicked off his wet sneakers. “They’re fine. Tara’s upset. Didn’t want me to leave after she gave me these.” Slapping down a manila envelope on the coffee table.

She and Chibs stared at the envelope. “What’s this?” Chibs asked.

Jax hissed, yanking the envelope open. Grabbing the contents, colorful pages in his fist as he pulled them into view, only to drop them back down on the table. “The letters you called me about.”

“Holy shite.” Chibs breathed. “She had them?”

Jax paced as Chibs stared from the letters to Jax and back again. Jax was still dripping, not that he seemed to notice. But it wouldn’t do for him to come down with a cold. And she was feeling nervous. The initial shock would wear off and she wasn’t sure what Jax’s reaction to her would be.
She went to the kitchen, grabbing a couple of glasses, the bottle of whiskey Chibs still had out, and a clean towel. Coming back into the room, Jax had dropped into the chair cornered to the sofa. Chibs looked up as she came back in the room. Took the whiskey and glasses from her.

Jax picked his head up as she moved in front of him, taking the towel she held out for him. Wiping the wet off his face, Chibs handed him a glass of whiskey, which he downed quickly. Chibs refilling his glass.

She went back to her seat on the sofa, Chibs joining her with his own glass. The three of them silent as they stared from each other to the letters.

She curled up into Chibs. Their hands automatically finding each others, fingers dovetailing. Their shared touch forcing their headaches back, but the sight of the letters didn’t ease any of their minds.

“Did you read them?” Chibs asked.

“Yes.” Turning his eyes to her. “You know what happened to my father, don’t you?” He accused brokenly between anger and grief.

She couldn’t look away from that pain. She caused this. By telling Chibs some of what she saw in Gemma...She held Jax’s eyes steady on her as she answered him.

“I’m sorry. I saw it in Gemma. She’s obsessed with getting her hands on those. Clay, too. Fighting each other like two cornered feral cats.”

“Fuck, I’m not surprised.” Jax said as he took another sip of the whiskey.

“What’s in them?” Chibs asked.

“Mostly love letters to JT’s...other old lady. Maureen Ashby.” Jax waved at the letters.

“John and Maureen?” Chibs brows creased in confusion, as he mentally mapped out the family tree. Looking back at Jax questioningly. “Trinity?”

Jax gave Chibs a wry smirk. “Trinity is my half-sister.”

“Oh my God.” Chibs comically looked to Jax.

“I found out when we were in Belfast looking for Abel. Gemma and Maureen finally told us. Jesus Christ, Trin and I were practically fucking when they interrupted us.” He said in a half-hysterical laugh.

At his laugh, she eyed him with concern. Trying to gauge just how over the edge he’s gone.

“Mary, mother of Christ, Jackie!” Chibs admonished. Upbraiding Jax like a father would do to a son who had done something completely idiotic and should have known better.

“I didn’t fucking know!” Jax exploded. “Trinity didn’t know!”

Jax drew in a hard breath.

“Gemma and Maureen caught us and they had to tell us then. And I think, if Trin and I hadn’t been going at each other, we never would have known. Gemma and Maureen would have let us go on with our lives never knowing that we were related.”
Jax took another shot of the whiskey.

“I’m so fucking tired of the secrets. Just when I think we’ve gotten one out of the way another one pops up to bite me on the ass.” Jax said bitterly, waving a hand at the letters with the latest secret coming to light. “Case in point.”

“Aye...okay.” Chibs backed off of berating Jax for getting it on with his sister. “You said most of them were love letters...that’s not enough to spin Gemma and Clay about.”

“JT had set up a meeting with Kellen and the Kings to negotiate a deal to get the Sons out of guns. He was killed before he could make that meeting.”

It took a moment for Chibs to catch onto what Jax was saying. The implications if JT managing to get the club out of the guns all those years ago. How life would have been different. “Are you serious?” Chibs breathed in shock.

“JT saw Clay and Gemma getting closer. Writing that he suspected he was set up by Clay. Sent him into an ambush with the Mayans unprotected. When the run in with the Mayans didn’t work, he suspected that his bike would be tampered with next.”

Chibs hissed as he followed the line of logic and events.

Jax continues, pouring another shot of whiskey. “Kellen tried to tell me. Tried to end the cycle...by giving Abel to a new family. One not born in blood and violence.” Jax finished forlornly drinking the shot. "I was going to let Abel go. Grow up with a father who doesn't have blood on his hands. But then shit happened with Jimmy..."

“Fuck! Fucking Jimmy...fucking Kings...and me with the....God fucking damn it!” Chibs seethed as he replayed the fateful events on their Belfast trip and the implications of JT trying to end the guns. "JT dead...Clay becomes President, we’re still running guns. And because of me...the ties to the Irish are even stronger than ever.” Chibs concluded. “Oh my God. Why didn't he come to me?” Chibs railed. "Fucking waste of all this fucking time...all the bullshit and time spent inside...all the fucking blood spilled because JT tried to sit down with the Kings...Fuck!"

Jax lit a cigarette, leaning back in the chair watching Chibs rant.

“You can't blame yourself. You only did what you thought you had to do. All of us.” Jax said when Chibs seemed to have stopped.

Chibs shot Jax an annoyed look. "Your father...he could be such a stubborn dobber."

"It’s all there. Read them for yourself.” Jax waved a hand at the letters.

Chibs shares a look with her for a moment then leaning over to scoop up the letters. Diving into them, Jax refills his glass again. As Chibs finishes the first letter, he slides it to her to read. She didn’t need to read them, she knew enough. But JT was a good writer. For a man that ran and created an outlaw club, he had a sensitive, thoughtful side to him. The only place he was free to express his true thoughts and insights were to Maureen or in his writings.

That thought saddened her. He had friends and a family that he should have been able to find comfort in. The way she saw the club from her dreams, it was a place of communion. A place where it was a home without judgement.

But no. Gemma and Clay ripped that from him. Making the club and life in general a place where blood begat blood. Where forgiveness was never allowed. And he knew enough that the only way
to get the club out of it’s path of violence was to end the guns. A decision that got him killed. She was surprised Maureen hadn’t killed Gemma when she showed up in her alley.

Chibs swiped away his tears as he read the words of his friend. She massaged his nape in sympathy.

“We have to bring these to the table. This information...” Chibs sat back with a stunned look on his face. “This is a Mr. Mayhem vote. Something this serious.”

Jax looks at Chibs. “I know. It took everything I had to not go after Clay, even now. Tara begged me...made me promise to think this through. I had to get out of the house, I needed to think. There was just no way I could keep this to myself. The cartel deal is huge right now. There’s just so much going on and I can’t see my way through.”

Shaking her head again. Jax was lying to himself. Even with the proof in the letters. She was surprised that Chibs didn’t pick up on it yet.

“What is it, mo gràidh?” Chibs asked noticing her frustrated head shake.

Maybe there might be a way, she thought to herself. It would be risky and could fall apart completely if they didn’t plan this out right. She felt the weight of Chibs and Jax looking at her. She had to decide if Jax could pull this off. He’s always been a mastermind in the schemes he’s pulled to get the club out of trouble on more than one occasion.

“Seer?” Jax pressed as she didn’t answer to Chibs question.

She bit her lip and looked up at Chibs. “I’ve never been able to change the future before. I was always on my own. But maybe...if we together work hard at it…”

“What’re you…” Jax asked in confusion to what she was talking about.

His question cut off as she turned her eyes to his. “Juice had a good idea about trying to read someone with you holding or touching me. I’d like to try.”

Jax raised his brows at her suggestion, his realization that she meant for him to be her guinea pig. “You want to read me?”

Jax looked from her to Chibs in stunned silence to what she was suggesting. Chibs caught in between trying out Juice’s idea and not wanting her to read anyone ever again.

“From what I’ve seen so far, you do read these letters, but it is much later in time. I don’t know if you reading these now...all of them...I don’t know if maybe it will have changed what I’ve seen. You are next in line. People look to you as their leader, even now. Clay didn’t want to vote me in, he’s afraid of what I might learn.”

“But he did.” Jax said.

“Only because everyone else was so excited and convinced of the idea. He didn’t want to reveal himself as the sole dissenter. He’s right to be afraid of me, afraid of these hitting the table. The truth of what Clay and Gemma did. The lengths they will go to to protect that secret. He’s probably kicking himself for letting me be voted in. Gemma’s been harping at him since I showed up, more so when you guys had to tell her about voting on me.”

“Gemma? She couldn’t have had anything to do with this.. with how we voted on you?” Jax asked.
“Jax, she was involved. Is involved.” She said quietly, treading lightly. “Much more involved that what you are letting yourself realize. Even you aren’t seeing it.” She directed to Chibs.

“What? What aren’t I seeing?” Chibs looked to her, his thoughts racing across his face and eyes.

“There is a reason I reacted like I did when she grabbed me.” She reminded him.

Chibs stilled as he recalled her seizures. Her upset as she rocked in his arms, crying with the feel of Gemma inside her. Remembering what she told him of what the future holds. The people’s lives at risk.

“Aye, we need to try at least with the two of us touching while you read. See if you can do it without passing out. If you’re okay with it, Jax?” He asked.

Jax stared at her, weighing her words. Trying to decide if he was willing to find out more.

“I will know you, Jax. Just like with Tig and Gemma.” She warned.

Jax still hesitated. She could see the wheels whirring behind his eyes. Half-expecting Jax to scoop the letters up and go storming out into the storming night again in this emotional state. She couldn’t let him leave. Not like this.

“Gemma couldn’t have been involved. Thomas just died, she was grieving. Everything was happening so fast.” Jax said trying to think through the past and his memories.

She shook her head at him. “Wishful thinking.”

“Tell him what you told me the other night.” Chibs said to her, gravely.

“Tell me what?” Jax asked, his voice threading with anger at the potential of more secrets being withheld from him.

“Chibs was upset after reading the manuscript. Talking that he wished he knew what JT was going through to maybe been able to help him. But I knew that it wouldn’t have mattered if he did. Clay and Gemma were on a mission. JT was a marked man and he knew it. I knew from reading Gemma what the letters meant to the future of this club, to your future. And Gemma…” She hesitated.

“What?” Jax pressed.

“In Gemma’s future, I saw her holding back some of these letters. You still read them, but not all of them. Just like with her not telling you about Trinity, she withholds vital information that sets the club in a direction that will lead to a lot of death and destruction. It was by her lies, her half-truths, and her…”

She rubbed her at her eyes from the stress of the truth bearing down on her. The strain of the risk of telling Jax what she’d seen, if it was the right thing to do or not.

“Her what?” Jax asked.

Her eyes going to Chibs and remembered him telling her to trust him. He’d protect her now.

“Her hand that killed...kills Tara.” Jax’s eyes went wide as she tripped over what tense of the word kill to use. It hadn’t happened yet, but could still.

“What? No!” Jax said in a harsh whisper.
“Gemma lies over and over to you, to everyone around her, even to herself. Her lies start a war between the Sons and rival clubs, even within the club itself. She is absolutely convinced that her actions are just and needed, for the good of the club. And for you. She is obsessed with you. And your kids. Gemma is much more dangerous than even Clay.”

Jax got up swiftly, pacing in back and forth across the room. She and Chibs watching him.

“But you’ve read all the letters now, the future may have changed, maybe not. I don’t know.” She equivocates, worried at Jax’s state of mind as he paced.

“Gemma would never hurt Tara. She’s mother to my kids.” Jax argued, sending her a dangerous glare for even daring to say that his mother would kill his wife. But she knew better and simply gave Jax a steady look, refusing to back down.

“She's no way more dangerous than Clay.” Jax said tightly.

“Then tell me, how did Clay know he needed to check what JT was really up to in Belfast?” She asked calmly.

Jax and Chibs were brought up short at her question.

“Somebody had to have told him.” Chibs theorized. “Or Clay himself was getting suspicious about JT’s trips.”

“But Gemma couldn’t have known about club business.” Jax said, adding to Chibs possibilities. “Maybe JT slipped up and mentioned something in conversation. But even so, its the members that votes. Not Gemma.”

“Really? You absolutely sure about that?” She raised her brows at them. “Just because Gemma’s not physically in the room, doesn’t mean she doesn’t have a voice in that room, over this club. Don’t fool yourself thinking she isn’t at that table.”

Chibs shook his head at her. “There is no way, mo gràidh.”

Nancy sighed. Annoyed that she had to drag them through this. “Jesus. At dinner, you guys had to explain to Gemma about the club possibly voting on me into the club. She even brought up the charter and bylaws. Not convinced? Kyle was voted to be allowed at Gemma’s stupid fundraiser for the school, to let him see his son play with his band. Gemma twisted Clay’s proverbial arm. You guys debated the issue in church.”

“That wasn’t her telling us what to do or how to vote.” Jax said trying to find a flaw in her reasoning.

“Jax, the point is that Clay brought it up. It never should have been debated in the first place. He was excommunicated, yet you guys had to talk and vote about it. It was only brought up because Clay listened to Gemma. She talks, berates, yells, bullies, sympathizes to Clay all the time, especially about you.” She waved a hand at Jax.

“When he has to step down and you take over. Her constant reminder that his time as President has a deadline. That must rub him raw with her in his face, reminding him all the time. And it isn’t just Clay she does that to. It’s everyone in the club.”

“When was this? I don’t remember anything about Kyle. And she doesn’t talk to me or tell me how to vote at the table.” Chibs defended.
Jax plopped back down into the chair again, “God, it was a long time ago, I think you were up north with McKeavey at the time. Kyle’s kid was playing in the band for the annual fundraiser at the school. Opie was in charge of the fireworks. April asked if Kyle could come and see his kid play. Asshole showed up and wanted to bring the club some business with auto parts. Kyle never had any intention of seeing his kid play. We found out he hadn’t taken his reaper off.” Jax informed Chibs. Then turning to her. “How did you know about that? Chibs was up north.”

“I know Tig, Jax. All of you had me read him.”

“Tig burned that reaper off of Kyle.” Jax said his eyes turning horrified, realizing that she knew what was going on in Tig’s head during that.

“Oh Christ.” Chibs said looking to her in horror, realizing that she had a front row seat for what was a gruesome act.

“No.” She grimaced. “You do not want to know how fascinated Tig was during that. Clay told Gemma about Kyle when he got home, she grilled Clay over what happened. Gemma telling April to go to St. Thomas. Tig dumping Kyle’s unconscious body on the steps of the emergency room entrance. Had to experience it first hand in Tig, then hear about it from Clay telling Gemma.”

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs groaned. Running a hand down his goatee in frustration.

“Truth to power.” She sighed, rubbing her thumb over Chib’s hand, soothing at him. “All great leaders throughout history had people who would tell them not what they wanted to hear, but what they needed to hear, as ugly and painful as it can be at times. Without that, you are running blind and taking your people with you. You say you are tired of the secrets, do you want truth? Or do you wish to remain in the dark, ignorant?”

Silence fell over the room as Jax and Chibs thought over her words. Jax stared at her, thinking, or waiting to see if she’d take back anything she’d said, she wasn’t sure. She just waited him out, letting him decide what he wanted. Mentally preparing of what she’ll have to do to protect Chibs, Tara and the kids. Get as much of the club out of the line of fire if possible. At least save Tara and the kids.

“Okay, let’s try this.” Jax decided in a rush. “You’re wrong about Gemma, but let’s try this. It was your abilities that led us to the letters. Maybe there’s more that we aren’t aware of.” He moving to the sofa, closer to her as he argued with her over Gemma.

“You sure, Jax?” Chibs asked.

“Yeah. I need to know.” Jax said firmly.

Chibs sighed and looked to her. She shifted, he helping her onto his lap. Hands at her hips and waist.

“Probably best if you touched me skin to skin.” She helped raise her t-shirt as he shifted his hands. She shivered as his warm hands settled around her waist.

She rolled her eyes at Jax, catching him giving them a knowing grin from her reaction to Chibs touching her.

“Brain out of the gutter, please.” She snarked back at Jax.

He grinned wider. “You’re about to know everything about me...so kind of pointless.” Jax quirked a brow upwards to add to his moment of humor.
“Ready?” She asked Jax, refusing to continue to play with Jax’s attempt to avoid this reading any longer.

“Do it.” He ordered. He held his hands out to her, his eyes steady and resolved on hers.

She took a breath and took hold of his strong grip. Her body swayed a little in Chibs lap as she connected into Jax. Chibs gripped her tighter to him, as she found her balance.

She breathed as she stepped along the edge of Jax’s mind. It wasn’t the usual drowning that she’d had before. It was like she waded into Jax, memories, thoughts, emotions flowing into her. She felt the pull of Chibs, along her spine. She mentally sighed in relief that it was working so far.

She focused on Jax, letting what made Jax Jax wash over her. Filling her, to the point that she didn’t have her own body or mind. She wasn’t Nancy right now. She traced the points of Jax’s past...how they continued through his life and projecting into the future. She didn’t know how long she was absorbing all that was Jax, she concentrated on the new tie to Chibs at her back and the rush of memories and emotions she was being bombarded with from Jax.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My darling = mo gràidh

Scottish slang:
idiot = dobber
Chapter 45

Chapter Summary

Ground rules

Chapter Notes

I am so sorry for not updating sooner. This and upcoming chapters are intense and detailed. I needed to go back to my source notes. Re-watch the shows to make sure I had details and sequences in order.

And my handwriting is so horribly atrocious that even I can't read them. Thus, transcribing them to a typed version. Just finished season 6 and that freaking shredded me. Not looking forward to season 7. I didn't like watching it when that season aired, it was horrifyingly good, but the pain everyone went through. God.

Plus, work has become a freaking nightmare. Forgive me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She yanked her hands from Jax’s with a deep gasp for air. Her eyes teared, blinking up at the ceiling. Chibs hugged her tight, as she shook.

“Mo ghaol?” He crooned worriedly against her ear. His accent thick with his brogue.

“I’m okay.” She gasped, absently patting at his hands around her waist. “I’m not passing out or puking my guts out. So yeah, it worked. Just give me a second, holy cow.” She breathed.

Her mind analyzing and organizing what she’s seen. Filling in the blank holes left by Tig and Gemma; and the picture she was getting wasn’t getting better. Fuck, they were in trouble.

She pressed her face into her hands as it all flowed together, weaving together, the interconnectedness. Filling in the jigsaw puzzle that was the club’s and Jax’s future. Reeling as the memories and futures combined. How could it be fixed? Can it be fixed?

Her eyes landed back to the letters on the table. Their truth, JT’s death, the lie. Truth prevails, always. The truth will be revealed, but when, how? The future now, brings death and blood. She swiped away her tears, her mind racing from what she witnessed the harsh truth and ramifications of those letters.

Looking to Jax. His eyes watching her intently and a bit worried the longer she was silent. He can wait a few minutes more. She was still thinking if they could fix this mess, he’ll need help. She knew he was just trying to do good for his family and the club. It will tear him apart. And not just from the letters and the dangerous path the club was on. But him...he needs help as a person. The damage he’s suffered since he was a child...echoing into his present and future. Until that is healed, he’ll never become his own person. Not without the sacrifice of his own life.
The memory of Tara crying in the doorway as he sped out the driveway in the truck. Anger lapped at her as she studied Jax. His impulsivity driving him to decisions that have such damaging ramifications. Not getting the full truth of what happened to him and will happen, altering decisions that lead the club into a bloodbath the likes it has never seen.

“You okay, Jackie?” Chibs asked.

“Yeah, it’s like Tig said, like she ran her hand down inside me.” He shrugged. “What? What did you see?” He asked her noticing her staring at him, his eyes flicking to Chibs as to what is going on.

“Let me up, I need to move.” She said.

“You sure you’re okay?” Chibs asked before letting her go.

“I’m fine. Physically, at least.” She paced and mapped things in her head. Looking for angles and how to bring truth with as little death as possible. Chibs and Jax watching her as she paced in front of the fireplace, TV and stereo equipment. Their silent questions weighing on her.

“Sorry, I’m processing what I just saw and how it all fits with what I saw with Gemma and even Tig. You are a big part of this club along with Gemma. It’s a lot to take in and I still have gaps, but I can guess some of it. God damn it, we’ve got problems.” Shaking her head in frustration, feeling like a mouse caught in an endless maze.

“What problems?” Jax asked.

She sighed. “I’m going to fumble this, so let me work out the things I need to say. I haven’t told anyone their full reading. The bits and pieces I told to Tig, Gemma, the people back home, it was all I could do. They beat me for just that. What I have to do with you is a full bore disclosure. I told you and everyone at the table, that I don’t go telling random people about what I’ve seen in others. It’s breaking a confidence.”

She glanced at Jax to see how he was taking her message.

“Yeah, you were pretty emphatic about that.” He said.

“Jax, you are a good person, you honestly try your best. You go above and beyond with the club, with Tara, with everyone who is your friend. Even people who are outside the club. I’m trusting you because of that. Because, in order for you to understand, you have to know what I saw in Gemma and even Tig. There’s just no other way…” She shook her head to herself.

“Okay. You’ve got me curious and worried. What did you see?” Jax demanded. His blue eyes piercing at her to talk.

Pressing her lips together, calming herself. Thinking fast, she needed a plan of how to do this.

Taking a harsh breath. “Chibs tells me that I’m safe here, that this is my home now. That nobody will ever hit me or knock me unconscious because of the truth that I speak. It’s only been barely two weeks…. Clay insomuch threatened my life just this afternoon. I’m nervous. And I know what you are capable of if pushed. And what I have to tell you…I’m going to have to push you. In light of that, I need you to do some things for me. To make this safe for me, for Chibs, and most importantly…for yourself.”

“But I’d never hit you.” He shot her a bewildered expression. “What did you see that would make me hurt you?” He demanded next, his eyes turning hard on her. Chibs fistled his hands, his body on
the edge of his seat, reading to get between her and Jax.

“Truth to power, Jax. If we have any hope of fixing things it’s information that you need. We need. Because,” She waved her hand at Jax to herself and Chibs, “this...is a we. You cannot do this alone.”


She breathed deeply trying to keep her cool. “Fuck, it’s bad on an epic scale. And you being who you are, I’m barely keeping my head above water here. What I have to tell you, the things coming for you, the ramifications of those letters...lives are at risk.”

She gave Chibs a pained look, pained from the headache forming and pained from the horrible future barrelling its way for Jax and the club. “I’m sorry. If I knew what was going on here, I wouldn’t have convinced you to come back here. I’m sorry.”

Chibs studied her. “Don’t be sorry. Whatever it is, you couldn’t have known. We had to come back anyway. Whatever it is, we’ll fix it.”

She pressed a hand to her forehead. “Yeah...sure.” She huffed. "Jesus. You say that now...but once you learn the truth of what it is the club is up against, you may not be so forgiving. God.” She paced.

“Mo gràidh, let me and Jackie make that decision. Aye?” Chibs counseled. "We're here...just tell us what you saw."

“You’re the one who wanted to read me, start talking what it is that has you so fucking scared. Cause the longer you drag this out, the worse I’m thinking it is.” Jax spit out, his blue eyes getting angry with her.

“Jackie.” Chibs warned.

“I will, but we need to set some ground rules.” She held his eyes firmly, trying to beat back the panic fluttering inside her.

“What do you need, mo ghaol?” Chibs helped, she sent him a grateful look.

“I need you to take Jax’s weapons and get them secured in the safe along with the letters.”

“What?” Jax sputtered, surprised by her order.

“You’ll get your weapons back when we’re done, I promise.” She told him. Hoping that would be true. After she was done with what she had to tell him...they’d be lucky if Jax was sane enough to be on his own. “Jax, please.” She shivered as her breathing hitched and her eyes teared up.

Chibs stood up and went to Jax. Jax’s eyes went to Chibs as he stood in front of him. Hand out for the weapons. “Jax, let her do this. Hand over the weapons. I made her a promise.” Jax gave her another look, but pulled his gun and knife handing them to Chibs.

He scooped up the letters and went to the master bedroom where the safe was located. She locked the front door, a preventative measure to slow Jax down in case he tried to run.

Jax poured another shot of whiskey as he moved back to his original seat. She sat down on the sofa, waiting for Chibs to come back.
“You’re going to sleep here tonight in the guest bedroom.” She said as she grabbed a notebook and pen starting to make notes for herself. Chibs walked back into the room. His eyes checking her.

“That’s not really…” Jax started to argue with her, but she looked at him, stopping him from finishing his complaint.

“It is necessary. You’ve been drinking and are not emotionally stable. You’re staying here tonight.” She ordered him. “And what I have to tell you…it’s going to take most of the night.”

“Fuck.” Jax pulled on his goatee, glancing at Chibs. Chibs simply shrugging that it was okay with him crashing for the night. “Fine.”

She looked to Chibs. “Get Tara on the phone for me, please.” He didn’t question her, simply pulled his phone out and handed it to her as it rang.

Jax jerked upright in his chair. “Why do you need to talk to Tara?”

She ignored Jax pointedly, concentrating on Tara. “Hello?” Tara’s voice came over the speaker end of the phone. She could hear the panic in Tara’s voice with that one word of greeting. Noting that Chibs distracted Jax with handing him a joint as she listened to Tara breathing erratically through the phone lines.

“Tara, it’s Nancy. I just wanted to let you know that Jax is here with me and Chibs. He’s safe. He’s going to sleep here tonight.”

“Oh, thank God.” Tara breathed in relief. “He’s okay? He was so upset when he left, I didn’t know what he would do.” Tara confessed in a rush.

“Yes, he’s fine. He had the brains to cool off and get his ass here or if not, back to you. He’s been drinking though since he’s gotten here. And Chibs is handing him a joint right now, so he’s going to sleep over. I don’t want him driving, the crazy fool.” Jax rolling his eyes at her and she glared at him.

Tara breathed deeply with a choked laugh. “Yeah, okay. Thanks.” Tara paused. “You...You’ve read the letters then?” She asked, her voice rising in anxiety again.

“Yes, we have and its okay. We have them locked up in our safe.” She heard Tara breathing calm down. “But I wondered if you could get out of work tomorrow, by chance? Leave the boys with Neeta for the day? We, all of us, really need to talk. It’s important.”

“Ummm, yeah. Shouldn’t be a problem. I only had a couple of meetings, those can be rescheduled. What time?”

“Great. Thank you. It’ll take most of the day, I think. Come for breakfast. We’re having pancakes.”

Chibs and Jax watched her. Chibs giving her an amused grin and Jax simply huffed at how she was taking over his schedule along with Tara’s.


“Great. Give me a second and I’ll put Jax on the phone.”

She twisted the phone to muffle the microphone. Jax reaching for it, looked at her in question when she didn’t hand it over to him right away.
“Tell her you’re okay and you’ll see her in the morning. She has to be here tomorrow. And for God’s sake, apologize to her for leaving the way you did. You scared the hell out of her. She was fucking worried about you.” She thrust the phone at Jax.

Chibs settled down next to her, as Jax talked to Tara. His hand going to her nape giving her a gentle massage. She wanted to melt under his touch, but she had work to do. She had to focus and not get distracted.

She made a couple more notes of pointed issues that they needed to talk about. She sighed under his magic fingers. “Thank you.” She looked to him tiredly.

“No problem, whatever you need.”

“It’s going to be a long night and day tomorrow.” She warned. Chibs kissed her.

“I’m here for ye’. Do what you need to do.” He said to her. “It’ll work out.”

“Let’s just see how things end up tonight and go from there.” She didn’t want Chibs to make any promises while he still didn’t know what it was that they were up against.

Jax hung up the cell and dropped it to the table. Grabbing his drink swearing to himself with a deep sigh. His action drew their attention to him. And she was pissed as hell at him. She didn’t know where this anger was coming from. And she didn’t have the time to think about it. Dealing with Jax was her priority, not her own issues, but she couldn’t let this go.

“Jax, how you left Tara like that tonight... You need her. More than you know. Swear to God, you do that again and I’ll have Chibs knock some sense into you.” She admonished.

“Sorry, I was so fucking angry. She had those letters this whole time and never said a word! I had to demand them out of her when Chibs told me about them the other night! She didn’t want me to see them...much less read them!”

“I know. But you need to stop flying off the handle and storming out of the house and just leaving her hanging like that. You are not just you anymore, Jax. Get that into your head. You are a part of Tara, just as she is part of you. And both of you have the kids to consider. You aren’t teenagers anymore where you can just take off at the drop of a hat. Thank God, you had the smarts to not go rushing off to mommy’s house.” She shook her head at him.

“I was angry and I needed to get some air. I needed to think.” He bit at her, angry for her taking him to task over his behavior.

“I’m not saying to not feel angry or that you need air. But you could have told Tara that. Could have gone out to the backyard or simply go for a walk around the block. Instead, you yelled at her in the heat of anger. Scared her worse than she already feels, jumped into your truck and sped out of your driveway. You could have run a red light and crashed into another car. Other people are out there, Jax.” She railed at him. Her arm waving out towards the front door and the outside world.

“You didn’t put just yourself at risk, but some innocent schmuck simply trying to get home from a long day at work to their own families and loved ones. You could have hurt or killed yourself and someone else because you were so angry. My mother died in a car crash. I almost died then, too. It’s...” She stopped the thought abruptly. Taking hold of herself. She didn’t want to dive into her issues of her past onto Jax.

"I’m sorry, I shouldn’t be yelling at you over this." She refocused on Jax. "You know what the dangers are on the road by riding the bike all the time. You let your emotions drive you and it
could have killed you...killed someone else on the road. And if you had died...what would happen
to Tara? To your kids? You have more to think about that just yourself.”

She took a breath as Jax’s own anger cooled towards her. Seeing him look abashed at her point and personal history with car accidents.

Jax couldn’t look her in the eye as he realized the truth of what she was telling him. “I know.” He said dejectedly.

“Sorry.” She apologized again to Jax for her harsh tone. “What those letters contain, you have
every right to be angry. But I’m even more scared and worried about how you’re going to react
from what I saw in you, Tig, and Gemma. How you will handle the full weight of that truth. It
could very well break you.”

Jax looked to her in confusion of what she was saying. The curiosity in his eyes to what it was that could break him.

“For you and us to all survive...you need to be prepared. You are already starting to know the full
scope of what was done to you. It isn’t fully formed yet, but its there. And if you aren’t prepared
for when it rears its ugly head in the wrong place and time...it’ll be bloody and people will die. I’m
going to push you, challenge you, it’ll probably be the hardest thing you will ever hear and
understand. I’m sorry for that.” She shook her head, going back to making her notes after a final
look at Jax.

“Jesus, just fucking tell me, the longer you delay telling me it only makes me more nervous.” Jax
complained.

“It’s why you had me take his weapons, isn’t it?” Chibs asked worriedly.

“Partly. In fact, Jax, hand over your keys. You’re already sleeping here, hand ‘em over.”

"Seriously?" Jax huffed. Staring at her and Chibs in disbelief.

“Jax, hand over the keys.” Chibs ordered. “If what she knows is as dangerous as it is, I don’t want
you driving.”

Jax glared at her in annoyance but dug his keys out of his pocket tossing them to Chibs. Chibs
slipping them into his own pocket. “You better tell me what you saw.” Jax growled at her.

“Don’t worry, I will. You’re going to wish I hadn’t by the time we’re done. There is no more
hiding anymore, Jax. If we don’t work to fix the shit that you and the club are all heading towards,
we may as well pack and run.”


“Not enough has happened yet to alter the future I’ve seen in you, Gemma and Tig. Just you and us
reading the letters wasn’t enough. Decisions haven’t been made yet. So buckle up, if you think you
can’t work to fix things, it would be better to just pack and get out of town, cut all ties to the
club...to Gemma...to Charming.”

“Fuck.” Jax swore.

She took a breath as Chibs and Jax stared at her. “Next rule, what is talked about here, stays here.
That includes Tara when she comes tomorrow. Jax, you need to vent or talk about the shit that’s
going on, you come here and do it. You don’t do it at home, in church, in the clubhouse, or the
garage. You only talk to Tara, me or Chibs. That’s it. Not even to your kids when they’re sleeping.” Jax sent her an annoyed look like she was cracked. She ignored his look and pressed on.

“You and Tara will be under a lot of stress. The two of you will need each other and a safe place to go. Your house is Grand Central Station, people just barging in whenever they feel like it. Gemma even has a key to your house. So, this house, it’s Switzerland from now on. That includes the other guys if they ever come here for readings or need to talk shit out. Neutral ground, got it.”

Jax looked to Chibs and they both shrugged at her in agreement.

“Fine, okay, good.” She breathed and shifted her focus to the actual reading. "If things stay on the same path as they are now...you are going to shoot Opie.”

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My darling = mo gràidh
My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 46

Chapter Summary

Jax’s reading analysis continues...and Jax still being stubborn...

Chapter Notes

argh, it’s rough. Only barely the beginning of this section. Bear with me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“What! I’d...he’s my best friend. Why would I kill him?” Jax interjected in shocked confusion Chibs simply looking to her just as flummoxed.

“I didn’t say you killed him. Just shoot him in the arm, keep him from killing Clay.” She rolled her eyes at how Jax misinterpreted what she was saying. This was going to be a long night she sighed to herself.

“Why would Opie shoot Clay?” Chibs asked trying to get to the bottom of what she was telling them.

“And why would I stop him from killing Clay? Given what he did to my father...Clay’s fucking lucky to be breathing right now.” Jax questioned darkly.

“Because Opie will find Piney shot dead up in the cabin. Tells you that Wayne followed him up there. Tells Opie that it was Clay who killed Piney.” She answers Chibs question first.

Looking to Jax. “I’ll explain about Clay...Clay has to live for now.” Jax looked to argue with her but she sent him a hard look. “Let me tell you why...it’s why we’re here now.”

Jax pulled at his goatee. “Fine.” He agreed.

“Wayne spins Opie up and it isn’t hard to do with all that Opie has gone through, Donna, the hit on Opie himself gone wrong, and then to find Piney shot dead. Piney is threatening Clay with some sort of leverage. To get the club out of the cartel deal.”

“Hold on....How do you know this? You didn’t read Piney or Clay.” Chibs asks.

“Clay tells Gemma, I read her.”

“Jesus…” Jax breaths.

“Given how messy the cabin is...looks like Clay ransacked the cabin looking for the letters. Gemma finds Piney before Opie does, like a week before Opie goes up there to check on Piney. Gemma calls Wayne to finish set the scene to point the murder to the cartel that Clay started. She’s in a race with Clay, trying to get the letters first. To be the one to control the information in those letters.”
“How does Piney know about the letters? Has he read them?” Chibs asks her and sending Jax a questioning look.

Jax shrugs. “Tara said she only read them herself, gave them to me and we’ve now read them. That’s it.”

“Jax you’ve been inside for fourteen months. Tara’s had the letters since you got back from Belfast...I think she may have talked to Piney. Asked him questions about your father. Whether Piney has read them or not, he...I think he’s bluffing Clay with the letters to get the club out of the cartel deal. That whatever Tara asked as triggered something with Piney.”

“Jesus Christ...Piney hates the cartel...the muling especially.”

“Aye.” Chibs agreed with Jax.

“Look, Tara’s coming over tomorrow, we can ask her. But it’s my best guess. And given what I’ve seen happening, it’s the most likely scenario that fits.”

“How did all this start in the first place?” Chibs asked.

“Abel likes to color, he’s at that grabby phase. He grabbed the note Maureen wrote to you to color on. Her note telling you to read the letters. To know your father like she did. Gemma finds it mixed up in Abel’s coloring books the night of Opie and Lyla’s wedding. Such an innocent bit of paper...that note is what sets Gemma on her path dragging everyone with her into the hell of her making. Gemma absolutely hates Maureen. That she and JT had Trinity, a whole other family. Gemma needs to know what JT wrote to Maureen. The not knowing every detail spins her out of control. Not just on the letters, but in everything regarding you and the club.”

Jax sends Chibs a glance but doesn’t interrupt her.

“Gemma was...is...an idiot and panics. She shows Clay the note the next morning. She’s all worked up and obsessed over it. Not even the news of the dead Russians found on Hale’s pet project deters her from her mission. Clay tells her that if you knew about the letters they would have known by your reaction. But you’ve been acting normal. He tells her to let it go. To not go start any fires. To which, Gemma tells him she doesn’t do that. But Clay gives her an amused knowing look and she equivocates that she doesn’t raise hell much. Big joke between them.”

Jax groans that he knew what she was talking about. It wasn’t the first time he and the club had to deal with Gemma and her hell-raising. And it wouldn’t be the last.

“But she thinks Clay isn’t realizing the damage that the letters might pose. It’s why she asked how you were doing the morning after Opie and Lyla’s wedding. Not the usual ‘Hey, how’s it going’, but really asking you. Studying you, watching your body language, your eye contact...looking to see if you were hiding anything from her. Lucky for you, you were oblivious to what she was doing and left for the day. You thought that she was checking on how you were adjusting coming home from Stockton. Telling you she missed you so much. How much she loves you. Tara had left for work already. Soon as you step out of the house, Gemma, in charge of the kids for the morning, she tosses your house. Hanging onto a crying Thomas while she’s searching high and low. Handing him off to Neeta when she shows.”

“Jesus Christ, I had no idea.” Jax comments.

“She’ll take a break at one point, all pissed off at how messy the house is and she can’t find the letters in the clutter. She is such a neat freak at home but the office at the garage is such a mess.”
She sighs at the thought. Jax and Chibs giving her rueful looks.

“Anyway, she catches Abel grabbing an envelope out of her purse and starts coloring on it. She asks him what he’s doing. He tells her mommy’s bag. Lightbulb goes off, Gemma figures out Tara’s been walking around with the letters in her bag, might even be hidden in her office.”

She shoots Jax a glare of ire. “I’ll give you one guess where she goes next.”

“Don’t tell me...”

“I’m going to be weaving back and forth between what I see in Gemma, Tig, and you. I’ll have gaps and can only guess at some of what happens. If I read more people, the picture would fill in more. But I have enough that things are not good...not at all.” She takes a breath and continues.

“Anyway, Gemma sneaks into Tara’s office. A real Nancy Drew she is. The Mystery of the Belfast Letters.” She jokes, grinning at Chibs and Jax.

Chibs rolls his eyes at her, while Jax slaps his hand to his face.

“Gemma searches Tara’s office. Jax, I’m going to warn you now...when Tara finds out Gemma’s been riffling through her desk at work, she will not be happy. Tara could be sued and fined tens of thousands of dollars. The hospital can be sued. Tara’s reputation would be damaged even though its no fault of her own. That’s just the civil side. Criminal...it’s a whole other ball of wax.”

“You warned Wayne off this morning.” Chibs said.

“What?” Jax questioned.

“Wayne showed up here this morning. Gemma sent him.” Chibs supplied for Jax.

“Him being a former cop...it’s second nature for him to call in a favor to one of his former employees. Told him if I found out he ran a background check on me or anyone else without a warrant or just cause, I’d report him to every oversight agency I could think of. He violated my personal privacy all for Gemma.” She explained further.

“You really take privacy seriously, don’t you?” Jax observed.

“Yes. I do. And you’ll know why by the time we’re done.” She warned.

“But Gemma’s looking for the letters. Not taking any files.” Chibs said.

“Even so, if she stumbles across sensitive information that could be useful to the club she’ll use it. Or simply talk about it with Clay and he’ll use it. It’s just wrong...okay? Can we agree on that, at least? And Gemma does find the letters in Tara’s locked desk drawer. She starts reading a few of them. Noticing that Tara pulled the accident report. But, she doesn’t have enough time to read all of the letters. Hearing Tara talking to a nurse outside her office. But, she doesn’t have enough time to read all of the letters. Hearing Tara talking to a nurse outside her office, Gemma scrambles to put the letters back where she found them, relocking the drawer. Racing to the ensuite bathroom just as Tara walks in.”

“Tara, confused as to why Gemma is in her office, questions Gemma. But Gemma can’t think of a convincing enough reason fast enough so she asks Tara why she’s not wearing her engagement ring. Tara’s being squirrely with Gemma, telling her she’s just waiting for the right time. Gemma thinks she managed to divert Tara’s original question of why Gemma was in her office with the door locked in the first place. But Tara not wearing her engagement ring has her questioning Tara’s commitment to you and the club. Oh..and yeah, Gemma’s dragged Thomas with her on this little
escapade.”

“The letters...they could be used for her to get out.” Chibs said quietly to Jax.

“But she didn’t...she hid them away.” Jax replied. “Why didn’t Gemma take the letters, she had them?” Jax asks.

“She’s panicking. Clay told her not to go start fires, not to go poke her nose in things. And she’s not thinking straight.” She shrugs. “Gemma’s not one for calm, reasonable thinking...she’s very volatile.”

“Fuck...no kidding.” Chibs sighed.

“Anyway, Gemma’s back at her office in the garage trying to figure out what to do. She’s really hung up on why the accident report is in with the letters. Conveniently, Wayne shows up and Gemma tells him about JT and Maureen. That he wrote her love letters. Letters that might have information about what she and Clay did all those years ago. Telling him that a copy of the accident report was with the letters. The two of them concluding that Tara must have suspicions about JT’s accident. Wayne asks her where Clay is on it. Gemma scoffs that he didn’t put any weight into it. Wayne convinces her to not go starting things, that Clay has enough on his plate.”

“So, wait. Wayne knows about the letters? How?” Jax asks her.

“Because both Gemma and Clay have tasked Wayne to get the letters.”

“So, Unser’s read them?” Chibs questioned.

“Don’t know. He tells Gemma he only read enough to make sure he had the right set of papers at one point. Whether that’s true or not I’m not sure. But I’m jumping ahead. First, Gemma drags Wayne with her back to Tara’s office to act as a lookout while Gemma gets the letters herself. But Tara’s hidden the key to her desk. Tara’s suspicions of Gemma’s prior unannounced visit to her office had her on guard. Margaret comes into the office interrupting Gemma’s mad search. Gemma grabs one of Tara’s medical books as cover. Margaret questions Gemma what she’s doing, Wayne comes back and distracts Margaret to get her out of there. Margaret telling Gemma that she’ll tell Tara that she found her in her office.”

“Gemma had the letters, then?” Chibs asked.

“No. Couldn’t find the key.”

“Gemma’s given up trying to find the key and tries to guilt Tara to confessing and telling her she has the letters. Waving the note Maureen wrote at Tara. Tara plays dumb. Gemma gives a revisionist drama of her history with JT. And how those letters from JT would be very painful for you. That JT was in love with Maureen. Gemma admits to already falling in love with Clay when her Thomas died. Saying she didn’t care anymore, didn’t try and hide it. She put Clay at risk, how humiliating it must have been for JT with her affair. And the risk of you finding out, could set things off with Clay again. A reminder of how things were when you and Clay were going twenty rounds a few years ago over Clay and Tig going behind the club’s back regarding Opie. Gemma goes into how lonely she was. That JT leaving her ripped her apart, months at a time in Belfast, leaving her alone with his sons. Sounding so bitter about it.” She huffed in annoyance at Gemma’s little poor me act. “Her claiming to be the ultimate mother, a fierce mother...and she’s so fucking upset at having to take care of you and your brother. Never mind the fact that she was sleeping with Clay. So no...she wasn't alone.”
“Jax’s eyes pinned on hers. “That’s how she said it? Calling us his sons?”

“Yes. I’m sorry, Jax. At the time, Gemma was having a full-blown affair with Clay and used it to try and get a reaction out of JT. Like a jealous housewife completely absorbed in her bitter anger and utter hatred with JT. Spending as much time with Clay as possible to drive home the point. It was messed up. You and Opie were hanging out a lot. Thomas following you around. Gemma telling you to keep watch over Thomas while she and Clay disappeared into her bedroom.”

Chibs ran a hand over his hair with a hiss. She checked him, his dark eyes turning to her with a tight grim smile. His hand taking hers in his hand, their fingers dovetailing.

“Fuck, I remember that. I had no idea. Thomas got sick not long after that.” Jax uttered as she and Chibs held hands.

“Gemma tells Tara that she loved JT, like you and Tara do. She was nineteen and JT was her whole world. That the letters aren’t any good to anyone. Her subtle threat delivered she sweeps out of Tara’s office.”

She shook her head at Gemma’s gall. “Gemma used the memory and death of your father and your brother to guilt Tara to keep those letters hidden or to give them up. Tara, I imagine, she had to have felt completely attacked by your mother. We can ask Tara about it tomorrow.”

“God, I can’t believe she would do that. Use their memory like that.” Jax choked out harshly.

“Jax, Gemma can’t even tell that history right to herself anymore. Piney told you that JT was home when Thomas took a turn for the worse. She tells Nero that JT wasn’t. She’s lying to herself and to everyone.”

“Nero?” Chibs asks.

“We’ll get to him.” She tells him.

“What is the right story?...I remember him being home. At least I think I do...” Jax’s brows furrowed in thought.

“He was home, Jax. But Gemma made sure his life a veritable hell. Enjoying his pain and anguish. Your mother is not a forgiving person.”

Jax hunched back in the chair, his elbow on the arm of the chair, fingers rubbing at his eyes, to only support his head in frustration. “She...”

“Don’t Jax. Let me get through this.” She interrupts Jax’s automatic need to find a way to explain his mother’s behavior.

“Gemma gets back to the garage where Piney tells her about the club muling for the cartel. Tells her to get some sense into Clay. Clay shows up and she confronts him before he could get off his bike. She tells him drugs aren’t what we do. Clay pushes her back and holds back the fist that he threatens her with. Telling her that she doesn’t tell him what to do. That she’s just an old lady and not a member, something that he’s let slide regarding her needling for information going on with the club. The violence of Clay’s actions and harsh tone shakes her up as he walks away. But once she settles down after a minute, she’s telling herself that this muling will not happen. She plans on talking to you, see if she can get you to side with her. Especially your history with Wendy and Abel.”

“That’s when she grabbed me, tried to kick me out of the garage, telling me to go home. She’s
angry that nobody is listening to her. And with me forcing the truth out at her dinner regarding her behavior in Oregon. It was humiliating for her. To be taken to task in front of everyone. She was pissed and thought she could at least take care of me. She was queen and none of the women in the club dare to usurp her. Saw me and thought that she could deal with me. Fix the distraction she thinks I’ve become for the club by bouncing my ass out of her turf. And she’s been begging for a fight.”

Chibs hissed next to her, still angry at how Gemma for what she did to her that day. Jax shifting his eyes from her to Chibs. She breathed and squeezed Chibs hand, reassuringly.

“You know what happened there, reading, freaking everyone out, passing out and puking my guts out. Read JT’s book which led you to the letters. The club voted me in. Thank you.” She nodded to Jax for his help with that. The muling passes.”

She marks off one of her notes.

“The club will go to make their first delivery to the cartel. I know we go to Tucson. There’s some stuff going on down there that we’ll need to take care of.”

“What stuff?” Jax asks.

“Samtaz, they’re dealing drugs.”

“What!?” Chibs alarmingly questions.

“Jesus Christ.” Jax growls in frustration.

“Yeah, there’s not much you can do, but you’ll force the table to revoke it.”

“Fucking hell.” Chibs mutters.

“While that’s going on, Gemma and Chucky are running errands in town.”

“Hold up...tell us more about this dealing in Samtaz…” Jax demanded, leaning forward.

She looks up from her notes. “Jax...Christ. We have a lot to cover and I don’t have time to fill you in on every little detail. It’s not important.”

“One of our charters is dealing...It is important.” Jax retorts. “We’re trusting Samtaz with a truckful of illegal weapons and they’re fucking dealing!”

She frowns at him that he wasn’t letting this go. “I know you think it’s important. But in the grand scheme of what is going on...it really isn’t. And we can’t fix everything...you’ll try but it’s impossible. There are some things that you cannot fix, Jax. Nobody can fix everything all the time. Believe me, I tried. Samtaz is small potatoes to what we need to focus on.”

Jax glares at her but leans back in his chair. At his silence, she continues.

“Meanwhile, back to Gemma...”

“God.” Jax groans. “This is feeling like the Keystone Kops.”

“Who?” She asks not recognizing what Jax was referring.

“You don’t know the Keystone Kops?” Jax asked in surprise.
“No...they out of Pennsylvania? Pennsylvania is the Keystone State.” She looks from Jax to Chibs, confused what Jax was talking about.

Jax slapped a hand to his forehead. “Oh my God. No. They’re from the silent movies, slapstick comedy.” He informed.

“Oh?” Still confused.

“I’ll put it on the list.” He said, giving her a kiss.

“List?” Jax asked.

“Aye, we’ve got a list of TV and movies that she needs to watch. Music, too.” Chibs explained.

“I didn’t have a TV or radio growing up.” She shrugged. “I can debate you on stuff from books and newspapers if you want.” She lit up at the idea.

“I’d like to see that list. Maybe add some things to it to add to her cultural education.” Jax said amusedly.

Chibs rolled his eyes. “Jesus, I’ve already got Tig putting shit on the list. And no. I have final say on the list.” He declared.

Jax huffed a laugh at Chibs ire, she shrugging helplessly.

“Anyway, Gemma is running errands while we’re in Tucson. Including a stop at Rita Roosevelt’s flower shop and she notices the information on the fundraising efforts to save the Gardens. They need like eighty grand to secure the land so that Hale can’t do his housing project. There’s various levels of donations, the highest level is the Gold Circle Club, donate five thousand and you’re in this exclusive little club. Gemma asks about it and Rita says its for their more prominent members of the town. Doctors, lawyers, and such to attract other higher social circles to join up on the board. Gemma wants to donate, but is put out that she’s not considered Gold Circle material. An outlaw biker’s old lady, doesn’t have the same social pull as say...Tara does.”

“Don’t tell me.” Jax groans.

“Gemma runs into a guy outside the shop. He mentions to her its a shame about the Gardens. That if Hale doesn’t get his investors locked down by the end of the quarter, the city council can shut Charming Heights down and the land goes back to eminent domain. Says his name is Nick Stackhouse with the zoning department. And with Clay talking about shutting down Hale’s pet project, Gemma thinks what better way to help the club than getting involved with the fundraiser. And she’s already on a vindicated, euphoric high in dealing with Tara and the note. How pleased she’ll be when Clay thanks her for her help.”

“Christ.” Chibs moaned and pulled out a cigarette, lighting it. His eyes going to Jax, sending a warning look that Gemma is a bigger problem than they all realize.

“Gemma and Chucky go off to Tara’s office, bursts in without knocking. She really needs to learn how to knock. And then...well...wait for someone to answer the door to let her in.” She observes.

Chibs and Jax rolling their eyes collectively.

“What? It’s just the polite thing to do.”

“Mo chridhe.” Chibs whines at her to move along.
She huffs. “Gemma finds Tara with Piney in the office. Piney makes to leave, but Tara tells him to stay, that they aren’t done talking. Tara drags Gemma out of the office to find out what was so important to come bursting into her office. Gemma tells her all about the Garden’s committee and she’s going to sign her up for the Gold Circle Club. Tara begs off, saying she’s already on three committees already, that she doesn’t have time. Gemma’s all annoyed that Tara’s not jumping up and down with joy to help her with this little project.”

“Chucky runs out of Tara’s office to get Tara, Piney’s collapsed and is admitted. Piney’s in really bad shape. Gemma goes to see him once he’s stabilized and settled into a room. Interrupting Piney and Tara again. Gemma jokes that they should just give Piney a bottle of tequila and he’d be fine. Tara leaves after Gemma’s snide joke about Piney’s drinking.” She shakes her head at that. “Such a shitty thing to say to a man who’s clearly not well.”

“With Tara out of the room, Gemma asks him what the hell he’s doing talking to Tara for. He tells her that Tara’s simply helping him grow old gracefully. Gemma doesn’t buy it. Threatening him to stop whatever it is he’s doing. Tells Piney to back off on Clay, before it kills him. He tells her that its why he’s doing it. Gemma that night goes back to Rita’s shop and gives her the cash for the Gold Circle Club in Tara’s name. That same night we’re muling back the first shipment of coke.”

Jax shakes his head. “My goddamn mother.” He laments. She simply gives him a dark look.

“Gemma threatens Piney? You sure on that?” Chibs asks.

“Yes.”

“Jesus, I’ve been dealing with her my whole life. I’ve tried to get her to back off, which she’ll do but then only to step in it again. There really is no controlling her, just...managing her.” Jax said.

“Jax, she is my all time worst read ever. I’m not surprised she ends up doing things her way, despite what you or Clay tells her.”

“Who was your worst?” Jax asks trying to figure out where Gemma fell in her rankings of reads.

“You don’t need to know. I was the most hated person back home because of what I can do.”

“Come on. Not even a hint?” Jax teased her.

“Jackie.” Chibs warned.

She sends Jax a cool look, not impressed with his smarmy attitude. “You think this is the first time Gemma’s searched your stuff? Or the only one she’s done her little investigation on?” Raising her brows at Jax.

“When you mentioned the book and journals to her from the storage unit, she searched the apartment for the book soon as you left. Didn’t find it then but she found the burned copy in with your dirty shorts when she was unpacking your boxed up stuff from the garage. She has zero concept of personal privacy when it comes to you or the club. She has it in her head that its her God-given right to go through your stuff. Anyone’s stuff to find whatever it is that she thinks she needs.”

“Seriously?” Chibs groaned next to her.

“I knew she took the book. Didn’t want me to read it.” Jax said.

“She kept it, it’s in her nightstand. Another time, she searched your stuff and found the folder Stahl
had given you about the Kings. It’s why she went to Stahl to cut a deal to protect you, not knowing that you were working on your own scheme to deal with Stahl.”

“God damn it. Stahl told me Gemma threatened her at gunpoint.” Jax ran his hands over his shorn head in frustration and reached for a cigarette, lighting it as he looked back to her.

“What?! When was this?” Chibs demanded.

“When we got back from Belfast. Stahl wanted me to ID the Kings and deliver Jimmy.” Jax said.

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph... Did you ID the Kings?” Chibs glared at Jax.

“Yeah. Had to to keep Stahl on the hook. But we tore up the paperwork. Stahl’s dead. She can’t hurt us.” Jax shrugged.

Chibs seethed next to her. She watching Chibs process. “Next time you try or think about doing anything regarding the Kings, you fucking talk to me first. Ye’ hear me? Dh airson eanchainn.” Chibs directed to Jax, muttering to himself.

Jax’s eyes went wide at how vehement Chibs was. “Okay. Jesus, I didn’t know you were…” Chibs glared hard at Jax to finish that sentence and Jax wisely shut up.

“Well...” She jumped in again eying Chibs and Jax taking in their tense mood. “…when Gemma found the burned copy of JT’s book she waved it in front of Clay. Told him to nail you down hard. That JT was talking to you from the grave. Clay telling her that she’s hysterical. Gemma just digs her heels in tells Clay that she wants to make sure that you follow in Clay’s leadership and not JT’s, whom she considers as weak. Telling Clay that she knows you better than anyone. ‘I know my Jax’. Lecturing Clay in how to bring you in closer to the club. How to twist you deeper into their way of running things. Not to go cowboy on your own ideas or JT’s. Like say getting out of guns...or going legit with Caracara.”

“To Gemma, Clay is easily manipulated. But you and Clay were having your own little power plays against each other. You angry with Clay over trying to steer the club with more legit businesses so that you don’t have to rely on the guns so much. Even end the gun running. Going into business with Luann, Stahl circling, then Donna being killed.”

“You were being pushed and pressed in ways that you didn’t want to go, didn’t want the club to go. Even suggesting not rebuilding the gun warehouse was a red flag in front of Clay. The secrets and lies tearing you and the club apart. Turning the club around, turning it legit with Caracara, stop selling guns, that was you trying to save the club. Years ago. All this time, if the club had stopped selling guns, Zobelle may never have been brought into Charming. The Feds, the ATF wouldn’t have had any ammunition against the club. The club wouldn’t be where it is today if it had stopped selling guns.”

“Mary, mother of Christ.” Chibs swore, seeing her line of vision.

“But I failed. Clay won. What was I supposed to do?” Jax said in exasperation.

“Listen, JT’s book, it was an opportunity to change the course of the club then. Now the letters have come into play. Again, this is an opportunity for the club to decide where it wants to go into the future. But decisions have been made between then and now, actions creating reactions leading to consequences. Taking out the Russians, brought the Cartel in to pick up the gun sales. Clay still heading the deal, sinking the club ever deeper into the guns and now muling. It’s disgusting that Clay profited off of Abel being kidnapped.”
Chibs shifted next to her. “That was my fault.” He admitted.

“No. It wasn’t. It was Clay’s. You weren’t there at the table with the Kings. Soon as they offered up Jimmy’s contacts and opening their warehouse...it was Clay that took advantage of it.” Jax said. “I didn’t want the guns when they offered. But I couldn’t contradict Clay in front of them. Not when Abel was still in Jimmy’s grip. It was Clay that ran with the open warehouse.”

“It’s true, babe. You may have forced Kellen and the Kings to the table...put suggestions to them to make things right to the club. But it was Clay that grabbed it in his greedy paws. How he lit up a cigar and went into his...I’m sure what he thinks is his business persona...settling into the chair, smoking away...negotiating the deal with the Kings.”

“Fuck...I shouldn’t have set it in motion though. Left it with getting your boy back and Kellen. I was pissed with how things were running and things being let loose. Blinded by my need for vengeance with that rat Jimmy.”

Jax slumped and sighed. Chibs slumping himself as well.

“The past is set. There is no going back and changing what happened.” She mollified the guys out of their own personal wallow session.

“But lessons were not learned the first time around with JT, or the second time with you running it. Its here again. Now. And I’m sorry, Jax. Of course you failed with Caracara and Clay. You were trying to do it all on your own, a noble effort to be sure. But Clay and Gemma, they have run of this place for a very long time. You can’t turn a battleship on a dime. Not with the history and expectations of what has and is expected to be done. Doing new things is scary for them. They make a lot of money from the gun sales, they enjoy the power they have over the club, over the other charters, the town even.”

“Gemma especially enjoys it. They are at the peak of their power and those letters prove what they are willing to do to stay there. You had zero chance of affecting change all by yourself. It was a smart move, you thought about the club and its future and had the best intentions. But you were blocked by Clay and had no back up. Here we are, again, the opportunity to change the course of this club, and make no doubt about it. It has to change.”

“Oh God, Jackie.” Chibs groaned out. “I would have helped. I didn’t know. We all saw you fighting with Clay over something. Bobby thought it was some personal crap going on between you two. I thought it was you trying to push for the gavel. Opie, too.” Chibs sighed in regret. “It wasn’t til later we learned what Tig and Clay did behind the club’s back regarding Opie.”

“I wasn’t pushing for the gavel. I never was. I just wanted to try and get the heat off the club. The guns brought the heat and blood. I was fucking tired of it. Whatever we earned was spent in lawyers and medical bills.”

Chibs nodded in agreement to Jax’s assessment.

“But, Gemma not just searched crap from you, but from Tara, too.” She leaded the conversation back. “She went through Tara’s purse when you told her to drive her home when she left the Cutlass to be worked on, and you going off to Indian Hills. Found the gun in Tara’s bag. Called up Luanne to do a little research into Tara and her time in Chicago. Found out Tara had a restraining order. Gemma complaining to Clay over letting you go out to Indian Hills all on your own. Telling Clay to have him call her, threatened to drive out there to check on you. Gemma’s been doing this investigation searching and even interrogating club members, wives, girlfriends, croweaters, whoever she has to in order to find the information of what the hell is going on at the time. She
can’t and won’t stop. If there is a secret, she has to know about it. Especially, if it involves you. She thinks its her right to do it. All of it to protect you.”

"She's my mother. Of course, she wants to protect me." Jax concludes.

“God damn it.” Chibs swore again, taking another swig of his whiskey.

“The fact that you or Clay shut her out on some club business drives her up the wall and guess what, she finds out eventually. Then when she does find out, she’ll go to Clay or you, or to any of the guys and plant a seed in your ears. How you should vote or think about issues. Gemma may not have a seat at the reaper table, but her influence is at that table. Your mother is a very real and dangerous problem. Especially if we are going to try and fix things.”

“She’s not at the table. Not the way you say.” Jax said stubbornly. Chibs giving her a contemplative eye.

“Yes, she is. She’s been there the entire time and none of you recognize it. You're too close. Step back, see the bigger picture.”

“She’s overbearing, sure. But she loves us. Whatever she does, she does it for the club.” Jax defended.

“Jesus Christ! Gemma’s not a member, Jax!” Chibs yelled. “No matter what her feelings or thinkings are, she doesn’t have a vote. And if she’s been influencing the table all these years... I’m not liking what I’m hearing.”

“I just...I can’t believe that Gemma is as bad as what you are saying.” Jax defended again.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My heart = mo chridhe
shit for brains=dh airson eanchainn
Chapter 47

Chapter Summary

Hi, sorry for delay in posting. Work and school all slammed up on me and I didn't have time to dwell on this next part.

Happy Pi Day, btw.

Enjoy. ;)

Chapter Notes

more of the reading.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Fine, don’t believe me, let me finish what I’ve learned reading you. And then we can debate that some more.” She glared at Jax for still clinging onto his belief in Gemma.

Chibs slid her a look that even he couldn’t believe how Jax was still defending his mother. Given what she’s told him privately and now with Jax. And it’s only going to get worse.

“You and the club are meeting with Marcus, their end of the muling isn’t ready yet. Needs another day to get things set up. The club will babysit the coke overnight. Prospects are tasked to guard the warehouse along with one of Marcus’s guys. Gemma meets with Otto about Luann; says that the new prosecutor is taking over the unsolved cases. Wants the club to find out who killed Luann. At the table, Clay will task the guys to find out what happened with Luann. Everyone deciding on Georgie as the most likely culprit.”

“I’ve got a gap here because next I see Clay telling Gemma that she was right about the letters. The threat they pose. Saying Piney threatened him, gave him just enough details. Things that only he and JT knew about; found some old letters. Says that Tara did tell someone about the letters. Gemma’s panicking, trying to find a solution. Gemma spins that all they have are the letters and suspicions. If there’s no letters, there’s no proof. Tells him that they aren’t in your house, so they have to be at the hospital. That she’ll go find them. And until she does, nothing happens to Piney or Tara. She makes Clay promise her that he won’t hurt Piney or Tara. Reminding Clay that Piney is 1st Nine and Tara, the mother of his grandchildren. And that if they are hurt, it’ll hurt you. She knows what happened to the last person who threatened Clay’s business dealings.”

“Fuck.” Chibs swears again..

Jax groans. “Why didn’t Tara just show those letters to me as soon as we got out?”

“Again, we have to ask Tara. She must have her reasons, don’t go jumping off on assumptions without hearing her out.” She warns Jax. He glares at her in frustration.
“Jax, I know you want to just barrel your way through all this, but if you do, it’ll set off a chain of events that there is no recovery from. It’s fucking hard. I know you don’t want to lose half your club at the end of all of this. So pay attention.”

“Gemma goes running off to Wayne again. Clay’s there already, tells her that he’s just seeing about getting a truck for the next run to Samtaz, when she questions him. She telling him that she’s delivering Wayne’s batch of weed to help with his cancer treatment.”

“But we just got back from Samtaz...he’s lining up a truck already? Delivery’s not for another two weeks.” Jax questions.

“I know. You question Clay with that reasoning before he leaves for Wayne’s.” She gives Jax a hard look to quit interrupting. Jax rolls his eyes at her with a huff, refilling his glass.

“Clay leaves and Gemma knows he’s lying, the way Wayne isn’t looking at her. That Clay’s using Wayne to get the letters for himself. Gemma tells Wayne that he needs to get the letters from Tara’s desk during her lunch hour. But to give her the letters and not to give them to Clay. Wayne’s pissed, caught between Clay and Gemma.”

“Fucking hell.” Jax groans.

“Where are we in all this?” Chibs asks.

“The search for Luann’s murderer, for the most part. Opie’s having some domestic issues. Later, you’re counting out the bricks of coke to hand over to Marcus. Only to come up with one shy of thirty. Fingers pointing back and forth of who took the brick. You guys deducing that it had to be one of the prospects or Marcus’s guy. Each of you agree to interrogate them separately to find truth.”

“Tig is having domestic problems of his own, as well. His daughter shows up, asking him for twelve grand to ‘help’ Fawn get into some rehab for bulimia. Gemma and Bobby find out the truth about Fawn and tell Tig that Dawn is conning him. He gives her the money anyway, he’s just so happy to see her. She’s the one that gets burned alive in front of Tig.” She runs her hands over her face in frustration.

“What?!” Chibs and Jax exclaim in unison, the two of them sitting up in a rush.

She ignores Chibs and Jax’s shocked question. “The missing brick shows up just in time for Marcus as Romeo is on his way to check out the operation.”

“Hold up…” Jax interrupts.

“Get to the girl burning.” Chibs ordered, cutting Jax off.

“Things happen before that. It won’t make sense without knowing about it. Just let me get through this.” She said shortly, Chibs and Jax sharing a worried look.

“You, Clay and Tig are checking out Marcus’s cutting and distribution operation. Gemma finds a death threat in Tara’s car as she’s grabbing the car seat. Tara wants to call the cops, Gemma tells her no. Wants to get her to the compound. Gemma calls you about the threat, you go to leave Marcus’s when a car pulls in front and opens fire on you and Marcus and his crew. Marcus gets hit in the hail of gunfire. You go racing off chasing after the driver. Everyone else drags Marcus over to the clubhouse. Gemma questions Clay over the death threat and the drive by if they are connected. He tells her he doesn’t know. She goes to Wayne telling him check out the note.”
“While Tara is working on Marcus, he asks her what happened. That you were worried when Gemma called him. Between all of you, you figure out that Galindo’s competition and enemy the Lobos Sonora are in town. Marcus has been hearing things on the street. Juice brings up that going after family are what cartels do. Which isn’t doing much to keep Tara calm.”

“You call and have tracked the driver back to an apartment. The guys all go to back you up. Even call the Niners for help. But when the guys arrive, the Niners don’t show. You storm the apartment yourselves. The Lobos have been using the local legal residents with families back in Sonora to help them get around town or whatever they need done under threat that their families will be killed.”

“Tara, meanwhile, asks Gemma if she knew about the drugs. Gemma doesn’t have to answer, but her look is enough to tell Tara all she needs to know. Tara upset says to herself that she can’t believe she signed off on this shit. Which raises a red flag at Gemma. Not knowing what Tara meant by signed off. Everyone comes back from the apartment, Gemma warns you about Tara knowing about the drugs. Not from her, even though she didn’t help matters. Gemma may as well have told Tara about the drugs.”

“You come clean with Tara about the drugs being part of the deal for the guns. That the deal was more complicated. Regarding the death threat, Marcus has reached out to Luis. Said that the note wasn’t written in your kids blood, it wasn’t the cartel that put the note in her car. And that he’s on his way to help deal with the Lobos. That the drive by was just a shot off the bow for the Lobos. Letting everyone know they are in town.”

“Who put the threat in the car then?” Chibs asked.

“My guess...Wayne. He knows about the letters. From Gemma, the set of letters he found in Tara’s desk were copies. Those are what he’s burning and read from. Gemma hands Clay a burned set of papers to Clay. Claiming she burned them. That it was painful what JT wrote. Thinking that by handing them to him, Clay will back off on going after Piney and Tara. The whole thing settled. But Wayne later on tells her that they were copies. Not the originals. And Wayne knows how dangerous Clay can be when threatened.”

“Tara had to have made the copies.” Chibs said.

“The way Gemma showed up unexpectedly at her office that day. Yeah. Best guess.” She agreed with him.

“Bobby gets a call from Samtaz...Armando is missing. They’re all skittish down there. At church, Bobby calls for a leadership challenge. Not happy with the way things are going regarding this cartel deal.”

“Fucking hell.” Jax groans. “He calls a leadership vote? You sure on that?”

“Yes. The complications of this deal with Romeo is only just starting Jax.”

“What does that mean?” Chibs asks.

“I’m getting to it.” She said frustrated with the interruption again.

Jax and Chibs shoot each other another look.

“Everyone is gathered for the vote, but it doesn’t get very far because a red pickup truck races into the lot and bullets shoot through the clubhouse. Everyone dives for cover and to race outside to stop the attack. One of the guys in the truck tosses a bag full of decapitated heads. One of which is
Armando’s. The club managed to capture one of the Lobos. The captured Lobos you toss into the van and taken up to the barn for interrogation.”

“Fucking Christ...so much for this deal being low profile.” Chibs says darkly.

“Gemma’s pissed that it’s sounding like she’s living in Juarez. There’s a fundraiser that afternoon and evening for the Community Gardens. Gemma has had Chucky working on cooking up a vat full of her chili. There’s some disagreement whether the fundraiser will still be on given the shooting.”

“Marcus has called and said that he’s lost three guys and one of his trucks with a haul of cut coke. Roosevelt questions you about the shooting and tells you that he’s put a man on Tara. He’s found out about the death threat by Margaret Murphy over at St. Thomas. Roosevelt being all smarmy about it all. Asshole. He’s going to have his reckoning with that attitude of his.” She commented to herself.

Jax raised his brows at her comment about Roosevelt, but she ignores him. Plowing on with the reading.

“Gemma tells you she just talked to Tara, she’s fine.” She pauses to give Jax a glare. Jax shot her a questioning look, but she didn’t have time to diverge from what she had to tell him tonight. Tomorrow. That would be when the real work happens. Fingers crossed.

“You and the guys to head up to the barn to find out what Happy has been able to get out of the Lobos you’ve captured. Marcus and his guys are there already there. Happy isn’t having much luck getting any information out of the Lobos. Luis shows up and shoots the guy full of sodium pentathol. From that, you learn that the Mayans have a rat in their ranks with ties to Nogales.”

“Marcus is pissed, its not the first time a family member has had to die for being stupid. Jax, you come up with the idea of using the rat to tell the Lobos that the Irish are storing their guns in the warehouse, where you all will lie in wait for them to show up to steal them. Tig is put on Gemma, Clay offers to cancel going to the fundraiser, but you tell him to go, put a PR spin with the town given the ruckus. Bobby’s pissed that the vote never finished and now that the club is being dragged into the cartel shit, he’s worried that there may not be a club left.”

“Where’s Tara in all this?” Jax questioned.

“With Gemma and Tig at the fundraiser. Clay and Oswald put together the last of the money needed for the Gardens, pissing off Hale. Gemma is sooo proud of herself, Clay giving a speech and half the money, that the club saved the town.”

“You really don’t like Gemma at all do you? All the things she does for the town, the fundraiser for the schools or the saving of the Gardens.” Jax commented.

“I grew up around people like that all the time. Like their only validation is in the narcissistic entitlement they get from others around them for doing what is supposed to be charitable work. Inside, they are simply using the charity as an excuse to feel better about themselves or more important than everyone else. And don’t feel sorry for Gemma, Jax. All those charity fundraisers she does every year for the schools...”

“Yeah? What about them?”

“She’s skimming from the ticket sales. Been doing it for ages.”

“What?” Chibs questions.
“Unfortunately, it’s not uncommon.” She sighed. "Even the high-society functions. Coordinators who put them together, they have their fees, bill the charity for their lodging and meals, then they take a cut of ticket sales or auction sales to cover ‘expenses’. By the time they’re done, the money raised on the ticket sales is reduced by half or more just to pay off the coordinator. The money left over...its barely what they hoped to have made from the charity function in the first place. The charity keeps holding the functions because every bit that they do get they need, and it’s good PR. Gemma’s doing the same thing.” She shrugged at the two of them.

“Are you kidding me with this?” Jax asked her astonished.

“No. What? You think you and the guys were the only outlaws around here?”

Chibs slid her look as he took another sip of his whiskey.

She gathered her thoughts again. “Everyone is suiting up and checking their weapons, Mayan, Sons, Galindo. All waiting for Lobos to show up. A couple of trucks pull up, one is left behind and the men all take off in the second truck. Leaving the one still there. Everyone is confused as to why they didn’t storm the warehouse.”

“Fuck, its a bomb.” Chibs said, running a hand over his eyes.

“That’s what you say.” She confirmed with a tilt of her head. “Marcus makes the rat open up the truck. All of you back up, but God...you’re morons. Honestly, if there was a bomb in that truck, you all were only like fifteen feet away from the thing. If it went off, you might as well have opened it yourselves.” She frowned disapprovingly at them as if they had already done such a deed.

“Mo chridhe.” Chibs whines.

“Don’t mo chridhe me...You’ve been nearly blown up twice already. Let’s not make it a third.” She admonished him. Chibs pulling her into a hug, giving her a kiss, as she grumbled at him.

“I take it that there isn’t a bomb.” Jax says with an amused brow lift and smirk.

“No, just the headless bodies. Quite a number of them. Mayans and Sons.”

“Lobos are smarter than they seem.” Jax says.

“Yeah, well, Luis is pissed, again. Big surprise. He kills the Mayan rat out of sheer frustration. Just to feel like he accomplished something, I guess.”

“Clay’s back from the fundraiser to find out what happened. Gemma is at the clubhouse cleaning up, Tigs waiting for her to finish so he can escort her home. Clay calls Gemma, tells her that he’s going to crash at the clubhouse, in the apartment. Gemma knows he’s lying to her because she’s in the clubhouse and he isn’t there where he says he is. Tig takes her home. Next day, Gemma goes up to the cabin to check on Piney. Finds him dead. She knows Clay killed him. Yells at him, ‘I told you, you stupid old man.’ The cabin is a mess, as if Clay was looking for something.”

“The letters.” Chibs says. Nancy simply gave them a knowing look.

“But Piney doesn’t have them. Shit, Tara does, did.” Jax concludes in a rush, tripping over the possession of the letters.

“Tara has a medical conference and a job interview up in Oregon coming up. With the Galindo’s dealing with Lobos and waiting for the Irish to show up, you decide to have Tara take the kids with her. Get out of town for a bit. Gemma finds out and she’s not happy. She really doesn’t like it when
the kids aren’t near her. Gemma confronts you about Tara going to Oregon, and you tell her that she’s just protecting her family. Reminding Gemma that it’s what she would do.”

“The club will be dragged into the cartel mess by Luis, to track down the Lobos up here in Northern California. He’ll be...understaffed sometimes.”

“Young? Fuck.” Jax swears for her word usage.

“Yeah. The Niners are caught up in the middle of the Lobos and Galindo’s. They don’t know that the Sons are aligned with the Galindo’s. The Niners, they’re buying coke from the Lobos right now. Before you got out of Stockton even. They simply didn’t know. Luis is pissed and pulls Laroy and his crew into luring the Lobos out. Some of them show up, there’s a firefight and the Lobos get away. Luis is pissed. He goes to kill Laroy and his crew in his frustration, to send a message.”

“You jump in the middle of it. You put your life on the line for Laroy. Telling Luis that Galindo came to the Sons for your contacts with the other clubs. If Luis kills Laroy, he kills all credibility and trust the Sons have with the other clubs. The coke that Galindo needs to sell, won’t sell if Luis kills Laroy. You convince Luis it’s better to have the Niners buy their coke from Galindo, spread the word that the Lobos are out and Galindo is the way to go.”

“Jax, you make Luis see reason, you save Laroy’s life. You are VP, where’s Clay? He’s standing off to the side and letting you risk your life. You even yell to Clay to step in and help keep Laroy alive. Clay ignoring your plea. Jax, you could have lost your life, Luis is a hot head. He lets his emotions override common sense. Saving Laroy, convincing Luis and the Niners to work together, that is all you. Clay is not smart enough to think as fast as you do. Do you understand? This isn’t the first time you’ve pulled the club out of their collective asses. And Clay lets you put yourself in danger, when it should be Clay doing it.”

“You implied that at church.” Jax said.

“I know. I was testing him. His leadership style. The fact that he had me read Tig instead of him was a red flag to me.” She scowled. “How Clay is fond of saying that sometimes the herd needs thinning. Such an assholic thing to say. Niners was one of the first customers that the club ever had for the Irish guns. For Clay to allow Laroy to be thinned out? Doesn’t say much for Clay’s loyalty to his customers.”

“Jesus. This is unbelievable.” Jax breathes.

“Anyway, Bobby comes to you and tells you how impressed he is at how you’ve been handling the cartel snafus. That he knows you’re planning on jumping out, he really doesn’t want you to leave. Saying the club needs you as its leader. With Bobby talking to you, telling you that Clay offered him the gavel...you’re pissed at Clay for reneging on your little deal.” She said pointedly to Jax.

“Deal? What deal?” Chibs questioned them, his eyes landing on Jax.

Jax breathed through his nose, looking at her accusingly.

“I told you, there’s no hiding from the truth. Not from me. Do you want to tell him or should I?” She offered to Jax. Jax squirmed in his chair and looked to Chibs.

“I made a deal with Clay over the muling. My vote and help in passing it. And when Clay steps down, I walk away in good standing with the club. That Opie would take the gavel.”

Chibs pulled out a joint and lit it, giving him time to gather his thoughts. She felt his anger rising.
“What the fucking hell were you thinking? This is a club that the members decide. Not you, not Clay unilaterally. Fucking hell...Opie as president. What a fucking nightmare that would be.” Chibs scoffed in utter disbelief. “And Bobby? Jesus. We may as well disband the charter now. Do you have bloody rocks in that head of yours!? God fucking damn it!” Chibs railed at Jax.

Jax gave Chibs a challenging look. “You saying you want the gavel?”

“Fuck no! I never wanted the damn thing. But that doesn’t mean you and Clay get to decide for the charter who is the next president. I know Opie is your best friend, but it doesn’t mean he’s up to the task. Bobby, too. I love ‘em, I do. But with you and Clay out of the club, the table will really have to think and debate on who would be up to the task. I can’t see Opie or Bobby taking the gavel. Neither one of them have the strength or the intelligence to keep things on track.”

“Who would you have then? Tig?” Jax argued back.

Chibs winced at that thought, too. But glared at Jax, “That isn’t for you to decide since you’ve got your plan on jumping now, is it?”

She shook her head. “Look, it doesn’t matter. Because neither Clay or Jax are leaving. This cartel deal is too complicated for them to step away.” She appeased to Chibs.

Turning to Jax, “And Jax, in order for us to fix things, you have to become president. It’s the only way I see the club and lives from not getting crushed. We can’t fix things if Clay is still president. You are tied to this club whether you like it or not.”

“I have a plan of getting out. I need to get out with Tara and the kids. Ineed to get out.” Jax’s voice stressed with panicked frustration.

“But you won’t leave, you can’t.” She said carefully, walking Jax back from the edge of the emotional cliff he was dangling on. “You’re too honorable to your father to let the club die. Not right now. You’ll understand why if I can continue.” She paused looking at Chibs and Jax. The two of them turning their attention back to her.

“After Bobby tells you that Clay intends him to take over, you confront Clay. You’re pushing to get out sooner rather than later. Clay’s pissed you’re pushing the timetable on him. I think Clay’s realizing just how complicated this deal has all gotten. The level of complexity is hitting home with him that you’re the one that’s holding this whole thing together. And here you are still wanting out and pushing the schedule on him. Thinking that you’d stick things out. He insults you that you’re being jerked around by Tara. And you threaten Clay over the slight about Tara. He’ll be crude about it, pissing you off. I won’t repeat it.”

Jax sighs and shifts in his chair.

“Gemma talks with Clay, that she knows that he killed Piney and why. That she talked to Tara, that she’ll never give those letters to you. That it’ll only push you deeper into the club. That Tara’s going to Oregon and when she gets back, Gemma will get the letters from Tara. And all of that will be put to bed. Makes Clay promise to not do anything to Tara. Gemma with her big fat mouth around Clay. She unwittingly tells Clay where Tara is going. Gives him the information he needs to do what he thinks he needs to do.”

“Fucking Christ. Fuck. I’m not liking where this is going.”

“Jax, I’m getting there so just listen, please. Gemma sees Clay pulling a large amount of cash out of their personal safe. She goes off to say goodbye to Tara and the kids before they leave, that’s when
she finds out you’re going with them, a last minute decision. Not much to do, just waiting for the Irish and Galindo meeting. You’re so freaking giddy to play normal dad on a family vacation. Even start flipping out a little when you stop to gas up the car and a motorcycle cop swings by and checks out the car. That he and you have a conversation about the car, his daughter is looking to get one. You ask him about his bike...if he misses riding the Defender?"

Jax and Chibs nod that she got the type of bike right, “It’s a chance meeting, one that you will need. Because that cop will help you later. Gemma is confronting Clay about what he needed the money for and he brushes her off telling her that its his money and as long as the house is paid for and she has cash for her little projects, to keep her nose out of his business. You and Tara stop at a park for lunch, she’s putting the kids into the car while you’re tossing your trash.”

She pauses and runs her hand over her eyes again. “A van pulls up behind Tara, men inside pull her into the van. She’s screaming and yelling for you. You run to the van as its pulling away, she’s fighting. And you’re torn, because you’ve got the kids in your car. Debating to go running after Tara or staying with the kids. Luckily, Tara’s fighting gets her in your reach and you punch and pull at the men grabbing her. The van door slams on her hand as it starts and stops. You manage to get her out of the van, but she’s hurt badly. The cop you met earlier will help convince the paramedics to take Tara to St Thomas. You’re amped up, thinking it was a cartel hit. The men were speaking spanish. With all the problems cropping up regarding the Lobos, you and the guys jump on them as the ones that tried to take Tara. Tara’s hand is broken. She requires surgery, there might be nerve damage.”

Jax pales as he listens to her.

“Jax, she is a surgeon, damage to her hands is a death sentence to her. Her hand will heal. It’ll take time, but it will. But she goes into a dark place. You’ll put the blame of what happened onto yourself. And it wasn’t your fault Jax. It wasn’t Tara’s fault. You’ll hang in with her, support her, but she’ll be angry and depressed. She can’t grieve with you there next to her at some times. She’ll yell and scream at you just to get you out of the room. You can’t take it personally. You hear me? She needs to vent and get through all that on her own, and you can’t help her in some of it, even though you want to. She’ll climb out of it and let you help her, but she needs to figure it out for herself first before letting you in. In the meantime, you’re angry and want revenge on the Lobos for trying to take her.”

“The club will go to the Niners along with the Mayans to find the Lobos. Thinking with their past relationship with them, they’d know where they are. But the Niners are angry, they’ve lost men of their own since they had to switch to the Galindo coke. The Lobos are becoming a real problem not just for the Sons, but for Niners as well. With the Niners refusing to help, Clay sends you back to Tara while he goes to meet with Romeo. Saying that you’re too amped up and not thinking straight.”

“I’ve got a gap in here, next Gemma sees Clay come home putting the cash back in the safe. She confronts him. Threatens to tell you that he that set up the hit on Tara. That it was never the cartel, but Clay who tried to take out Tara over the letters. Clay spits back that it was her that started the whole thing with JT. How he let her get to him with her broken and bitter heart when JT was leaving her. How she used sex to keep him close, to do her bidding. Telling Gemma that you should hear that part of the story. Gemma panics. She tells him to get out and to never come after her family, my family. She pulls a gun on Clay.”

“Holy shit.” Jax says with wide eyes as she’s laying out the events.

“Clay and Gemma’s fight escalates. Gemma fires at him. Misses. Clay’s pissed and the two of
them get into a drag out brawl. She gets some hits and scratches in, but Clay’s got what, fifty, sixty pounds on her. He beats the crap out of her. Knocks her unconscious. She wakes up and patches herself up, self-medicates with booze and pot. Wayne finds her and wants to call it in, have the cops arrest Clay, reset the scene of Piney’s murder to point to Clay even. Gemma tells him no. Clay is beyond saving. He doesn’t deserve to go to prison, to die by law. Tells Wayne that Clay has to die...by the hand of the son.”

“She says that? By the hand of the son.” Chibs asks her for clarification.

“Yes. It was very clear. Jax, she wants you to kill Clay.”

“I can’t believe this. I just...” She waves off Jax’s stuttering.

“Next day, Gemma goes to St. Thomas, Margaret sees her face and tells her this, pointing at Gemma’s face, is why Tara needs to take the job in Oregon. Why she needs to get out. That if Gemma truly loves Tara, she’ll let her go. Gemma confronts you about Tara’s job, that you and Tara are leaving and taking the kids; that you aren’t coming back. You’re pissed at Clay for how bad Gemma’s face is. She simply tells you it was history building up. You tell Gemma not to go to Tara with her beat up face. That Tara can’t deal with her drama right then. She says she won’t, but she’ll ignore your dictate. She’s not ready for you to take out Clay, she still doesn’t have the letters. And she knows that Tara is the only one who knows where they are. She won’t give Clay up to you until she has them.”

“She’s convinced that when she has the letters, she thinks she can sway you to stay. To make it so that you take over the club. And by you staying, the kids will still be here.”

“The Irish are all worked up over the cartel mess and the attack on Tara, you and Clay have to go calm their nerves. You’re pissed at Clay for beating up Gemma, and he has to tell you to drop it in order to deal with business. Reminding you of your agreement of getting out. Telling him to treat Gemma as an old lady. He’s doing that. And you gave him permission to do it.”

“What?” Chibs asks.

Jax throws his head back as all his dirty secrets were being forced into the open like this. But he asked for it. “Clay asked me how to handle Gemma when I told him I was leaving. What to do about her. I told him that Gemma is just an old lady.” Jax tells Chibs.

“And thus, you gave him approval to deal with Gemma as such. Although, like I said, Gemma pulling a gun and shooting at him probably pushed him too far. He was already heading for the door when the fight escalated.”

“I didn’t mean for him to beat the shit out of her! Christ, it hasn’t even happened yet and I’m all upset over it.” Jax threw his hands up in the air out of frustration.

She grins at him. “Welcome to my reality. I’m thinking of having hats made.”

Jax and Chibs huffed at her dark humor.

“Romeo shows up and he’s got a couple of bodies that were the men who tried to take Tara.”

“Jesus Christ, it was Clay though, who did they kill to cover their asses?” Chibs asks.

“Don’t know. Romeo and Luis are simply trying to help cool your need for revenge. And god, Gemma sees Tara being wheeled back into surgery, Tara broke her cast in a rage. Wendy’s back.”
“God damn it.” Jax swears.

“Yeah, well, Gemma steps in and deals with her, Wendy wants to get to know Abel. She’s clean, has a job. She’s his birth mother, her timing sucks. We’ll talk about Wendy with Tara tomorrow.”

“There’s nothing to talk about. Wendy nearly killed Abel with her habit.” Jax spit out.

“And you forgave her when all that went down. Even told Gemma that it was partly your fault for bailing on Wendy. You got her into rehab. Where did that Jax go? Tomorrow, we’ll talk about Wendy.” She glared at Jax who was pouting at her.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My heart = mo chridhe
“Anyway, you’re busy telling Romeo that there were three men not two and that you want to be there to go after the third who tried to take Tara. Clay convinces Romeo that if the Sons helps the Galindo’s deal with the Lobos once and for all, it may prove to the Irish that everyone is one big happy family. Back at church, everyone is getting caught up on what’s been going on. You tell everyone that your revenge for Tara isn’t one with the club, its personal and you don’t expect the club to help. Tig will tell you its club business since Lobos shot up the clubhouse, killed Armando, its club business, too.”

“You all meet up with the Galindo’s as you storm the Lobos camp. Kozik and another guy I don’t know. Mexican. They get blown up from a field of landmines, right where Clay and Juice are trapped.”


“Yes. It’s quick and fast.” She shakes her head sadly.

“Is that why you told Tig to forgive Kozik the other night?” Chibs put together. Jax sighing at the memory of what she told Tig.

She doodled in the corner of her notebook, Chibs and Jax looking at her for an answer. Giving them a shrug. “Yeah. Tig and Kozik, they were best friends until Missy died. Tig being all stubborn over it. It wasn’t Kozik’s fault the dog died. She was old, for crying out loud. Tig will miss Kozik. Miss having the chance to forgive him before he’s killed.”

“Shit. We need to kill this deal with the Cartel.” Chibs growled towards Jax.

Jax ran a hand over his eyes.

“Can’t.” She said before Jax could answer Chibs.

“Why?” Chibs asked her.

“Getting there. Anyway, once you realized the landmines are littering the ground, you call in to have the big guns delivered. The guns the Irish specifically told you not to use. But you use them to
route the last of the Lobos from their camp.”

“Gemma shows up that night on the TM lot. Tells you that Tara needed emergency surgery. You go back to the hospital. Tara’s back in her room with a new cast when you see her. She’s sleeping and you climb in with her, exhausted. Busy day playing War, after all.” She says dryly. Jax rolling his eyes at her.

“Tig sees Gemma all beat up and he turns in his SA patch to Clay. He can’t be Clay’s right hand anymore if Clay’s not trusting him or telling him what’s going on. Seeing Gemma all beat up, it’s the last straw for Tig and his role as Clay’s right hand.”

“Next day, Galen and the Kings are pissed that you used their weapons. Clay tells Galen that without using them, he would be dead. You pipe up that it was a one time thing that happened. All the guns will be south of the border, that there won’t be any blowback onto the Cause. The Irish are somewhat appeased by that notion, so the meeting is set for the next day for everyone to meet with Romeo, finally.”

“You run into Gemma as you leave Tara’s room the next morning, and ask her about Opie, if she’s seen him. That he was going to go check on Piney, Gemma tells you that he stopped by the house that morning, but he didn’t stay or say anything. You asking her about Opie, makes her realize that Opie found Piney. She runs up to the cabin. Wayne is there, Piney’s body isn’t in the cabin anymore.”

“Fuck...Opie had to have had Wayne call Skeeter.” Jax concludes.

“I don’t know about that, it’s a gap. I haven’t read Wayne or Opie. You do end up at Skeeters to say goodbye to Piney later on. So probably. Gemma questions Wayne. He tells her that he told Opie that it was Clay that killed Piney. She’s so fucking pissed at Wayne. She doesn’t want Opie killing Clay. It wasn’t her plan. She’s spent twenty years building her plan, and she’s not about to have it blown to bits by Opie gunning after Clay. Wayne’s confused as why it matters, he just wants Clay taken down already.”

“Jesus. She’s saying all this?” Jax asks.

“Yes, and thinking it. She’s obsessed that it has to be you that takes out Clay. Gemma is racing to keep ahead of things. Things that are fast spinning out of her control. You find out about Wendy’s visit to Tara and Gemma putting her nose in your business. You’re pissed at Gemma for trying to micromanage your and Tara’s lives.”

“God, I know I said this already, but I can’t believe how this is all playing out. The back and forth. Jesus.”

“Well, you’re holding out for this big meeting so that you can finally get yourself and Tara and your kids out of it all. Trying to hold onto your Jax Teller’s Great Escape.” She rolls her eyes at Jax. Jax scowls at her over her description of his get out of Charming plan.

Chibs huffs at her amusedly, despite the seriousness of the drama unfolding.

“Gemma finds out that Clay is in Tara’s hospital room alone and goes running up there. Afraid that Clay might hurt Tara, kill her even. But Clay’s walking out of the room as she approaches. Tells her that Tara’s fine. Gemma kisses Clay and tells him that Opie’s looking for him, that he knows that he killed Piney.”

“Shit. You have the Godfather on that list?” Jax asked.
“Aye. Of course.”

She glares at the two of them for interrupting. “Next, Clay sees Tig in the clubhouse with three croweaters giving him a massage. Tells Tig that he’s got a vibe that something’s not right with the mexicans.”

“Tig’s annoyed that Clay is being all coy with his ‘vibe’. Simply tells Clay that Rat is in the garage and that you’d turn up eventually. Tig takes off, with the croweaters. Ick.” She shudders at the memory of that night Tig spends with the three women. Jax smirks at her reaction to Tig and his sexathon session.

“That’s the night, isn’t it? The night Opie shoots Clay.” Chibs says, getting her back on track.

“Yes, Jax meets Opie at the crematorium. You’re shocked that Piney’s gone. You pepper Opie with questions of what happened, thinking it was a cartel hit. Opie just tells you to shut up and let him remember his dad. And that Piney would want you there. Wayne has shown up by this point.”

“When the two of you step out, Opie pulls a gun on you. Screaming at you if you knew that Clay killed Piney. Opie suspicious of how you and Clay have been working together so well lately, that you would have had to have known. You obviously don’t and Opie is convinced of it, when you tell him no. You try and talk Opie down...he’s upset, not thinking. You want to get proof of what Opie is telling you, bring Clay to the table.”

“Opie’s...God, he’s so upset. Says what table, there is no table. You’ve told him your plans of leaving by now. And he’s just so out of control. He shoots out the tire on your bike so you can’t follow him. You try and go after Opie in Wayne’s truck but it stalls. You end up taking the freaking hertz. Halfway there, you crash and another biker pulls up alongside you. You take his bike to race to the clubhouse. It’s a near thing. You’re begging Opie not to shoot Clay. Needing to fucking follow the club rules. For once. Follow the rules.”

“Opie shoots Clay, you can’t believe he actually did it. You shoot Opie in the arm to keep Opie from delivering the kill shot. Wayne shows up, Rat is running in from hearing the gunshots and Clays bleeding and gasping for air. Things are moving fast. He needs an ambulance and with the bullets...it’ll be reported to the police. You need a cover story. Clay mentions the blacks, you jump on it. You and Rat haul Clay out to the garage, telling Rat and Wayne that blacks shot up the garage, that they don’t know why. You take Opie to Crain’s to get patched up and promise him that you’ll find the truth of what happened with Piney. Opie’s all despondent and tells you to talk to Gemma. That she knows what happened.”

“Clay’s rushed into surgery, Gemma shows up and the doctors are telling her to come with them and they’ll tell her what’s going on with Clay. She just tells them to just keep him alive and she fucking leaves. It’s not the first time she’s said and done that.” She said darkly.

Chibs and Jax share a silent look.

“Roosevelt and a couple of his guys are there, questioning Wayne of what happened. Tig is pacing like a coiled spring, questioning Wayne himself. Trying to get details out of him, as soon as Roosevelt leaves. Wayne tries to dial Tig down, that it happened fast. Tig is convinced of the cover story, though. Happy and you,” she nods to Chibs, “...are telling him to wait until they know more. But Tig remembers Clay asking for help just a mere few hours ago. That stupid vibe, and he left him. Left Clay unprotected. He’d been Clay’s protection for so long, the one time he let his guard down, Clay gets shot. Tig takes off.”

“With Clay in surgery and down for the count, you step in to keep things moving with the cartel
and the Irish. Calling Romeo to make sure they are still up for the meeting. You’re scrambling to prepare for it, and to keep your promise to Opie for truth. Telling Tara to pack, you’re still convinced that you can finish this deal and be able to step away. Tara’s not really believing you are able to do it. But she trusts you enough that she knows you mean what you say. You have hope that it’ll all work out like you had planned. As you leave to go back to the clubhouse, you tell Phil, who is on protection duty with Tara, that if he sees Gemma that she needs to come find you.”

“Gemma shows up at your house to grill Tara for the letters.”

“Jesus Christ.” Jax moans.

“She tells Tara that Clay was shot. By Opie. Because Piney was threatening Clay with the letters. Showing Tara her beat up face, telling her that Clay was the one that set up that hit on her. Tells Tara that Clay will keep up the violence until he’s gotten the letters. She pleads with Tara to give her the letters. That she’ll give them to Clay and everything can get back to normal. That the violence will stop. Tara gives her the keys to the storage unit. Tells Gemma that after this, that Gemma knows that she, you and the boys are leaving. Gemma agrees.”

She pauses and gives Jax a solid look. “The sight of those keys in Tara’s hand, Gemma would promise the fucking moon to get those letters.”

“Does she give them to Clay?” Chibs asks.

“No. She’s found the original letters in the storage unit, hidden in some old TM accounting receipts. She finally reads them. She pulls three of the letters out of the bunch, puts them in her bag and heads to the clubhouse. Soon as she walks into chapel, you’re questioning her what Opie’s been telling you, that Clay killed Piney. She confirms it. Asking her why...You automatically think its personal beef between Clay and Piney regarding the cartel deal. Tells you that that isn’t the case. It was over the letters that JT wrote to Maureen. She gives you her selected letters for you to read. Telling you that Tara had them. You’re shocked that Tara had them. Kept them from you. Gemma tells you not to blame Tara, she was scared what you would do.”

“Gemma spews out her tale of woe about JT and Maureen, how JT wrote to her that he predicted that Clay was going to kill him. The Mayan ambush and that when he survived that, he told Maureen that his bike most likely would be tampered with. Goes on telling you that all the violence going on was Clay fighting to get the letters. Killed Piney over them. Put the hit out on Tara. Beat her up. Killed your father. All that violence to keep the truth from coming out. The truth in those letters. Tells you to read them. Then go to Clay’s hospital room and kill him before he can get up from his bed and strike first. Tells you to take the gavel. The seat that had been stolen from the Tellers all these years. To take the seat that you were always meant to be. Where a Teller belongs. She lays it on thick.”

She shakes her head, catching her breath as she thought out the shared future between Gemma and Jax. The past of what really happened to JT. Gemma’s role in how everything happened. Lying to everyone about her participation in his death. Her participation in fighting Clay to get the letters first. Her participation in marrying Clay when it was Clay that killed JT. The gall of it all. “Her logic is utterly ridiculous.”

“Why?” Jax asks with a cock of his head.

“Gemma was married to Clay for what over ten...fifteen years. Yet she claims that Clay stole the seat from the Tellers. That Clay killed JT, yet managed to stay married to his killer. To let her husband’s killer bed her? Become your step-father, help raise you? Yet when she comes to you, spinning her story to you, giving you the letters, she’s spun it to make it like she never knew until
now. That she was in the dark the entire time. Bullshit. Utter complete bullshit. She’s been spinning this her whole life. She can’t even tell the story straight anymore. Every time she tells it, it’s different depending on who she’s talking to. What she wants them to do for her. Claiming she loves everyone…it’s not love what she’s feeling. Her definition of love is so completely wrong. She doesn’t love...she doesn’t know how to. Yet she’s constantly telling people she loves them."

She gives Jax a hard look. "There is a reason she married Clay. And it wasn’t because she loved him. Even though she tells herself that she does love him.”

“Christ.” Chibs says next to her.

“That’s not true…” Jax is shaking his head at her. “My mother...she fucking loves me. She loves Clay.”

Jax looking at her that she doesn’t know what she’s talking about. Denying what she’s saying. But the edge of panic in his eye, she knew she was knocking a leg out from under him, his belief system of his mother and their relationship.

She was forcing him to look in the mirror of the harsh truth and he was stubbornly refusing to look. But the worst is yet to come she knew. Because even without her there, Jax would have figured all this out in the worst time and way possible. So many lives hanging in the balance or lost already because of the games Gemma did to her own son. And Jax refusing to see her for what she truly is.

She thought maybe to stop talking, to stop here. Let him live this, live his life and learn the truth as it wills out. But with so much at stake, she couldn’t do it. If telling Jax the whole truth could save one life, it would be worth it. She doesn’t respond to Jax’s assertion to Gemma’s love for him. It was a topic to be approached later.

“You have Gemma leave the room as you go over the letters she’s given you. She’s waiting at the boxing ring when Wayne shows up, he’s asking her what’s going on. Tells him that you’re reading the letters, Wayne’s scared. Gemma assures him that his involvement and hers are protected. That she pulled the letters implicating her and Wayne in their part of JT’s death. Clay, not so much. Tara shows up, surprised that she’s able to drive since she was just released from the hospital. Her arm set in a cast and sling. But she shows up.

“Asks Gemma how many of the letters she took out before giving them to you. Tara knows that Gemma is culpable and that Gemma would never allow you to know that about her. To risk you leaving and having the kids leaving Charming. Gemma’s shocked at Tara for figuring it out. Asking her why Tara gave her the letters in the first place. Tara simply looks at her and tells her that she’s smarter than Gemma.”

“Gemma’s not sure what Tara means by that but before she can question Tara further you come out of the clubhouse. Telling Tara that she should have given you the letters before. Tara apologizes, that she was afraid what you would do. You tell her that you have to kill Clay. Tara says she knows and gives you a drug to inject into Clay’s IV. Its a blood thinner, inject it and pull out the tube coming out of Clay’s chest. It’d look like Clay pulled out the tubes on his own and he’d basically drown in his own blood. She tells you to kill him and then come get her and the boys and take them out of Charming.”

Chibs and Jax share another look.

“You don’t know what to think. You’re in too much shock, all the crap that’s going on in such a short amount of time. Clay, Gemma, Tara, your plan, the meeting, now the letters indicating that your father was murdered by Clay, you’re overwhelmed. Rightfully so. You leave to meet with
Romeo. But I have to switch to what’s happening with Tig."

“God, do we have to?” Jax whined.

“Yes, because while you think Tig’s gone off to work out his issues with a pack of croweaters he’s actually stolen a car and is stalking Laroy.” She gives Jax a wry grin.

“What? Oh fucking hell!” Jax and Chibs say in unison.

“He’s convinced of the cover story that black shot Clay. Given the tensions that the Niners are having with the Sons, it’s not hard to make that logical leap. Laroy is on a lunch date with his girlfriend at an outdoor cafe, some of his crew around with them. Tig drives the car up onto the sidewalk, he misses in actually hitting Laroy who jumps out of the way. The Niners chase after Tig. He calls for an escort. Shots are exchanged and one of Laroy’s crew is killed.”

“At TM, you and Chibs are yelling at Tig for him going off on his own without any real facts. Tig’s utterly convinced it was Laroy. He takes off to go stand watch over Clay.”

“Problem is, that in Tig’s hit and run, Laroy’s girlfriend is killed. Her name is Veronica Pope.” Sending Jax a knowing look waiting to see if he makes the connection. Jax raises his hands in query, looking to Chibs if he knows who she’s talking about. Chibs pressing his lips together in thought.

“Damon Pope’s only child.” She fills in after a moment of confused eyes sent her way.

“Damon Pope? The Damon Pope...his daughter...oh fuck.” Jax breaths, eyes wide as the connection comes home. Chibs swearing next to her. His hand gripping hers tightly.

“Women don’t last long around Tig.” She observes absently. “You try and patch things up with Laroy and the Niners. Try and meet with Pope, have Romeo make a call to set up a meeting with Pope and you. But I’m skipping ahead.”

“How would Romeo help with that?” Chibs asked.

She sighs deeply, rubbing at her nose. Taking a moment to switch gears.

“This cartel deal was a mistake on sooo many levels. Clay doesn’t know who he was getting into bed with. He didn’t think this through, at all. Just saw the money this deal would bring him. Not the club...him. I think we can agree, that Clay doesn’t have any love for the club anymore. Just uses it and his position to line his pockets. And he doesn’t care who gets hurt in the process.”

“Fucking asshole.” Chibs gripes darkly.

“Romeo wants bigger guns, RPG’s, sniper rifles with scopes, anti-tank grade weapons. Because the Irish threw open their inventory to the Sons for taking out Jimmy, Clay is taking advantage of that. Moving the Irish to sell the war-grade weapons. It’s a huge step for the club to advance into this type of weaponry.”

“But the Irish are nervous about selling to the Galindo. Russians was one thing, they understand the need for revenge for what they did to you in Stockton, that you needed to find another buyer. But the amount of guns, the bigger the guns, makes them nervous. Which I don’t get. They were willing to sell, why do they care who they sell to. It’s all money in the end.” She shrugs.

“Gods, fucking Irish McPricks. They don’t like anyone they can’t see through.” Chibs muttered.
“Clay calms down Galen, the two of them talking all the time and working this deal. Galen and Clay, they’re BFF’s.” Shaking her head. “Galen has a bug up his butt over you.” Pointing to Jax. “He’ll only sell guns, especially the big guns, to Clay.”

“Why?” Jax asked.

“Has to do with what happened when you were in Belfast. Galen blames you for Kellen’s death.”

“But I had nothing to do with that. I had no idea what was going down until it was happening.” Jax explained, throwing his hands in the air. “I tried to get Kellen to back out of it when I realized what Jimmy and Kellen were doing…”

“I know, but Galen doesn’t know that or really care. He misses Kellen and points his anger to you. Clay could and should be smoothing things over between you two but he doesn’t. The wound of having Abel stolen and potentially sold out from under you…that is a touchy subject for you.” She raises her brows at Jax, "You think Belfast is the only place where the Army sells babies? Galen uses that to pick at you, getting you to react. Show that you can’t handle the very real and serious business of the guns.”

“Oh Christ.” Chibs groans.

“Yeah, the Catholic Church finds suitable families for the kids, sure. But it's the Army that profits from it, making it a business. It’s disgusting. Using the Church as a front.”

Chibs seethed next to her. His body tense. A subject that the Rí Cláiomh wouldn't take lightly. Not at all.

Her and Jax looked to Chibs, watching him digest this tidbit of information. His eyes flashing dangerously. "This shite wasn't going on while I was in Belfast." He declared.

"The adoptions though?" Jax dared to ask.

"Adoptions were a way of life in Ireland. For Catholics, it's a mortal sin to have an abortion. The Army had to have started the selling after I left. Fucking Kings. I can't believe Kellen would approve the money from it, though."

"Been a long time since you'd been to Belfast from when you first came here." Jax offered Chibs the out.

Chibs glared at Jax. "It doesn't make it fucking right!"

She let go of her pen, raising her hand to the back of Chibs neck. Feeling how tense his muscles were, she automatically, massaged that tenseness from his neck. He shivered and groaned at her massage. His dark eyes softening as he looked at her. Raising his hand with hers in it, he kissed the back of her hand as she kept up the massage. She ignored Jax's interested look as she took care of Chibs. And how he reciprocated her gesture. Once he wasn't as tense, she continued.

“The meeting with Galen, the Kings, and Romeo to get the orders and schedules and pricing all set up is starting. Galen sees that Clay’s not there and asks about him. You explain that he’s in the hospital and can’t make it. Galen won’t deal. He won’t sell without Clay there. He doesn’t trust you, and doesn’t trust Romeo. Without Clay, there is no deal. He leaves and you try and go after him to tell him that you can make this work.”

“You’re bending over backwards to get this deal finished already. Finished so that you can pack up Tara and your kids and get out of town. But Galen is being an asshole and your plans are being
destroyed right in front of you.”

“You go back to Romeo and tell him that this deal was way bigger than what the Son’s usually deal with. That Clay promised them to make this work. With him shot you’re doing your best to make it all work... Just basically walking back from the whole thing hoping that Romeo will just give up and find someone else at this point. Romeo tells you that he and you need to talk alone.”

She breathes, looking at Jax. Heartened to see he was still listening to her.

“This is when you find out who they really are.”

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
King's Sword = Rí Claíomh
Chapter 49

Chapter Summary

the reading continues...

Chapter Notes

Getting through this reading...We're getting through it. Trust me, I'm building up to a point in all of this.

f.y.i, I think I came up with a solution for getting help to Otto. Hit me yesterday, spent the day writing it out.

Jax and Chibs stared at her in anticipation.

“The Galindo cartel is being helped by the US government. The NCS division of the CIA is helping the Galindo’s in their fight south of the border. Romeo and Luis whip out badges even.” She pauses looking at the two of them, each of them frozen as they couldn’t quite put together what she just told them. And a second later, it hit them.

“Oh my God. Are you kidding? Tell me you’re fucking kidding.” Jax rocks back in his chair, his hands flying to his head.

“Shite, the drugs, the guns, all that fucking cash. Fuck, I should have known. God damn it!” Chibs gets up to pace angrily. “I knew this was a bad deal when Tig told me. Fucking God damn Clay! And you!” Chibs pointed at Jax. "Helping Clay get this muling passed. Fucking idiot!"

She winced as she watched Chibs vent. Feeling guilty for making him come back here with her. When most of the trip, he was wanting to run the other way when Tig told him about the muling.

“Jesus fucking Christ, I didn't know!” Jax retorted to Chibs accusation. "Fuck! Romeo’s ‘deep contacts’. The drugs...the heavy weapons. All of it crossing not just state lines…” Jax groans, still reeling.

“Aye, across the fucking border. It’s fucking hard time if we’re ever caught; and we’re being played from all sides. Fuck!” Chibs concluded with a wave of his arm at Jax.

“It’s quite the neat, little package for the US government, isn’t it?” She pondered calmly.

Her calm question had Chibs and Jax looking at her again, a direct contrast to the two of them freaking out. “The Sons have connections with the Irish inventory that no other club has. The sales of the drugs you’re muling for the cartel helps pay for the guns and whatever else supplies and men that they need for their war. Just so that the politicians can negotiate trade agreements when the Galindo’s gain power.” She looks at Jax and Chibs. “And, sadly, that’s not all.”

“Not all? How could this get any worse?” Jax astoundingly asked. Chibs shifting on his feet.
“Romeo will find out that there is a Rico case being built against the Sons.” Chibs and Jax freeze at her mentioning the Rico. “Bobby has gone missing after he’s gone to see Otto. Find out that he checked in but he never checked out. You reach out to Romeo to see if he knows where he is, using his ‘deep contacts’. The CIA will put the Rico case on ice, so long as the club is setting up and running this deal. If the deal falls apart, Rico will come crashing down over the club and everyone goes to jail. Romeo tells you to get Clay back up on his feet and get the Irish back to make this deal.”

“There’s a Rico case?” Jax asked, after he took a slow blink.

“Yep. Whoever it is running it, he’s good. You, Gemma, Tig, none of you know, not until Romeo tells you. Might have been picked up after Stahl was killed. Whoever took over her office.” She shrugged. “Maybe word got out that the Irish threw open their inventory to you. Not sure. But I get a sense that Romeo wasn’t expecting to find it there. When he went looking into Bobby for you he found out about it. With Galen throwing a hissy fit and threatening the deal, he’s using it. Romeo needs those guns. He has an actual war to fight. And the Rico...its just an useful tool to use to get the Sons and Irish in line.”

“Oh my God. Clay doesn’t know any of this?” Chibs asks her pointedly.

Jax hunched over, gripping his head in his hands.

“Not as I’ve seen. Not in his behavior to this point. He’ll figure out something is up later. We need to keep Clay on a tight leash, if he thinks the deal is going to fall apart...he’s going to screw things up by going off on his own.”

Jax gave a harsh laugh at that.

“With Romeo telling you who he is and the Rico, he makes you promise not to tell anyone about his CIA connection. Your plan of getting out of Charming are over. Clay has to live in order to keep the club alive and out of prison. And you, Romeo tells you, you will take over the club. All for getting this deal done and running.”

“Gemma and Tara are both confused as to why you let him live. You’ll tell Tara, about the cartel, the CIA, the Rico. You can’t not tell her. You tell her to pack and take the boys with her to Oregon. It kills you to make that offer. To let her go while you stay here and deal with this mess. A mess Clay put you in.”

“Fuck me.” Jax groans.

“You’ll go to Clay’s hospital room and really fight with yourself of what to do about Clay. Clay wakes up and you pull your knife on him. Not letting him talk, telling him that he’ll step down as president, he’ll still have a vote and a seat at the table. Keep Galen happy and never hit Gemma ever again. Clay brings up the letters, and you simply tell him it doesn’t matter. You are laying down the law with Clay. His role is to keep the Irish happy and selling their guns that’s it. You strip the president patch off his kutte.”

“You sacrifice your personal happiness for the club. Your father’s club. It’s a cost that rips you to shreds, but you do it. You can’t leave, with Clay out of commission, Opie off licking his wounds, Piney dead, Bobby wanting to break the club off from the cartel, he’s not an option because of the hold Romeo has over you. There’s no one else that you can leave the club with. Not Bobby, not Tig who has spun so out of control he’s started a war with the Niners, not Chibs with me tied to him. Happy, he’s not ready for leadership. There’s literally no one else to bear this burden.”
Jax stares at her a bit, and looks to Chibs as the two of them have a heavy eye conversation that her assessment was right given the circumstances she was describing.

Chibs collapses back down next to her, taking her hand to cool off their headaches again.

“Opie is waiting for you when you go to clean up and tell Tara what’s happened. You want Opie as your VP, hope he comes to church and help you run the club. Opie is just pissed that you aren’t telling him the truth of what’s going on with Clay. Why he’s not being brought to the table over Piney. Romeo made you promise, you have the club to consider, not just Opie’s need for revenge. The weight of that knowledge is crushing you. It’s why you have to tell Tara. Try and get her out, hopefully, later you can join her. Clay lives, he has to live, even now.”

“Bobby was seeing Otto? Otto flipped?” Jax asked.

“Oy, Christ. Otto reaching out to the club through that visit with Gemma. He’s being squeezed by the Fed’s, the guy who’s heading up the Rico.” Chibs put together.

“Fuck. Otto would flip. If it was over Luann, he’d flip. God damn it.” Jax agreed.

“There’d have to be a present history to make Rico. We have a rat at the table.” Chibs said menacingly to Jax.

Jax hissing at the thought, the two of them thinking through the guys at the table, who the rat could be. Jax shaking his head. “Not necessarily. A meeting between us, Galindo, and the Irish...that alone is enough for present crimes.”

“Even with the Rico, I don’t think it’ll matter.” She gained their attention again, “The cartel is keeping it on ice right now, but even later, I don’t think it’ll matter. Something is coming, its bigger than Rico, the Irish or the cartel.... I’m not sure... Jax, the tattoos, my powers are growing, I have no idea what is going to pop up next with me over that. But something big is coming. It’s almost as if Chibs and I are being...prepared in some way. And, I think. we need to know Romeo. Like need his help in some way.”

“Need his help? How?” Jax pressed.

“I don’t know. It’s just a feeling I have. But we’re getting off point. Clay recovers and the deal is finalized between the Irish and the Galindo. But one of the deliveries of coke will be attacked by the Niners.” Jax raises his brows at her in question. “Tig’s screw up with going after Laroy.” She waved her hand at Jax. “The coke is salvaged, but the truck is burned up. It’s how you go to Romeo to set up a meet with Pope to try and make peace.”

“Wait, does Opie come in as VP?”

“No, he’s taking time. He feels betrayed by you, the club. Opie’s family has been decimated by Clay.”

“And that’s why he can’t be President. He can’t focus on the job when he’s been hurt like that. He’ll go off on walkabout to lick his wounds. The club can’t let a President just take off like that.” Chibs said.

She didn’t give Jax a chance to argue with Chibs. “When Clay comes back to the table, he’ll admit to killing Piney.”

“He does?” Jax asks in confusion. “Why?”
“He does, he’s getting ahead of the problem of Opie knowing the truth. Of you knowing the truth. He’ll lie about what went down with Piney, saying it was a kill or be killed situation. Especially when Piney is drunk out of his head when confronted. Clay tests you at the table. Forcing you to push votes. Why you let him live is bothering him. He knows he deserves a Mayhem vote. He deserves the sentence that the table would deliver if the letters hit the table. Or if Opie shows up and tells everyone what really happened with Piney, Wayne eagerly verifying Opie’s accounting...”

“Shit...I’d have to tell everyone why we can’t kill him. The CIA, the Rico. Fuck...I’m screwed.” Jax put together.

“The club is screwed.” Chibs reminded Jax that this didn’t all fall on his shoulders alone. It was a club problem.

“Before you two go over the deep end, let me finish.” She interrupted Jax and Chibs from devolving into another tangent.

“You make Bobby you’re VP, Chibs your Sgt at Arms. Tig’s fine with it. He knows his heads not in the right space to stay on as Sgt at Arms. Tig, in fact, is horrified to hear Clay admit that he killed Piney and it wasn’t black. He knows he screwed up, again. Tara decides to stick with you. Waiting for you to get things fixed with the club so you can leave with her.” She pauses, thinking over Tara's decision to stick with Jax. If she had left when she had the chance, she probably would be alive. Everything would have been different for her, possibly.

“You need to extend the olive branch to the Niners and Pope to settle that down so everyone can get back to business. Pope though doesn’t show, sends his second, man called August Marks. Laroy’s not running the Niners anymore, there’s a new kid. You go to shake his hand and tell him you want to work out a deal. The kid pulls a gun and fires at you but the gun is empty, luckily. The kid himself is confused, looking to Marks, questioning what happened. You attack the kid for firing a gun at you point blank. You’re yelling at Marks for what the hell is going on. Marks kills the kid and picks a new Niner to take over, right in front of you. Marks simply tells you that Pope will see you soon. That whole meeting, it’s a show. You don’t call the shots with Pope. Pope decides who lives and dies. He’ll meet you when he’s good and ready and not one second before.”

“Shit. I’d heard some of the shit he’s done, everyone steers clear of him.” Jax said.

“Warrants are put out for you, Chibs, and Tig’s arrest. Witnesses have come forward picking you three out who killed the Niner in the escort and Pope’s daughter for the hit and run. You are calling Romeo all freaking day to set up protection in county and he’s not picking up.”

“A cop calls Tig, telling him Dawn was picked up, that he’d let her go if he came to pick her up. It’s a trap and he walks right into it. The cop is on Pope’s payroll, Tig’s handcuffed and chained up like a dog. Its at a railyard, there’s a metal lid covering a pit in the ground. Shit, its the same place where you meet with Marks and the Niners. God.” She pauses and digs out a joint from Chibs shirt pocket. Chibs seeing what she’s doing, pulls out his lighter from his jean pocket and lights the joint for her. Taking a drag and breathing it out, letting her brace herself to tell them about the next part.

“Pope shows up and Tig thinks this is it, he’s dead. That he’s going to kill him. Pope tells Tig that they would be too easy. They open up the pit, Laroy and a bunch of other chopped up bodies are in there, along with Dawn.” She ignores Jax’s widening eyes.

“She’s tied up and wakes up when they start pouring diesel into the pit. Tig is saying no over and over again. He’s begging and screaming to let her go. To kill him instead. It was his fault, he deserves the punishment. Tig is begging, literally begging with everything in him. Pope simply looks at him and says, ‘know my pain.’. Tosses his lit cigar into the pit. I can still hear the screams
of Dawn yelling for her daddy. Daddy...help me Daddy. Tig’s screaming and throwing himself toward the flames. The chain and the heat of the fire holding him back. Pope tells Tig it’d be a shame if something happens to his other daughter as he leaves.”

“Fucking hell.” Jax says.

“You felt that fire, reading Tig, didn’t you? It’s why your hands were burned, wasn’t it.” Chibs asked, scared for her. She looks to him a solemnly, passing the joint to him. Chibs sighs and takes the joint. Breathing in the weed.

“Anyway, Wayne gives you a heads up about the warrants and you take refuge at a brothel. The fight between Gemma and Tara are escalating. Tara doesn’t want you to run. Gemma telling you to buy yourself time so you can set up protection. It’s Gemma that leads you to where you can hide. You side with Gemma. She...she loves it whenever you pick her side. That you are still hers.”

“I’m not hers…” Jax argues.

“To Gemma...you are. Tara and Gemma are in a push pull fight over you and your attention. It’s been going on for a very long time. The more attention you give to Gemma...Gemma feels vindicated and like a winner in some contest. It’s childish and stupid.” She gives Jax a hard look, but forces herself to move on. To not get bogged down with the verbal beating that Jax deserves for being such a blind idiot in regards to his mother.

“Gemma has met her latest beau, Nero; it’s his brothel you take refuge in. She’s going to go on a drinking and drugging binge with Clay kicked out of the house, but still alive with your pardon, which she doesn’t understand. She’ll get drunk at bars and pick up men. Sleep with them. Tell them her name is Rose.”

“Rose? That’s her mother’s name.” Jax said in confusion.

“Yeah, that’s an issue you don’t need to worry yourself over. It’s Gemma’s issue that she had to deal with herself.”

She shakes her head at Jax to drop the subject. “Anyway, Nero, he’s actually a nice guy. Calls himself a companionator, brings the love together. I love that word. Companionator. Wonder if he puts that on his business cards.” She says to herself with a grin. Jax and Chibs looking at her in amusement.

“You’ll get into business with him even. He has a level head and knows what he wants. You’ll go to him for advice eventually. He’s got a thing for Gemma and she him. But because its Gemma, she’s not thinking long term with this guy. She’ll try and bring him close. With his business aligning with the club. You’ll tell her to not get mixed up with Nero. Trying to keep personal and business separate. But…” She sighed. “They’re both adults. Nero is, at least. He falls hard for her. But Gemma’s still half in-half out with him. Teasing him and stringing him along like she does with every other man in her life. And with you trying to put the kibosh on their ‘love’...it just makes them more crazy for each other. Like sneaking around behind dad’s back.” She levels a wry look to Jax.

He heaved an annoyed sigh and rolls his eyes. “Seriously?”

“Yep. Nero and Gemma hooking up...man...Nero has no idea what he’s getting into. Life with the club, that’ll be rocky. Add in Gemma drama...But like I said, he has a level head. He’ll even try and get Gemma to move with him to Narco. Retire with him on a farm he wants to buy off his uncle.”
“What?” Jax snapped his head back at her. Chibs looked intently at her over that bit of information.

“It really isn’t important. But Nero tries to get Gemma to start thinking about leaving with him. But of course, Gemma can’t leave. Not with you and the boys here. It breaks Nero’s heart with her vacillating of being with him or not.”

“Anyway, Nero helps you while you’re securing protection in county and helping Tig track down Fawn and get her out of town. Tig’s a mess. He ends up killing the cop who lured him out there and a guy who comes out to clean up the pit. You three turn yourselves in later that night, still not sure if Romeo managed to get the protection or not but time’s run out. Opie shows up while you’re being taken into custody. He punches Roosevelt and he’s arrested along with you three.”

“How does Opie know all this if he’s been taking time from the table?” Chibs asked.

“Don’t know, its one of my gaps.”

“Luckily, Romeo gets the protection in place when you four step into county. Just in time, too. They call you up to the warden’s office, Pope is there waiting for you. The warden steps out. This is your meeting. You tell him he didn’t have to go to all the trouble, being smart to him. Pope isn’t having it. You ask him what he wants to make things right. He wants half your mule money.”

“That would be a club vote, though.” Jax interjects automatically.

“Pope really doesn’t care about the club or your votes. He’s telling you what he wants. He wants Tig in jail, forever. Whenever Pope thinks about his dead daughter he’ll know where Tig is and what’s being done to him. And to appease the Niners, he’ll demand a dead Son for the Niner killed in the escort. That the warden will tell you how it’ll work out. You argue with him but Pope is done. Telling you that if you want to get out of county, you’ll meet his demands. Pope leaves and the warden comes back in. Tells you that the guard you need to talk to is in the solitary unit. That it’s their game. And sends you back.”

“The four of you start a fight in the yard to get tossed into the solitary ward. You and Opie are bunked in one room, Tig and Chibs in another. The guard in charge comes to you, tells you that one of you four is going out in a bag. Because the guard spilled the beans to what Pope wants in front of Opie, you end up telling Opie everything. Romeo and the CIA, the Rico, how Piney was using the letters as leverage against Clay. It’s why Clay killed Piney. Now with Pope and Tig’s idiot mistake, you’re at your wit’s end. Everything is spinning so out of control you don’t know what to do to keep everyone alive.”

“Now you’re stuck in this tiny cell and the price you have to pay to get out is to pick a guy. Opie understands now, why you’ve been silent on the whole thing. He’s still pissed at you for not telling him the truth. But your hands were tied. And I agree with Chibs, Opie would not make a good president.”

Jax huffed, “You barely know him.”

“I know him through you.” She says sharply at Jax. "Your memories and feelings for him. Just because he’s your best friend for practically your entire life, doesn’t mean he’s ready to take on the weight of the presidency.”

Jax looked like he wanted to argue with her some more over this issue, but gave it up as she and Chibs both glared at Jax.

“You have to pick a guy to fight until he can’t fight anymore. In fact, the guards...they put bets on
the fights. This isn’t the first time they’ve done this. It can’t be Tig, Pope has already decreed his fate. Who do you choose. Opie? Your best friend. Chibs? A brother and trusted confidante. Yourself? A father to two young boys? Who do you choose?” She challenged.

"And if I don’t choose?"

"The guard will choose for you. There is no way out. One of you has to die."

Chibs stiffens beside her, his hand tight in hers. His eyes dark as he watches Jax, looking her way too. Jax gets up and paces, the stress of what she’s telling him evident in his eyes. She looks to Chibs, he senses her gaze, and gives her a grim smile. He knows out of the four choices, it would be him. The only one without wife or kids. Tig’s fate sealed by Pope, it only leaves him. Chibs gives her a kiss on her cheek. The knowledge of who was to die. But she shakes her head at him. Turning to look back at Jax. Jax pale, as he watches them on the sofa.

“Time runs out and all four of you are put into a room, you tell Chibs and Tig what’s going on. Tig offers to fight without question. It was his mistake, he knows he deserves it. You’re pissed at him, but he’s saved by Pope. Telling Tig that he’s going to be in jail for the rest of his life, at the mercy of Pope’s men.”

“You give a rather inspirational speech, how you don’t care what Pope wants, you decide your fate, nobody takes that from you. You start to go with the guard. Everyone is yelling and screaming when they realize what you’re doing, that you’ve chosen for yourself to take the fall. Something that Clay would never do in that same situation, I think. The mark of a true leader. But, Opie punches the guard and that’s it. The guard rolls Opie into the other room where you have ringside seats. The glass separating you from him. You’re yelling and banging on the glass as you watch Opie.”

She grabs the joint back from Chibs. Taking another hit. Jax pacing, glancing at her for stopping her monologue. Leaving him in suspense. She presses a hand to her forehead and pulls her eyes off of Jax. Bracing herself to tell the next part, trying to keep herself separate from the emotions of the pain and horror.

“The room is stained with old blood. The guard throws down a length of pipe, tells Opie to make it good. Jesus, four of the largest blacks, I’ve ever seen, come into the room. Opie manages to get a few good shots in, but its four to one. You watch as Opie gets his head smashed open by those animals. Tig can’t bear to watch the final blows.”

She takes another hit of the joint and silently watches Jax, giving him some time to digest what she’s just foretold. Jax silently runs his hands over his head and down his goatee as he paces.

“You force Pope to let Tig out with you, that you’ll need his vote at the table to get his mule money passed. After you’re done with Tig, you’ll hand him over to him. Pope praises you, how you hold your rage, channel it to focus on the work at hand. It’s what makes a man become a King.” Shaking her head at the sentiment.

“That is such utter bullshit. Telling you that.” She sighed and picked up where she left off.

“Lyla is devastated when Opie doesn’t make it. She’s a single mom with not just her kid to take care of but Opie’s as well. Lyla, she’s not as confident as Donna was. She won’t go to the club for help. Doesn’t want to be a burden. That attitude and thinking...gets her in trouble. And how Gemma treated Lyla when she started coming around with Opie...Lyla doesn’t feel she can go to Gemma for help, too afraid of her. She’ll be tricked into going to another porn studio, told it was supposed to be just a S & M scene. But ends up being torture porn. They rape her and burn her and
beat her up. She’s crying and scared out of her mind when she finally gets free, begging for Opie. Ima tells you that this studio had references.”

“Jesus Christ, fucking Ima…” Chibs breathes.

“But that’s way out, yet. If we don’t stop Tig from going after Laroy when Clay is shot, Opie will die and Pope will become a presence that you will have to deal with.”

“The club will get into business with Nero, expanding his business, help set him up in a new location, because Gemma will end up trashing the current location with her childish antics over Clay showing up at Nero’s place of business. Where Clay seems to have taken up with the comfort of one of Nero's girls. Young, blonde thing. Emma Jean.”

“This after we’re out of county?” Jax asks.

“Yeah. The guys are getting ready for Opie’s wake and this whole bullshit with Gemma fighting with one of Nero’s girls over Clay will blow up your day.”

“God damn it.” Chibs growls out.

“Even with Gemma kicking Clay out of the house, she can’t stand anyone moving on her man. You remind Nero to stay away from Gemma. That she’s a trainwreck waiting to happen. The two of them try, well, Nero tries. Gemma she’s still on her drinking and drugging and sleeping around phase. Drags you and the club in to fix her screw ups. Your mother...she's pissed and under that...ashamed of herself. She knows that she screwed up. Knows that she's in the doghouse with you. While you're dealing with the fallout, Gemma will get Tara to beat up Nero's assistant. Starts the fight and Tara will jump in to help Gemma. Fuck...Soon as the fight is between Nero's assistant and Tara, Gemma is so fucking proud of herself, watching Tara beat the shit out of Carla. Using her cast to...” She stops getting into the nitty, gritty details of the fight. "Gemma thinks that if you found out Tara getting in the fight...you'll be angry with Tara and you'll forget you were angry with her.”

Jax drops back in his chair. "Jesus Christ. I don't know what to say to all this."

"I told you that Gemma is more of a problem that you realize. And it's only going to get worse."
Chapter 50

Chapter Summary

more of the reading...

Chapter Notes

Sorry...sorry...I tried to post a much larger section up but I was getting bogged down and had to split this up. Give you something new to read while I'm fixing the last of Jax's reading.

Thank you for sticking with me on this. Any mistakes here are mine. I'm doing my best to summarize things and leave some things for later. Enjoy...

Happy Easter!

“The Nomad charter is disbanding due to low numbers, a few of its members are voted into Samcro. Clay is out of the hospital and back at the table. Charming is suffering from home invasions that is putting a poor light on the club. Clay and Tig knee-jerk blame Pope for all the new problems that are cropping up. Clay is testing you, your leadership at the table. Admits that it was he that killed Piney, telling everyone it was a kill or be killed situation. That everyone needs to vote, he killed a member. You tell everyone that they need to sit with it before deciding on what to do.”

“He doesn’t know about the Rico or the CIA?” Jax questions.

“No. But he’s trying to figure out why he’s still breathing. Why you are so gung-ho for this deal all of a sudden. Clay trying to think...is bad. And don’t be fooled by how broken he looks. His recovery is faster than he lets on.” She warns him with a glare. Taking another hit on the joint.

“But you have the brilliant idea of trying to dismantle the Rico deal. And you can’t tell anyone but Tara and Bobby about your plan of getting out of that. You stubbornly cling to your word to Romeo that you wouldn’t tell anyone who they are.”

“With Rico gone, the cartel wouldn’t have that threat over our heads.” Chibs pointed out. Jax perking up at that, the ideas whirling behind Jax’s eyes.

“Yes. True.” She drawls out warningly. Her tone enough to get Jax and Chibs attention back. “Tara offers her medical services at Stockton in order to see Otto. Try to convince him to recant his statement. She’ll have to go see him a few times to get through to him. He makes her bring in a crucifix he’d given to Luann. Tara calls Gemma to get it out of storage.”

She grimaces. “I need to back-up a little.” Conferring her notes.

“Tara can’t be bringing anything in to Otto.” Jax warned with a finger wag.
“I know. But she does. And you and the club are on a mission to take out the guard and the blacks that killed Opie. You’re...distracted with your need for vengeance. You’re also trying to figure out what is going on with the home invasions. Meeting with Pope a few times, he changes his deal with you. Offering to take another thirty kilos of coke from Galindo and push it into his own distribution. Doubling the cash you’d make on the current deal with Galindo and Mayans. You also lean on him to find out if the invasions are coming from black. You and Nero are setting up Diosa and need to lean on Hale to lease you the empty Elk’s Lodge for them to set up. I am soooo not missing that.” She grins excitedly.

Jax and Chibs sending her wary looks.

Waving off their unsaid questions. “In all of this, you and Tara try to get up to the cabin just the two of you for some down time. Gemma is a bit on the outs with Tara. Her drugging and drinking is getting out of control. And Tara doesn’t want Gemma around the boys while she’s not with it. You convince her to let Gemma watch the boys so you can have your little vacation. She agrees and calls Gemma. Gemma picks the boys up at TM. You’re finishing taking care of club business while Tara decides to head up to the cabin ahead of you. Get things set up. And while you are riding up to the cabin, you’re shot at from a van. You manage to kill one of the shooters. He’s black and you think its part of the home invasion problem. Your attempts at having a vacation are pretty dismal of late. And spending time in Stockton doesn’t count as a vacation.” She quickly adds with a wag of her finger at him.

Jax rolled his eyes at her.

“Anyway,” she sighs getting back to her reading. “Gemma’s been getting high with Wayne when she gets Tara's call to watch the boys. Convinces herself that she’s fine to drive. She’s driven high before. But she’s weaving all over the road. She’s in the wrong lane when a truck comes barreling down the road head on. She drives off the road into the trees that line the road. She’s knocked out. When she wakes when the paramedics are working on her and the boys. Thomas crying and screaming in the background. Gemma sees Abel bleeding on a stretcher.” Her voice hitches as she gets through that.

Her own memory of her mother’s fatal accident trying to push into her brain. Gemma was lucky to have been knocked out. She remembers hearing her mother’s screams and ultimately her groans of pain as she lay on the hood of the car before her own injuries knocked her out.

“Fuck!” Jax swears, his eyes wide as he stares at her. Chibs rubbing his thumb across her knuckles, his eyes searching hers as she had checked out for a second there.

Jax’s exclamation and Chibs soothing touch drew her attention off her history and back onto Jax. Into the here and now. she giving Chibs hand a squeeze in acknowledgement.

“He’s fine. Abel’s fine. But his heart rhythm is messed up. He’ll need a procedure done to calm it down. He’ll be fine. Everyone is fine. Clay tells you that Gemma was attacked like you were. And the shooter you killed, he’s black. You’ve already chopped off the guys hands, one to Wayne, the other to Pope. To find out who that guy is.”

“Why to both Wayne and Pope?” Chibs asks.

“To test Pope. If both Wayne and Pope come up with the same name then Pope’s not lying to us.” Jax said.

“And you’re getting pissed having a target on your back and not any answers to why it was put there. Sending the hands is a message not to fuck around with you anymore. Wayne reminds you a
fingerprint on a glass is sufficient. Pope is annoyed that you’re testing him, not trusting him to tell you the truth.”

“The fucker had Opie killed. There’d never be any trust with someone like that.” Chibs said.

She sighs, “I’m just telling you what will happen, if things don’t change. If we can keep Tig from going after Laroy...none of this would happen.” Reminding Chibs and Jax.

“Jesus Christ…” Jax muttered as he pulled out a cigarette for himself. Grabbing the ashtray closer. “Doesn’t mean that Gemma won’t get high and drive off the fucking road and nearly kill my kids.”

“No, it doesn’t.” She agreed with him.

“Gemma lets Clay lie for her. With that lie, you and the guys are out looking for the people who attacked the two of you. Gemma can’t come up with any details about the van, the make, color. Nothing. Pope and Wayne both confirm who the shooter was. Pope has more intel on him that Wayne does as far as affiliations. Based on that, you track down the driver. Soon as you left Gemma’s hospital room, Clay tells her that he couldn’t let you be angry with her when you’re already angry with him.”

“Fucking Clay.” Jax muttered around his cigarette.

“Nero visits Gemma and she tells him the truth of what happened. He tells her to tell you the truth. That no good can come from lying about something like that. Like I said, Nero, he’s got a good head on his shoulders. Meanwhile, you and the guys are running all over the place, based on Gemma’s and Clay’s lie and Pope’s intel. Nero tells you about what Gemma told him. That she was high. Trying to convince you to quit the club and the violence before it all spins out of control. You force Gemma to admit the truth and Tara punches Gemma. Telling her she’s done. Yells at Gemma to get out.”

“So with Tara volunteering at Stockton. Tara asking Gemma to do something for her, she’s on it like white on rice.”

“Christ.” Jax mutters.

“You come home, not realizing what Tara asked Gemma to do. Or what she’s doing to get Otto to recant. Tara’s kind of zoned out, showered and smoking a joint at the kitchen table waiting for you. Calmly, too calmly, tells you that Otto had it all planned. Asking her to bring in that cross, killing the nurse with it. Thus freeing the club of the past part of the Rico.”

“Fuck.” Jax stares back at her as the pieces clicked into place. “Otto pins Tara as an accessory.”

“My God. I’d never think Otto would go that far.” Chibs said.

“Anyway, Gemma threatens Tara that she’ll go to the cops and tell them that Tara made her get the crucifix. Remind her that she handed it to Tara in the parking lot of the prison where there are cameras. All of it to get her access back with the boys.”

“She what?” Jax asks, his brows rising in disbelief. “Gemma would never go to the cops.”

“If it was in her interest...she would. It’ll be a last resort, but the threat is enough to freak Tara out.” She takes another pull on the joint. “You’re doing everything you can to get Tara out of this. Promising her she won’t go to jail. And if that happened to me and you were telling me that kind of bullshit...I’d whack you upside the head.” She glares at Jax. Jax glaring back at her for telling him how to be with Tara.
“But, surely Lowen could reason with the prosecutor that Tara didn’t know what Otto would do with that cross.” Jax tries to think out what he’d do.

“Look, I know you want to think you can fix everything that is going on. There are things that you have no control over. The more you make promises that you can’t possibly keep...the less she’ll believe you. And before you know it, you two could be standing right next to each other, but be oceans apart.”

“What does that mean?” Jax asks annoyed with her.

“It means that you and Tara suck at communicating with each other. But we are not going to discuss this point until Tara is here. Part of the issues that we need to tackle is your relationship with Tara. And discussing it without her here, is pointless. So tomorrow.”

“Tara and I are fine.”

“Oh my God…” She rolled her eyes. “You are soooo not fine. You have no idea what fine is. So don’t give me that bullshit.”

“Jesus Christ. Seriously, Tara and I are fine.” Jax stubbornly defended.

“Really?” She asked him pointedly, her eyebrows popping up sarcastically. “How is it that Tara didn’t give you the letters when you got out of Stockton?” Making her point. Jax frowning at her.

“You are not fine.”

Jax thrust himself back in his chair. His hand flying up to his temple in frustration.

“In your defense...it’s easy to let your personal life slide with all the drama going on with the club. Taking on the Presidency is a lot of work. Keeping the guys on track is a lot of work. You’re focused on getting the Rico killed. Making decisions on the fly without bringing them to the table. Bobby in particular gets in your face over it. And with you reading the letters, you're hell bent on getting Clay stripped of his patch. All of them. Only way to do that is to kill the Rico and shift the guns and the muling off of the Sons. You’re trying to do it all on your own primarily.”

“But, no decision happens at the table without a vote. Even if I’m out of control, everyone at the table can disagree and vote things down if they want.” Jax argues.

“There’s no time to call for church. No time to debate the issues. And what will you do if the guys decide to vote against you. You have information that no one else has...they can’t make an informed decision and you can’t tell anyone of said information.”

"Fuck." Jax groaned, taking a pull on his cigarette.

She shrugged at him, squinching up her face. “And part of you likes the power. To call the shots where you’ve been forced to do Clay’s bidding all these years, to now have that power. You’ll threaten Bobby to tear him apart if he tries to slow you down. Or go around behind your back. It annoys you that Bobby is jerking you around and talking to you out of fear. Fear of what you are doing. Fear of what you are deciding on your own. Fear of what you’ll become...become like Clay. A man who uses the club to his own ends.”

“I’d never do that.” Jax said, his eyes wide in disbelief.

“Jax, yes you will. Under extreme circumstances...you will. That drive...will force Bobby to give up the VP patch. He’ll leave the charter for a while. Bobby...doesn’t know how to advise you. The odds that Tara will go to prison are very real. You are trying to find a balance between the club and
your personal life with Tara and the boys. If she’s gone...either in prison or dead….you will be completely unfettered. Free to rule as you want. Out of anger or grief. And the club, they will follow you. They know how strong you are. And how right you’ve been in the past. That you live for the club. Putting up Caracara, finding ways around the law. What you did with Zobelle, that was a stroke of genius on your part. And with the power of the club fully under your control, you become blind to what the consequences are with your decisions.”

Jax stared at her in thought. “I...Who becomes my VP after Bobby?” He quizzed.

“Chibs. And he quickly realizes what Bobby has had to deal with in advising you.”

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs groans, sending Jax a glare. Jax heaving a sigh back.

“Tara will come to you with papers, wanting you to sign that in case something happens to her, that Wendy will get custody of the boys. You’ll refuse to sign, telling her once again that nothing will happen to her. The fight between you and Tara escalate. Your hatred of Wendy, her hatred of Gemma. Tara will be arrested, Gemma arrives in time to see Tara being put into the back of the cop car. The cops hold her for a couple of weeks, processing her case or something. She refuses to see you. When she gets out, she’s harder, quieter, not talking to you of anything of importance. And with a new haircut. A new wrapping around her hand.”

“What does that mean? New haircut?” Jax asks.

“You love her long hair. I can only guess, but either she’s cut it herself to punish you. Or she was targeted by the other inmates. With her new bandaging around her hand...probably a mix of both. Gemma brings up the new haircut with Tara and she just laughs it off. Saying its what all the cholas are wearing. Offering to do up Gemma’s to match.”

“Jesus.”

“While Tara is inside...Gemma’s happy as a fucking clam. She pretty much moves into your house. Taking care of the boys as if she were their mother. The way she talks about Tara...calling her ‘wifey’ all sarcastic. Her hold over this family...she’s supplanted Tara.”

“But it’d be natural for Gemma to step up to help.” Chibs said, sliding a look to Jax.

“Sure, but when Tara comes home, Gemma won’t let go of her new position in the family. Even Gemma is a bit unnerved by how quiet Tara is. But she doesn’t put much into it...she’s got her power over Tara and has her position with Jax and the boys solidified. Gemma even taunts Tara by calling her Mom. Uses it as a weapon to remind Tara that she’s in charge not her.”

Jax breathed in on his cigarette as he watched her.

“Tara’s meeting with her lawyer a lot. And it isn’t long that Tara tells you that she’s pregnant again. You’re so excited, telling her its a girl this time. Thinking that things are finally falling into place.”

“Where’s the club in all this?” Chibs asks.

“Brainiac over here figures out a way to frame Clay for Pope’s murder.” Jax scowls at her for her mild insult. Chibs rubs a hand over his goatee, sending her an amused look for tweaking at Jax. She shrugs at them. "It giving Tig the chance to take his revenge on Pope over Dawn’s death. With Clay out of the club, dealing with Galen and the Irish heat up. Bobby tells them that Clay got sloppy with Pope. Galen’s not believing a word of it. But he wants to push more guns on you to distribute. You suggest that the San Bernardino chapter might want to take over what Redwood is
handling. Galen says he’ll take it to the Kings, that it shouldn’t be a problem since you’d be
doubling their business.”

“Doubling?” Jax asked.

“Yep, to Galen...you aren’t stepping away from guns. And your suggestion is a go, even though
you told him that it was just a possibility with San Bernardino.”

“Greedy bastards.” Chibs growled.

“Yes. They are. The club is spending a lot of time dealing with Galen and trying to get out of guns
completely. Galen doesn’t take kindly to that at all. You know that Galen and Clay have been
running guns under the table from both the Redwood table and the Kings. They’ve been doing it
for years.”

Jax looked at her in thought. Her reminder of Clay’s long-standing relationship with Galen firing
his memory banks. “Fucking...God damn it. I forgot about that. Clay would never tell me
everything he was doing. And I’ve always thought maybe it was just rumor. I never really had any
solid proof of it going on.”

“What?” Chibs demanded out of Jax.

“Just over the years as VP with Clay. I’d overhear some of what he was saying, ask him about it
and he’d brush me off. But it was him talking to Galen and setting up meetings.”

“This is going to need some research.” Chibs said gravely.

“You have someone you can call?”

“Aye. A delicate matter. Don’t want to warn anyone we are digging in on them just yet, I’m
guessing.”

“Things heat up with Tara. Gemma hears from Wendy that Tara is putting together her will, that
Tara’s decided to make Margaret Murphy the boys guardian. All of it behind everyone’s backs,
boxing everyone out. Gemma goes storming after Tara, demanding to know what she’s doing, in
front of nearly everyone at the hospital. Gemma attacks Margaret and goes storming after Tara
who has run off to her office. Running like the hounds of hell are after her.”

She takes another hit off the joint. Chibs rubbing her knuckles with his thumb.

“Gemma catches up to Tara, slamming the door shut behind her. They fight. Tara telling Gemma
that she is getting the boys out of Charming, away from the club and most importantly away from
their psychotic grandmother. To which, Gemma slaps Tara. Tara slaps her back. Gemma gathering
her breath, telling Tara she’s lucky she’s pregnant.”

“Jesus Christ.” Jax says harshly.

“Tara screams and throws herself onto the corner of her desk. Margaret, Wendy and Wayne come
rushing in. Seeing Tara huddled on the floor, bloodied. Saying to Gemma, ’Look what you did. My
baby.’ Gemma tries to deny what Tara’s accusing her of when Margaret quickly says ’yes you did.’
Tells the security guards to take Gemma away. That they all saw Gemma attack Tara. Gemma is
arrested. You are called and find Tara still on the floor. That she wouldn’t let anyone near her until
you came. Lowen shows up and Tara has you sign papers barring Gemma from the boys. You’re so
devastated by the miscarriage and the fight between Tara and Gemma, you sign.”
“Oh my God.” Chibs whispers.

“She...does she do that? She...Why?” Jax stuttered, eyes pinned and confused.

Ignoring Jax, “Gemma, though, she’s thinking while in holding at the police station. She talks to Roosevelt. He needs her statement before she can get her bail set up. She tells Roosevelt that she thinks Tara set her up. That Tara was never pregnant. Roosevelt asks her if Tara would do something like that. Why she would do something like that. Gemma scoffs at Roosevelt. She knows that it’ll be her word against Tara’s. A biker queen versus a doctor.”

“Soon as she gets bailed out, by Wayne, she wants to go and see the boys. Wayne has to tell her that she can’t. That the order of protection bars her from seeing the boys. Wayne tells Gemma a few choice words regarding Gemma’s overpowering control over everyone. How he knows that she has a lot of love for those boys. But it’s wrapped up in so much secrets and hate he doesn’t know if she can ever find that love. That she has two paths before her. A path that she toes the line regarding Tara that given enough time, perhaps she’ll be forgiven. The other path, is the one she’s on now. And you can guess which path she decides on.”

Jax heaves a deep sigh. Chibs frowning at the situation.

“Instead of backing off, Gemma tracks down Wendy. It doesn’t take Gemma long to figure out the that Tara promised Wendy for help by giving her access to the boys. To get to know Abel. Wendy admits that it was all staged. Tara was never pregnant. She staged the whole thing. Wendy herself is breaking under the strain of all the lies and secrets. She asks Gemma to take the drugs that she bought. To help her from falling off the wagon again. Gemma tells Wendy she has to get rid of that on her own.”

“Fuck! There’s no way Wendy will ever get near the boys.” Jax decides.

“But in the end...there is no one else.” She returns coolly.

“Gemma tells Nero what she’s learned regarding what happened with Tara. Nero tells Gemma that she’ll need more than an ex-junkie’s word. Gemma confronts Margaret. Who unwittingly, tripped up and confirmed the ruse.”

“Tara will call you that Nero came to see her while she was at the hospital. Basically, saying he didn't think she was a malicious person. To have lied about faking a pregnancy and miscarriage. From the call, Tara is just flipping outraged that Nero dared to talk to her. To try and convince her to tell the truth and drop the restraining order on Gemma. Let her back to see her grandsons.”

“What?” Jax asks again.

She shifted. “You’re still at the stage that you believe Tara really lost the baby. You don’t know that it was all a ploy on Tara’s part. And when Tara calls you all upset, it pisses you off to no end that Nero would get between you and Tara after such a tragedy. You’ll get in a physical fight with him over it. It’s clear to you where Nero’s loyalty lies and its with Gemma. Even though he’s trying to fix the situation, he has no clue what he’s doing.”

“Gemma even takes Nero to task over him getting in Tara’s face over it. He’s telling her he’s just trying to help. Help Tara see the damage she’s causing with what she did.”

“Gemma, despite your anger at her, tells you to dig for the truth before completely cutting her out. And you enlist Wayne to call Lowen to his airstream where you are waiting for her.”

“Lowen tells you that Tara’s planning on filing for divorce and wants full custody of the kids. Hurt
by Tara’s ruse, you tell the guys what is going on. Gemma’s there to hear you admit this. And she’s so fucking proud to have been proven right. Having you apologize to her for not believing her. Another win for Gemma. To make sure Tara doesn’t run from Charming with the kids, you put one of the new guys on her, West. It’s Bobby that suggests putting a familiar face following her...give her more of a warning not to leave town. Thus it’s either Rat or Juice who ends up following Tara around. Your spilling the beans about what Tara did...you’ve essentially put Tara in an enemy box. Someone that can’t be trusted anymore.”

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph. What a fuck up.” Chibs groans, taking a toke on the joint himself.

“I can’t believe shit would go so bad like that.” Jax says astounded himself.

“It gets worse. Gemma will threaten Tara. Telling her that it would be best if Tara would just simply leave town. It would be her decision of how they would explain Tara’s disappearance. Mommy moved away...or Mommy passed away.”

“Holy fucking shit!” Jax looks to her shocked.

“You of course are unaware of all this going on. The war between Tara and Gemma is at all time high. And you are oblivious about it for the most part. And when you set Juice and Rat to follow her around, she’s fucking pissed as hell. At one point, she’ll back over Juice’s bike. Wayne gets the call from Juice to come get him with the tow he explains with Gemma. Wayne worried for Tara just unraveling out there. Thought he’d go look for her. Gemma is annoyed with Wayne for trying to help Tara...tells him to let her fucking unravel.”

Jax pulls at his goatee and runs his hand over his head.

“You’ve temporarily crashed at Colette's house in Stockton.”

“Colette?”

“The house madam out of Stockton that you and Nero expand into.” She explains.

“Tara finds you and Colette fucking and its the absolute last straw for Tara. She attacks Colette and you. Pulling a gun as she’s rushing out of the house. Screaming at you. You’re freaked out because she’s got a gun. Tara yelling at you. ‘What happened to me?’ Over and over again. Each time, one motivated at you, the next over the situation, the third at herself. For allowing herself to become the very thing that she never wanted to become. A Gemma clone where her only answer is violence.”

She gives Jax a hard look. “Want to tell me that you and Tara are fine again?”

Jax huffed at her. Trying to come up with a response, but failing at it. “I don’t want Tara to become a Gemma clone.” He finally returned. “And this is all just the hypothetical future you’re telling me.”

She rolls her eyes at Jax. “Well, that’s good to know. But if things play out in this hypothetical future...Tara will be forced going to extremes. And by the time you figure out how bad things are for her...it’s nearly too late.”

“Fuck. As if faking a pregnancy and a miscarriage wasn’t extreme enough, there’s more?”

“The Irish will make you help bust Clay out of a prison transport so he can take over the gun sales in Northern California, Oregon, and Washington. Bobby gets shot in the breakout. Tara has gone to pick up the boys from Gemma’s house. And is pissed to find out that Gemma is helping Wendy
until she can get into rehab again. Nero, our intrepid solver of problems, suggests to Tara that she look in on Wendy. Gemma gets a call from you regarding Bobby and tells Tara to get her medical bag. Tara’s pissed off that suddenly she’s still the mob doctor now. After all the shit she’s been going through, Gemma forces her to help Bobby. Tara doesn’t have a choice. Even though later, you thank Tara for helping. Saying that you know that she didn’t have to help you guys. But Tara didn’t have a choice in the matter.”

“During this whole time, the club has had another Mayhem vote on Clay. Soon as you get him out of his transport and off to meet with Galen at an airport hanger. You, Tig and Chibs kill Galen and his guys.”

"Shit."

Chibs says.

“Nero has arrived with Gemma and Tara and Clay has a chance to say goodbye to Gemma. Telling her he’s glad she found someone. You all walk Clay over to where Galen and his guys are lying dead and you shoot him in the throat, killing him. You’ve finally got your revenge on Clay for your father’s death. Nero drives Gemma and Tara to St. Thomas so Tara can go steal some surgical supplies in order to help Bobby who’s being taken up to the cabin. Nero is questioning that you guys all voted that. Gemma crying. She’s shaken by the finality that Clay is actually gone for good now. And she’s angry at how upset she is. She hated Clay and here she is crying over him being dead. Tara is quick to inform Nero that Clay killed Piney. Tried to have her killed, because Clay knew that she knew what he did to JT. How her hand was crushed, ruined her career. That Clay should have been dead a long time ago.”

“This going on...you and the guys are setting the scene for when Connor shows up. Connor, of course, is fucking floored by seeing everyone dead. You tell Connor what he needs to know and what he needs to tell the Kings. The truth that Connor needs. Any other story will paint Connor as a failure. Telling Connor that the Kings have to push the guns to black in order to keep the sales in Northern Cali. Connor realizes he has no choice and agrees.”

“Shit. They bend?” Chibs asks her.

“They don’t have a choice. But things aren’t all rosy in with the local gangs. Chinese are pissed, thinking that the Irish guns should have been passed to them, especially when Romeo’s need for big guns is dying down. They’ll hijack Happy for awhile. You and black will gun down the Chinese for thinking they had any right to demand anything. Uses the strife to show Connor why the Irish need black in their corner, to keep them protected. Marks tells Connor that if it helps, his mother’s maiden name is McDuffy.”

Chibs barks out a laugh in surprise. Jax grins in amusement.

“Things are looking better for the club after all this drama. You're still cleaning up loose ends when Tara runs. She’ll trick Gemma and grab the boys and leaves town. And the amount of things Tara has been privy to regarding the club, she has more than enough evidence to get protection. You race to the house and find that she’s packed all her and the boys clothes. Gemma rushes into the house behind you and even she can’t believe Tara did it.”

She stares Jax down. “You’ll find her and she’s... You’ve never seen that fear in her eyes before. It shakes you up to see her like that. That she would believe you’d kill her. Her begging you not to kill her in front of the boys. That at least she’ll die knowing she did everything she could to get the boys out.”
“You and Tara finally start talking and working things out. You two work out a deal. You negotiate a deal with the DA. That all charges against Tara be dropped. And you will serve the time for the weapons charges that led to a school shooting. And that Tara has your blessing to take care of the boys as she sees fit. Including taking them out of Charming.”

“What weapons charges?” Jax asked.

“There’s going to be a school shooting. The gun used will be traced back to the Sons as the supplier. The DA is under pressure to find the bad guy for the political and social fallout of the shooting. Nero knows the kids mother and he comes to you to help with dealing with her. Getting her out of town. But of course, things don’t go as planned. And we don’t have time to go down this rabbit hole.”

“Sounds like a big rabbit hole…” Chibs entreated.

“It can be, but seriously, we don’t have time right now. Gemma hasn’t even met Nero yet. This could be a year out from now.”

Chibs and Jax shared a concerned look again.

“You’ll agree to serve time to satisfy the DA. It’s hard time. Fifteen, twenty years with your priors, they’ll get you on serious time. If you manage good behavior, might get out in seven to ten. But you agree to it. You make the club agree to it. The only people who don’t know are Gemma and Wayne.”

“Gemma’s drinking and smoking pot, when Wayne shows up. Gemma’s all depressed that she and Nero broke up, Tara and the boys gone…she’s completely out of it.”

Chibs shifts next to her.

“Wayne asks Gemma if she’s heard from you. She says no, why. Wayne fumbles a little and mentions he got a call from Tara’s lawyer to pull some police archives. And from the sound of things, that the cops will be arresting you. That Tara maybe made a deal…”

“Gemma jumps to conclusions with what Wayne is telling her. Gemma tricks Wayne and steals his truck. She’s barely aware of the drive to your house. Her rage is all-consuming, there’s no rational thought in her head, at all. You’re unaware that Wayne talked to Gemma about anything you’ve set up with the DA. You’re spending time with the boys before you go to the house where the DA will pick you up. Wayne shows up and asks if you guys have seen Gemma. Juice offers to go track her down.”

She takes the joint back from Chibs for another draw. Frowning at the way Wayne fucks things up when he thinks he’s helping. She wonders if Wayne has listened to what she told him earlier. Shaking her head, no, not likely.

“Gemma is in your house looking for Tara. Tara walks in the house, calling for Wayne. Soon as Tara walks into the kitchen Gemma sees Tara in her sights. The absolute rage Gemma is overwhelmed with is...like I said before, Gemma has no rational thought in her head at all. She is pure rage and anger. Tara tries to run out of the house. But Gemma attacks Tara. There are no words spoken in the fight. It’s fast, brutal and bloody. Your mother kills your wife in your kitchen with the carving fork driven into Tara’s head, repeatedly. It isn’t until Tara’s body falls the the floor that Gemma realizes what she just did.”

Chibs goes absolutely still next to her. Jax pale, eyes pinned, as he leans forward, his elbows on his
knees. She forces herself to keep going.

“Roosevelt walks in and sees Tara dead. Gemma covered in blood, shaking on the floor next to Tara’s body. Gemma telling him and herself it had to be done. That she was a rat and betrayed you. She made a deal. Roosevelt shakes his head and tells Gemma that it was you that made the deal. That Tara didn’t rat. Gemma’s shock at the news stuns her. Reality of what she’s done hits her. Roosevelt goes to call in the scene...” The house is utterly silent as she details the events that are coming for Jax.

“When Juice comes in and kills Roosevelt in the back before he could call it in. Juice gets Gemma out of there along with the murder weapon. Protecting the club’s queen. You come in and find Roosevelt and Tara dead on the floor.”

She takes a moment to breathe. Give Jax a chance to process before continuing.

“You are...crushed, to put it mildly. Pulling Tara into your arms, kissing her. Not wanting to believe she’s gone. Your grief is all consuming. What you feel...it’s traumatic. And because of who you are...the culture of this club...you don’t deal with your grief, at all. In fact, Gemma has Tara buried within a week, while you are cooling your heels in County. She didn’t hesitate to bury her secret. Her and Juice’s.”

“Holy fucking Christ.” Chibs breathed next to her.
“You’ve managed to shift the drug muling off to the Mayans. And the Irish gun trade to Marks and Black. The Sons is operating legit businesses for the first time in decades. A feat that would do your father proud. But all of that is upended when you find Tara murdered. Life in Charming, Stockton, Oaktown, and everywhere in between will come undone...all by a lie.”

“You will be taken into custody while the cops go over the crime scene in your kitchen. The cops had an appointment with you regarding the deal you had brokered earlier. They find you still cradling Tara. Have to physically drag you away. You’re held in county for ten days. Ten days for Gemma to feed you the lie as truth. When she tells you what she saw that night...you reach out to Marks to get you a burner so you can get the club updated to what you know now and what to do in order to prepare.”

“Who does she pin it on?” Chibs asks.

“The Chinese. Juice helps her construct a feasible story. Gemma doesn’t want Tara’s death to land on brown or her boyfriend, Nero. And Juice knew of the recent tensions going on with Chinese regarding the gun trade.”

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs sighed.

“While you are inside, you’ve been making friends with the AB. A man named Tully is going to become the shotcaller when he’s transferred to Stockton. Third in line of the AB. You’ll brutally beat and carve one of their snitches up for them. Tossing Tully the guys teeth as way of hello.”

Jax and Chibs share a knowing wry look at the way they sometimes have to make friends.

“The DA clears you of Tara and Roosevelt’s murders and with Tara dead, your deal is dead in the water. They release you. The DA comes to you and reminds you to be the man you were ten days
ago. The man who took responsibility and owned his place. Trying to get through to you, but its futile. You have a new agenda, a new enemy, and you will tear everything that you have worked for to the ground to slake your vengeance.”

“Gemma picks you up and she’s a bit unnerved with how...contained you are. Telling you Tara’s service was small and quiet. That the boys will be glad to see you. She’s had them moved to her house. At the mention of going to see the boys, you turn the car around to head for the clubhouse. Gemma alarmed at the sudden change in direction, you tell her you can’t see the boys. Not now. The guys have been helping the Grim Bastards deal with the E. Dub crew who have taken out a couple of their prospects. Doing Grim Bastards a favor. They hear of your release and meet you at the clubhouse. Pulling you into hugs and expressing their condolences.”

“Gemma is pulling away to head back to the house when she catches sight of Wendy on the sidewalk. She pulls over right away and gets in front of her. Trying to keep her from going to see you. Talk to you. But it’s too late, you and the guys catch sight of Gemma and Wendy. Wendy explains that she heard about Tara and was worried about the boys. Offering her help.”

“Gemma quickly jumps in and tells you that she called Wendy. That she needs help with the boys. You tell Wendy to work things out with Gemma.”

“How...you said she was going to rehab, but she’s out already? How long was she in for?”

“Nine days. She truly is concerned for the boys. She has no other agenda. But you don’t care about that since you have to deal with Tara’s murderer and don’t have the time or the patience for Wendy, Gemma, or your boys.”

Jax shifted and sent her an annoyed look. “I’d never be like that...not with my sons...I really don’t know where you’re getting this from.”

“Jax...You've just lost Tara. The love of your life. Brutally. This isn’t like when she left for college...it cut you up then too, her leaving. But she was alive and there was always a chance she would have come home. Tara’s death...that wound...it’s like someone scooped out your heart and lungs and yet you’re still walking and talking. Completely confused as to how that could happen. And the pain of your grief is so large that you can’t let yourself feel it. You have the wherewithal to know you aren’t in the right frame of mind to be with the boys. You literally can’t. Like a shark, you need to keep moving or you’ll die. And if you went to see your kids, the look in their eyes, it’ll kill you. So no...you can’t see them. You can only take care of business. The business of getting your vengeance for Tara’s death. Gemma telling you it was Chinese. You have a target and are laser-focused on that target. Nothing and no one will stand in your way.”

Jax sat back with a frown but didn’t contradict her.

“Since you are no longer off to prison for the next decade, you are back at the head of the table. Everyone settled, the guys fill you in on the state of the relationships with the other crews. You tell them that you’ve made inroads with AB. Red Woody will be open officially for business the next day according to Bobby.”

“Red Woody?” Chibs asks.

“Caracara 2.0. Down at the docks of where Lyla had been tortured. With the previous occupants run out of town, the club has taken over the space to get the porn back-up and running. Lyla will be running things there, behind the cameras.”

“After the updates…” she sighs. “...you tell everyone at the table that you never wanted the
President patch...dread taking it on. That trying to get the club away from the guns hasn’t worked. You’ve lost the woman you loved. You’re not going to lose the club you love. And for the club to move forward in what you need done, you ask everyone around the table to have no doubt. To kill for the men next to them. To die for each other. Thus, declaring war. And you…” she looks to Chibs. “…just tell Jax that they all trust him and love him. Asking him what he needs. Thereby solidifying that Jax has his army in his personal war.”

“Shit.” Chibs sighs.

“If Opie were at the table...he would have made sure that you weren’t at the table right away. Forced you to take some down time. Go see your kids. Even make you go out on the road for a while until you had your head on straight. Opie would be demanding more proof than just Gemma’s word. Everyone should be demanding for more proof than just Gemma’s word. But they don’t. Everyone left at the table knows better than to try and slow you down.”

“Ope couldn’t see his kids after Donna.” Jax said, still stuck over how he’d be with his kids.

“Yes. But he went on the road. He didn’t come right back to the table. He knew his judgement was flawed in his grief. And you helped him kill an innocent man, too. You should know better. Everyone at the table should know better.”

“But as President...I can’t just take off…” Jax pointed out.

She glared at him. “You just managed to get the club out of Irish guns. Out from under the cartel. Out from Pope. Out of drugs. A feat I doubt anyone else in the club could have done. You very well could have gone and taken some time. Let Bobby and Chibs handle the day to day things as they crop up. Not everything has to land on your shoulders. And it shouldn’t. You need to learn to delegate. If your members aren’t prepared to take over in case something happens to you, the club will founder. You said you wanted Opie to take over the club when you step out...but what have you done to teach him what it is he’ll have to do? He has no idea you’ve told Clay to put him as President if you two manage to get your escape plans to work.”

“Hold on...I’ve been in the club long enough to know what should be done...him and Ope...they’ve grown up in the club.” Chibs disagreed.

“Yes, for the most part, you could step up if needed. But you’d be floundering for the first few days or weeks. The secrets and deals going on at the head of the table is completely different than simply voting and being tasked to get things done.”

“Well, from the sound of things, I’m not leaving according to you. So it’s moot point anyway.” Jax huffed.

She pulled her hand out of Chibs as she crossed her arms, frustrated with how dense Jax is being. She knows he’s smarter than this. Chibs shifts and settles his arm around her, his thumb sweeping up and down the top of her shoulder. She’ll have to poke and prod Jax when he takes over. Figure out how to have the members of the club learn the weight of the work ahead and get them prepared.

“Nero shows up and the two of you talk privately. Nero expressing his condolences and to let you know that brown nor yellow had anything to do with Tara’s murder. You tell Nero that its best that he handles Diosa in Stockton and the club will take care of Diosa in Charming. He agrees and tells you that he’s been working with Marcus and Lin wants to set up a meeting for you and them to discuss what to do going forward. He wants to give you a couple of days...but you insist on having it right away. Nero’s a bit surprised by how quickly you’re wanting the meeting. But he agrees and
goes to set it up. It’s obvious he’s worried about you.”

“Later that day, you meet with Marcus, Henry, Nero, and this asshat Oscar.” She rubs at her nose at the thought of Oscar. God he’s a sleaze.

“Oscar?”

“The President of the Mayans Stockton charter. He’s straight up criminal. I don’t like him. Anyway, all of you are sitting down. Condolences are shared. Nero, again acting a mediator amongst all of you, reminds everyone that they need to figure out how to move forward to keep shit off the street.”

“Jesus...how the hell did Nero get himself caught as middleman in all this?” Chibs griped.

“Nero just can’t help himself trying to fix things and getting in between things. Hooking up with Gemma...its what started him getting pulled back into the club life. The very thing he’s trying to get out of. To freaking retire already. But no. He can’t leave without Gemma and she won’t go. Idiot.” She waved her hand frustratingly.

“Anyway, you tell everyone at the meeting that handing off the guns to Marks had upset the balance with all the other clubs. That getting out of guns was historical shit and you were so focused on getting out that you didn’t realize the blowback of that. That it was a mistake on your part.”

“Hold on...you just said that things were good us out of guns. But sounds as if it isn’t.” Jax pinpointed.

“It is good for the club. It’s everyone else that are all twitchy with the power shift. And if the club had stayed out of things...they would have worked shit out on their own. But with your plans for taking out Chinese...you’re getting back in the middle of things.”

“Are we taking the guns back from black?” Chibs asked.

“No. But you’ll use Connor. You tell Henry that you have a solid relationship with Connor, the boots on the ground IRA. You can help Henry get the guns that he can’t bring in with his usual supply of weapons. Then invite everyone to a party the guys are holding for you on getting out over at Red Woody. Come meet Connor, see if things can work out for you. There’s going to be families and children there. Nero gives the final push that if things don’t feel right, they can leave. Henry relents and decides to go. Walking away from the meeting, you have Chibs call Gemma to get a party put together for that night.”

“TO has called...they’ve located the Impala they’ve been looking for. It doesn’t look right for the neighborhood. But you all go and check out the apartment. End up killing four people there. The woman, she automatically fires a gun at you when you enter the bedroom, so it’s a kill or be killed situation. However, the person you’re looking for isn’t there. Instead its a Pastor and assistant Pastors that all have a group orgy thing going on. So already, your perfect plan of war is off to a banner start. Killing the wrong people. A theme that is going to continue.”

“Jesus.” Jax swore softly.

“You tell Quinn, West, and Montez to bury the bodies at Chigger Woods. Shallow grave, marked. You never know when you’re going to need them. And you will. God.”

“At the party, Gemma and Nero have made up and seem to be back in love again. You two are talking to Connor to sit down with Henry. Convince him that it’s okay to sell guns outside of
Marks. While there, Gemma has found her mark. She questions him why he’s all alone in the party. Checks that he doesn’t have any wife or kids waiting for him at home. Handing him a bottle of booze before she goes to point him out to you. TO is tasked to scoop up the guy and deliver him to your house.”

“So she’s just pinning Tara’s murder on some innocent schmuck?” Chibs clarifies.

“Yep. Gemma leaves and lets TO and his guys into the house where they’ve bound and gagged him. After they leave, she starts cleaning up some dishes in the sink and she’s talking to Tara. Telling her sorry about Wendy. She didn’t see that coming up. Telling Tara that Wendy’s not looking to replace her. Or herself. Willing to give Wendy a chance.”

“Talking to Tara?” Jax questions her.

“Yep. She’s going to be doing that a lot. Tells herself that what happened was supposed to happen. It’s a coping mechanism she uses to build her own truth up.” Frowning as her thoughts ran away on her. Her sense of Gemma and her psyche won’t let her face any truth about what she’s done. She never has. All the anger Gemma throws around is fueled by her fear. Fear of being weak and alone. And she won’t ever let herself feel that. Ever. Not now at least. Maybe if she had therapy...No...she won’t do that either.

“What?” Jax asked as she got lost in her own thoughts.

“Sorry. Just thinking about Gemma.” She waved off his question.

“The guys watch as you torture the guy. He’s gagged and struggling to tell you that you’ve got the wrong man...but you don’t give him a chance. Tig...is a bit unnerved by how you are working the guy. You’re quiet, controlled, and methodical in your torture of the guy. You kill him with a carving fork in his head.”

“Shit...Tig? He’s…” Jax said astonished. His face pulled in surprise.

She waved it off, too much time dwelling on these tangents. “For all the time you worked that guy over, it doesn’t give you the release you’re looking for. Killing just one man isn’t enough. You want Henry, his family, his crew, everyone associated with Henry.”

“The guys clean up the kitchen for you as you crash. Waking up, Tara not in bed with you, the neighbor is mowing his lawn. And you feel all disjointed. How could the world go on as if nothing had happened? As if Tara wasn’t murdered in this house? Again, a sign that you are so not ready to deal with the business of the club. Not in the state you are in.”

“The first major strike against Henry will come at their buy with the Triads. You’ll reach out to Indian Hills to assist. Tig has followed one of Henry’s delivery trucks to a farm out in Selma. You’ve requested that Jury hire a couple of outsiders to help in your upcoming battle. Jury questions you what the plan is. You basically tell him that you are going to methodically and maliciously take out Henry’s entire organization. And Jury questions you on your reasoning for such a bold act. That it’s the complete opposite of what you’ve told everyone at the Conclave. The quest to get out of guns and the violence from all of it. Only now you’re running right back into it. He doesn’t back out of helping you...but he questions you. Make sure you know what you’re doing. The attack goes as planned. And you suck at driving.” She glares at him.

“What?” Jax looks at her like she’s lost her damn mind.

“One of Lin’s guys hops back in the delivery truck and tries to drive away with a briefcase during
the shootout. You two jump into the local muscle’s truck. You’re driving and you’re in the back shooting at the delivery truck. The dirt road splits off. You turn the truck to sideswipe the Chinese off the road. In the process, you nearly get killed by falling out of the back with the sudden swerve in direction. Only one hand keeping you from getting under the tires. Managing to get back into the bed of the truck. Seriously. Get some real driving instructions. God.” She huffs with another glare at Jax.

Chibs grinning at her as she takes Jax to task again for his safety. Jax simply shakes his head at her with a rueful grin.

Huffing to let go of her ire, she continues. “In the briefcase are four kilos of heroin meant for Henry. The guns you have stored at the docks. You thank Jury and they leave. Later that night, you two along with Tig go to the local muscle’s place to pay him back for his help and to help pay for the damage to his truck. Instead you kill them, setting the place up with one of the kilos, the money, and a few of the guns. Later, you’ll learn that one of the guns you leave at their place was the very one that Jury used in the attack.”

“Why is that important?”

“Because unbeknownst to you...one of the muscle is Jury’s long lost son. Gib. Gib O’Leary.”

“But Jury doesn’t have kids?” Chibs ponders.

“He does. Nobody knows about it. He’s not with the mother. She’s hooked up with some anti-government meathead. Jury’ll tell you that he didn’t know about Gib until he’d gotten out of his tour in Iraq. Only just had a couple of times to get to know each other.”

“Jesus. Why would Jury have his kid help us?” Jax asked.

She stared at him, her hands quickly balling up a page from her notebook and threw it at him. Jax easily catching it. “Are you serious? Jury didn’t know that you were going to kill whoever he’d hired. For God’s sake. You are not this stupid.”

Jax raised up his hands. “Sorry. It’s late and I’m getting tired.”

“Maybe we should quit for the night, pick up again tomorrow.” Chibs suggested with a look at his watch.

“No. Tomorrow is Tara. We have to get through this tonight. We can’t talk about this in front of Tara.”

“Fine. Let’s get through it.” Jax agreed. “Just try and move along faster, okay?”

“I’m trying. God. You have no idea. Whatever. So, of course Henry finds out that his buy was attacked. Men were killed, his guns and heroin is gone. He’s questioning Nero and you as to what happened. Who was responsible for it. You simply tell him you don’t know but you’ll have a local chapter look into it for him. Later will tell Henry that it was some idiot local muscle that took down the buy and direct him to Gib’s place.”

“Gemma finds out that Wayne has been hired as a consultant by the new Sheriff. She’s dropping off tea to him in the airstream where he’s fallen asleep. He’s got Tara’s murder book spread out. The photos of the scene shake her up. It’s a slap in the face of what she’s done, that reality should have been a wakeup call for her. But it only makes her more resistant to admitting anything. And that she really can’t trust Wayne anymore because he’s been hired to find Tara’s killer.”
“Red Woody opens with their first porn movie… ‘Skankenstein Lives’.” She rolls her eyes at the cheesy title and plot for a porn movie. “Everyone is amused and glad that the business is finally up and running. Lyla is looking better, her taking charge of things at the studio.”

“Henry’s second called back and found one body at Gib’s house. Thinking the Triads got there first. But you’re alarmed when they mention the one body. There should have been two. Bobby ends up calling Jury to find out more on the guys he hired. Marks shows up, he’s heard about the attack on Henry and reminds you that he can’t have a street war right now. He’s got a land deal he’s trying to secure. You’re annoyed that Marks is tying your hands behind your back like this. Marks reminding you that Pope earned his respect by being the smartest person. And he earned his by being the deadliest. Threatening you to not do anything stupid.”

“You decide to go check on Tyler with the Niners. You want to shore up your relationship with the Niners because Marks. Tyler can’t really make any moves on Marks as he’s the pipeline to the guns. And he’s got an internal problem with a Chester, trying to splinter off with some of the other Niners. You give Tyler one half of one of the kilos. And help him with his Chester problem. You need people to use for your plans so there is a lot of favors being done between the various crews. And to act as spy on Marks for you. And in exchange, you give the other half of the kilo to Tyler to keep Marks in the dark of what you’re doing and act as double agent.”

“Gemma will put herself in a fight between one of Nero’s escorts and her father. She’ll get banged up a little, Nero jumps in pulling the guy off. But the father, Hass, he calls the cops and presses charges. To convince Hass to rethink his pressing charges, you’ll have Gemma bake up a cake as a peace offering when she and you go to the guy’s house. She’ll let you in where you’ll beat the living crap out of him. Landing him in the hospital and not surprisingly, dropping the charges against Gemma.”

“It’s also when you meet the new Sheriff. Althea Jarry. She infers that she’s up for a little payout. Work together to keep Charming safe and profitable.”

“You get a call from your parole officer wanting to meet. Jax tells you to go meet him. Later when you’re back, you tell everyone that it was a set up where Wayne and Juice forced a sit down with you. Juice asking if the club had voted Mayhem on him...or if he was being targeted by Jax alone. Wanting to know if there’s a way to earn his way back into the club.”

“Abel has started pre-K so Gemma’s driving him to school. It’s a progressive, private school and Gemma is talking to herself again. Never sent you or your brother to a private school. Having strangers raise your kids up is just lazy as a parent. Telling Tara that she knows its what she wants. Goes on saying that private school is wasted on Abel. That he’s like his father. An outlaw. Thomas though, he’ll probably end up becoming a doctor like she did.”

“You’re meeting with Tully and are working with him and that relationship. You’ve got at least two kilos of heroin left to unload. Tully tells you to meet with his guy Leland. If the heroin is good, it’ll earn you favors in and outside of the prison.”

“Tyler shows up at Red Woody to meet with you. Tells you that Marks is spinning out over this deal he’s been working on in Piedmont. Some Pastor and his wife and kid have disappeared and Marks needs their signatures making him partner to the church.”

“Pastor? That the same Pastor in the orgy?” Chibs asked.

“Yes. Tyler thinks the wife Loutreesha is off in some lake house. An area that the Niners would stick out like a sore thumb kind of place. And since you’ve got the bodies, you have Tig, Rat, and Happy go dig the bodies up and see if they can find anything that will lead them to the house.”
“You find a cell phone that will lead you to the lake house. At the lake house, you end up breaking in. Tig gets shot through a door leading to the garage by buckshot. A car flies out of the garage and Rat in the van, forces the car down into the lake. You two jump in and help get the son and his mother, Loutreesha from drowning.”

“As you’re patching up Tig and drying off, Loutreesha and her son, Grant, tells you why they’re on the run from Marks. Her husband, the Pastor, had gotten into some shady deals with Pope and now Marks. Marks wants to become a partner to the church to have access to federal money so he can launder his money. Promising to build affordable housing on some of the land that’s owned by the church.”

“And, I’m guessing, the housing never gets built.” Jax figures out.

“You now have leverage over Marks. You finagle Loutreesha into writing and signing a statement to what is going on and have Tyler give it to Marks. Hoping that Marks will back down on both Loutreesha and you. But Loutreesha has a drug habit. Grant has been trying to get her off the junk. It’ll end up putting them up at the cabin and Gemma helping wean her off the drugs. Marks doesn’t take kindly to the threat of the statement. He’s been digging into what is going on with Lin and with the threat you’re dangling over his head, he’s hired a man named Moses as head of his security.”

“You go meet with Leland but the cops happen to see you driving by and follow you. The AB idiots freak out and shoot Eglee’s partner. She gets shot four times in the back. With the shooting, everyone scatters in case more cops show up.”

“Back at the clubhouse, you’re pissed about the fuck up with Leland and his crew. The Sheriff shows up. You’re worried that someone saw you at the meet, the only reason why she’s there but to perhaps arrest you. But she’s unaware that you were there. She asks about Hass and his sudden hospitalization and dropping of charges. If you had anything to do with that. Before you know it, a van screeches to a halt in front and a Chinese guy has thrown a grenade into the clubhouse. Everyone survives the blast. But Henry knows that you’re behind the attacks on him. The war is in Charming now. And well, having the Sheriff there to witness it, she’s really sinking her teeth into the mysterious war that’s breaking out in her quadrant. Trying to steer her off Chinese is not working anymore.”

“Nero hears of the attack and shows up. He’s relieved everyone seems to be okay and alarmed at the escalation. Before he can get into it with you, he gets a call. He’s yelling at you about Diosa. The lot of you are racing across town but it’s too late. Chinese have attacked the very full house. Everyone is dead. Even Colette. It’s a bloodbath. And nobody is answering at the warehouse where the Chinese guns were stored. Somebody has sold out the club to Lin. They wouldn’t have taken such actions unless they knew it was you.”

“You order a lockdown at Red Woody. Nero is upset and wants to know why the violence has all occurred. He thought everything was good. He’s not getting any answers from you and leaves to go tell Borowsky about Colette.”

“Borowsky?”

“Retired, crooked cop that runs the port in Stockton. He’s a sleaze. He gets a cut from anything running in and out of the ports, including Colette’s house.”

“Gemma shows up at the lockdown and starts her comfort routine in times like this.” She sighs. “When you show up Wendy asks that you talk to Abel. The kid is confused and freaked out to what is going on. You tell him that it’s for everyone’s protection. He susses out that you are responsible
for all these people. You leave him in Wendy’s care and go to church where you discuss what happened. Information is back that West is dead at the warehouse. The guns are gone. Only other people who knew where the guns were were Jury and Borowsky.”

“You guys go to meet with Borowsky and Nero shows up. He’s pissed as hell. Pushes you about why Lin is all up in arms. Thinks you’re lying to him and Lin has threatened his son’s safety. Suddenly being the middleman is not such a great idea for our Nero. You tell Nero that Gemma saw two of Lin’s guys at your house the night of Tara’s murder. Tell him that you’re going to destroy Lin and nothing is going to stop you. Nero has to decide what side he wants to be on. You turn on Borowsky and tell him that someone sold you out over the location of the guns.”

“Borowsky takes you to talk to the guy that was supposed to keep an eye on the place. He’s got a pawn shop. The guy admits that he got a call and two grand to look the other way on his rounds. Borowsky is angry and shoots the guy before you can dig too hard into him.”

“To help Nero, you send him back to Henry and to tell him that you and Chibs will be at the warehouse with his heroin. But the warehouse will be filled with Sons to take out Henry and his crew. To suggest that Henry bring as many of his guys with him.”

“You two go to the warehouse. Set the backpack of the two kilos of heroin in the warehouse. Door closed. Henry and his guys show up. They unload quite a bit of bullets into the warehouse, surprised to find that there is only the backpack sitting there. They’re confused, expecting you to have all of your guys. But you’re alone. You’re telling Henry that you have nothing to do with the attacks on the Chinese. That it’s all Marks. He’s the one that is calling all the shots now and is behind everything that is going on. You suggest that Henry meet with Tyler and he’ll confirm what you’re saying.”

“Henry has you and Chibs scooped up and tossed in one of their vans. But before they go too far with you. Borowsky’s crooked cop brigade stop Henry and get all of his guys zip-tied to a chain-link fence. The guys have shown up to help. You and Henry fight. He’s all kung fu fighter and you with your boxing style, it’s a bit of a mess type of fight. While you’re fighting Henry you accuse him of killing Tara. Henry is yelling back that he has no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Because of the new Sheriff is on the take with the club, she calls and tells you that an APB went out on Henry. Real cops are on their way. So your fight is broken up early as you’re forced to leave. As the real cops arrive, the Chinese are arrested. And to finish off the day, you do a drive-by shooting along some of Lin’s known corners. Thinning out the herd.”

“Tyler meets with you at TM. Tells you that Marks knows only what Lin knows. He can’t prove things but he’s talking war on the club. You’re snarky and tell him that’s not part of your plan. Tyler snarks back that he’ll let you deliver that message. Tyler is tasked to find the mysterious missing Dulaine to finish the job for the Grim Bastards. The payback will fall on the club. TO shows up and you question him of who he’d want to keep on out of his crew. Suggesting that Grim Bastards patch over to the Sons. TO is surprised by the offer, saying that he’s the wrong shade of white. But you get him on task to dealing with Marks first.”

“You see Wayne on the lot. Which is odd, because he was supposed to go with Gemma up to her dad’s home as escort. He tells you he did, followed her up half way. Only to find out her SUV broke down. He’s heading to help. Asking him why Gemma didn’t call you, Wayne said she probably didn’t want to bother you.”

“The Sheriff has passed on information regarding Lin’s arrest. With the two kilos of heroin found in their van, Henry’s not going anywhere anytime soon. But it gives the DA a chance to press Henry, offer him a deal. That there’s pressure coming from Oakland City Council. Which is not
part of your plans, either. But it gives you an idea to show the City Council that Marks isn’t the upstanding businessman he is, but just another thug.”

“But you have to go meet with Leland. Leland is all tweaked that Eglee is still alive. But you manage to talk about the heroin. And you have to explain that it was confiscated off of Henry when he was arrested. You offer guns in exchange. But Tully has already set up arrangements based on the heroin that you no longer have. The Grim Bastards rode with you to the meeting and one of Leland’s guys calls and informs Leland and his guys that a bunch of blacks are down the road. The news tweaks out Leland and the bunch of you start a fight. And it’s pretty clear that you can’t get any business done with Leland in charge.”

“Marcus has reached out. He’s got Juice. Telling you that he was willing to trade club secrets for safe passage into Mexico. Marcus tells you he knows why you’re taking down Lin. Reassures you that he had nothing to do with Tara and he had no idea that Lin did. Marcus requests you to hand over the Irish guns over to Mayans, in exchange for Juice. You tell Marcus that the guns aren’t for you to hand over. It’s Connor’s. Marcus reminds you that you gave it to Marks. Go to the IRA and say you changed your mind. That Mayans can do everything that Marks is doing. Considering it, you say if you do this, that you’ll need to give some of the prison trade over to the AB. To take care of a debt to Tully. And tell him that the Niner’s are breaking away from Marks...split the heroin trade with Tyler out of what’s left of Lin’s territory. Marcus questions how you’re going to handle Marks. With the club and Mayan together, you both can take Marks down. Do that and you’ll take care of the Kings regarding the guns. You have Juice stripped of his kutte before you leave.”

“You go meet with Tully and tell him what’s been going on. He’s pissed about the heroin you promised him. And you offer up Marcus’s offer to share the prison trade. Mayan will supply while AB distributes. Tully tries to play the race card, not wanting to mix race in business. And you call him on it. But Tullydoesn’t have much room to negotiate. Tells you to bring a sample to Leland to test out and if he’s cool with it, he’ll make the deal work. You press Tully to work on getting access to Lin. Tully offers advice in dealing with Leland...you have to get him to trust you.”

“With Lin in jail on the drug charges, Wayne has been pressing Gemma to go make a statement with the cops. Tell them what she saw at the house when Tara died. By connecting Lin to the murder of a mother and a doctor...the DA can’t flip Lin on a deal. He threatens Gemma to make the statement or he’ll do it if she doesn’t. She’s fighting him over doing it. That she doesn’t talk to the cops at all. And she’s pissed he’s in her face over it. You get wind of this going on and you press her too to make the statement. With you telling her to make the statement she agrees. Wayne drives her to the station house and she’s all pissed off at Wayne. Tells him to move his airstream off the lot. Takes his truck to get back home, leaving him to get a ride with his cop buddies.”

“Tyler has found Dulaine, finally. Grim Bastards and the club go to shootout Dulaine’s hangout. And with a pile of dead black guys, you pack them into the van when you go to meet Leland. Leland asks why you’re driving around with a bunch of dead black guys. Bobby pipes up with why does he care. They’re black and they’re dead.”

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs mutters.

“Trust in place, Leland tries out some of Marcus’s heroin. He likes it and it’s all set. Leland will let Tully know that things are good.”

“With Henry inside, you need someone inside to have access to him...to take him out. Marcus has turned over Juice to you and order him to get arrested. You’ll have Rat and Montez follow Juice to make sure he does as he’s told. With things settled down, the lockdown is lifted. Wayne tells you
that Eglee is out of critical care and that she won’t tell anyone what actually happened. Nero is trying to convince Gemma to come with him to Norcos again. He’s got plans of selling his piece of Diosa. He tries to talk to you about it but the club is too embroiled with its war to consider buying him out. Nero will end up selling to Marcus and the Mayans. With your newfound relationship with Marcus, everything is cool.”

“The mess with Loutreesha and Marks is heating up again. She tells you that she’s being blackmailed by a guy that goes by the name of Greensleeves. He’s got video of her Pastor husband in another of his sexploit and she doesn’t have anymore money to pay him. Marks isn’t backing off on her either. And Marks will figure out that it was you that started the war with the Chinese. He’ll target you in retaliation for what you’ve started. To protect Loutreesha and Grant, you’ll have them go up to the cabin. Tell Happy and Rat to go get Gemma and bring her up to the cabin to help with Loutreesha’s detox. To which, Rat questions you what to do if Gemma says no. Saying that she can be a bit...intense. You’re amused and ask him if he’s afraid of your mother. Happy pipes up with that they all are. Nero helps track down Greensleeves and when you two get attacked by his women, letting the guy escape. Nero helps get the guys address out of one of the girls. Offering her a chance to work at Diosa instead of the streets. You get the video and toss the guy through his window. Another problem solved.”

“Jesus.” Jax complained.

“Still think Opie is ready to handle the Presidency? Even you during this are stretched to your max.”

“Abel is having problems in school. He’s sent home when he pushed another kid. Again when he hit another with his lunchbox. Gemma is pissed at the teacher for trying to advise her on how Abel is picking up on his behavior issues from her. Gemma telling off the nosy teacher good. Gemma doesn’t raise weak men.”

“Happy and Rat come to get Gemma to the cabin and she doesn’t know what to expect. She’s heard that you’ve seen Juice and doesn’t know if he’s told you the truth or not. So she’s freaking out. She’s full-blown talking to herself. While holding Thomas, she’s apologizing for killing his mother. That it was an accident. Accidents happen for all kinds of reasons, for love, for reasons we don’t understand. And when Gemma puts on her ‘mother hat’ to ask Abel why he hit the kid, if he was bullying him. Abel shrugs and tells her it was an accident. She asks Abel if he knows what an accident means. And he...Christ he’s a smart kid...he asks Gemma if she does right back to her.”

“Holy fuck.”

“Yeah, you need to be careful in what you tell him. He’s more aware and watching everyone around him. He’s picking things up. Like when you talk to him about the lockdown that it’s your responsibility to watch over everyone, to protect them. He’ll take it on himself to protect Thomas...he’ll grab a hammer and starts banging it into a wall stud, demanding to go home.”

“But you’ve just finished with Greensleeves and have told Tyler to deliver another statement from Loutreesha along with a picture of the Pastor’s body at one of his construction sites. Tyler calls and says Marks is ready to meet. While you’re waiting for Marks with Marcus...he’s late. Very late. An hour past the time, Moses shows up and hands over a package for you and leaves. Marks doesn’t show. Inside the package is a tablet with video of Bobby being held down as Moses takes out one of his eyes. Which also inside the package. The threat you tried to get Marks to back down on Loutreesha has failed. You have twenty-four hours to meet Marks demands to the letter, or they’ll cut off another piece of Bobby.”

“You’re freaking floored. You didn’t expect Marks to kidnap Bobby...use him to get at you and the
club. Marks knows how tight the club is. While Marks has zero vulnerabilities, no family, no friends like the club does. He knew how to strike at the club by kidnapping Bobby. You...” she looks to Chibs. “...reassure him in how he can’t stop now. All the shit that’s been done, it’ll all be for nothing. Tyler shows up and has information on Moses...he’s former Blackwater and he’s got a professional team with him. He’s got the Niner’s watching all of Pope’s sites in the hope of finding where Bobby is being kept. And he’s getting more nervous the longer he’s acting as double agent. Moses and Marks are smart, they’re going to figure out they’ve got a mole. But you convince him to keep on.”

“Until Tyler calls with Bobby’s location, you decide to follow up on Jury’s kid...try to figure out who is ratting on the club. Talk to his mom. That’s when you know about Jury’s son. You have Jury meet you half-way along with Indian Hills VP. You accuse Jury of ratting. Jury tells you that he knows it was you that killed his son. He recognized one of the guns. But despite, killing his son...he defends himself that he’d never turn on the club. The fight escalates when Jury verbally attacks you over JT’s death. Suggesting the JT purposefully rode into that semi. That he knew his panhead like the back of his hand. He would have known something was wrong with the bike soon as he turned it over. You’re caught in a trap. Plans are in motion and Jury could bring it all to a screeching halt. You punch him, he falls to the ground and pulls his gun. You pull yours and fire. You kill Jury before he could fire at you first. Jury’s VP is running to Jury, yelling at you over what you did. You spin the tale that Jury admitted he ratted the club out to the Chinese. Gave up the location of the guns.”

“Gemma comes home and finds her birds dead. One pinned on the wall of her bedroom, the other in her bed. Checking the rest of the house, one of the kids stuffed toys is knifed to the wall. An eye missing. And a message written in crayon...’No Son is Safe.’ You have everyone go up to the cabin, pull Abel from school until you can deal with Moses.”

“You ask Jax if there’s anything he needs to tell you about shooting Jury. Remind him to be careful. With Redwood’s war, no Jury, it’ll make the other charters nervous. He’ll tell you it was self-defense. But to Indian Hills...it looked like murder. To you...a very complicated situation. Just need to prepare for the fallout.”

“Another package shows up and you can’t open it. You thinking you have any negotiation on the terms is rejected. They’ve cut off Bobby’s fingers. You go up to the cabin and explain the situation to Loutreesha and Grant. Things being more complicated. Telling them they need to trust you. And even the kid tells you to quit promising shit. Tyler shows up at the cabin and while you’re distracted with Tyler, Grant hits Montez with a tire iron and takes off with the van. All of you go running after Grant. Happy is wiped out, but you manage to convince the kid to pull over. He’s telling you he was going to turn himself over to Marks, to sacrifice himself to save his mom. Happy catches up and slugs the kid.”

You go to meet with Marks, telling him that he doesn’t need Loutreesha or Grant. Marks wants the kid at least along with the location of the body, and the video you got from Greensleeves. Wants to impress on everyone the importance of silence. Bring what he wants and he’ll hand back Bobby. In your devious mind, you’ve got Tig and Happy cut up the body, just need the head and the arms to help id the Pastor, use the torso of the other Assistant Pastor.”

“What? Why?” Jax reels back as if he were standing over a decomposing body.

“You’ll still have DNA evidence of the Pastor on Pope’s construction site.” She explains.

“Shite...that’s wicked smart.”

“Tig likes working with Happy...tells Happy as he’s cutting up the body that he feels like he’s the
normal one. Happy’s all ‘whatever’ as he does the job at hand.” She rolls her eyes as Jax and Chibs grin to each other.

“Indian Hills shows up at Red Woody. You tell them that Jury had a kid and hired him to help with the attack on the Chinese. With the kid dead, Jury retaliated by ratting to the Chinese on the location of the guns. Send them off to talk to the kid’s mother. Reiterate that it was self-defense. Indian Hills is calling for a Forum, bringing in Packer to keep it impartial. When they leave, you realize you need Lin to confess that it was Jury that called him. With Jury labeled a rat, your shooting of Jury would be justified. With Juice inside and already tasked to take out Lin, you reach out to Tully and explain the situation.”

“You go to meet with Marks with evidence and Grant, just like he wanted. Bobby is there and he’s in bad shape. He’s gagged and when Marks checks over the body, the video. Bobby is trying to talk to you but his voice is muffled. Marks pulls a gun from the back of Bobby’s jeans. Points it at you, talking to Grant. Warning him that if he or his mom talks or goes up against him that this is what will happen...shifting the gun off you, he kills Bobby in front of you. After you’re able to get over what Marks did. You have Chibs get Loutreesha’s statement to the Sheriff, so that she arrests Marks for the murder of her husband. Bobby is buried up at the cabin. Gemma, alone with Bobby, crying and apologizing that she didn’t know that this was going to happen.”

“You meet with an Otis and the AB. Leland isn’t around, there seems to be a shakeup in the leadership with the AB. Otis is more willing to work with you without the race getting in the way like Leland. You find out that Leland heard that Eglee made it and figure out he’s gunning for her. You race to the hospital to try and stop him but Wayne manages to kill Leland for you. You had the foresight of calling Wayne in case you couldn’t get there in time. While you are talking with Wayne you get a call from Wendy. Child services have been called over at Abel’s school.”

“Chibs sends you off to deal with your family. Like I said, Abel is a smart kid. You’re confused when you get to the school. You’ve been so focused on club business that you haven’t kept on top of what is going on with your kids. And Gemma not bothering you with most of it. And now it’s come to your attention.”

“Gemma pacing and pissed off at being made to wait for you to show up. Soon as you show up, you ask her what’s going on. You don’t even know Abel’s teachers name. Gemma tells you she’s Abel’s nosy teacher. Ms. Harrison and Abel come into the room, the vice-principal is there along with child services. Ms. Harrison tells Abel it’s okay for him to show you what happened. You’re horrified to see the deep scratches on his arm. You ask him who hurt him and with a prompt from his teacher that it’s okay to tell you. That it’s a safe place. Abel tells you that it was grandma.”

“When you get back to Gemma’s house, you sit down with Wendy, Gemma, and Nero is there. Why Nero is there I have no idea. Just because he’s boinking Gemma doesn’t mean he’s got any right to sit in on a very family meeting. Anyway, Wendy tells you that she dressed him that morning and he didn’t have any scratches nothing. You’re trying to figure out why would he lie. Telling Gemma that Abel knew that fingering her would get her in trouble. Gemma shakes her head telling you that she doesn’t know what is going on with him. Abel’s been quiet...distant. Nero pipes up thinking that it has to do with Tara. That maybe if he got rid of Gemma Tara might somehow come back. Wendy says that Abel needs to talk to someone. Gemma jumps in and says he’s five. He doesn’t need a shrink. You’re pissed and explode at Gemma, saying that he needs something. That Gemma can’t be around the boys anymore.”

“Gemma like a dog with a bone it won’t let go of...just says that she’d never hurt the boys. Which only pisses you off even more that she’s still off in her own head about things. It doesn’t matter what she or you think is going on...child services is calling the shots. Reminding her that the state
could take Abel and Thomas away from them if they don’t follow protocol. And especially with
your criminal record, it’s a very real possibility that they could be taken from you. You turn to
Wendy and ask her for her help in packing the boys and moving them and herself back to your
house to help out. You apologize to Gemma but its just the way things have to be for now. Fuck,
Nero and Wendy console Gemma. God.”

“Did Gemma hurt Abel?” Jax asks her, his eyes wide as if not sure if he wants to hear her answer
or not.

“Physically...no.”

“Then who...?” Jax follows up.

“I’ve only read Gemma, you, and Tig...none of you have hurt Abel. My guess and based on his
behavior...he did it himself.”

“But he’s just a kid...how would he get an idea to do something like that?”

“Jax, Abel’s smart. He’s seeing and hearing things going on around him. He’s stuck being with
Gemma this whole time at her house. Odds are, he’s seen and heard Gemma on one of her talking
to Tara sessions. The way he manages to get sent home from school. And how he’s protective of
Thomas...I think he’s doing it all to protect Thomas. To make sure that he’s around his brother as
much as possible. To not be alone with Gemma. He’s probably terrified to come home from school
and find Thomas dead by this point.”

Jax rubs his hands over his head again, settling back in the chair so she could continue. But she saw
the worry in his eyes. Good.

“Chibs comes in and grabs you...you’re expected over at the AB farmhouse, you and they are all
packing and ready for battle when Moses and his crew show up looking for Loutreesha and Grant.
Soon as they are all far enough into the kill zone, its a free for all. You specifically shoot Moses in
the leg to get him down on the ground and not get a kill shot in the maylay. Once his guys are all
dead, you rip out his eye and you take his fingers.” She looked to Chibs. “You then deliver the kill
shot.” Back to Jax. “Tyler drives up and he’s got TO and Rat who’ve been beaten up a bit from
Moses. They scooped them up earlier to find out where Loutreesha is being kept. Happy keeps one
of Moses fingers. Tells Rat there’s three more if he wants one. Idiots.”

“Gemma is home alone, getting high. She’s still tripping over what happened with Abel. And to
her thinking it was Tara winning. Even dead, Tara won. Managed to get the boys away from her.
Nero comes in and tells her he’s going to Norcos the next day. Maybe it’d be good for her to come
with him, with all the drama going on with Abel. She agrees, help get him set up there until things
are sorted out with Abel.”

“You come home and you tell Abel about Wendy being his birth mother. Wendy is overcome by
what you’re doing. It’s everything she’s ever wanted in the first place and now, you’re allowing
her into your family like this. You go tuck Abel into bed and he asks you if that’s why Grandma
killed mommy...so that his first mommy could be with him. And you are completely confused
while Abel conks out for the night.”

“You spend the entire night thinking about what he just said. Trying to think if he’s maybe lying
and why he would do that. And if he’s telling the truth...then what the hell have you been doing
these last few weeks with your war on the Chinese. When if it was Gemma that killed Tara, then
the Chinese had nothing to do with Tara all along. The war and deaths associated with it was based
on a lie, told to you by Gemma. Or that Abel really is in need of psychological help.”
“Next morning, you’re still thinking things through, not sure what to believe at this point. Wendy tells you that she can’t keep any secrets anymore...tells you that Gemma was hiding Juice at her apartment. When you ask why she would do that. She shrugs and tells you that he was hiding from the club. You ask her who else knew about Juice at her apartment. She tells you Wayne does. Wendy telling you about Gemma hiding Juice, it just fuels the possibility that Abel was telling you the truth. But you need more proof.”

“Dealing with the club is on the backburner as you head over to Wayne’s. You question him on the night Tara died. Asking him what happened to Gemma that night. Did she call him. He says yeah...she was wrecked. Didn’t tell him what she saw exactly. With the lack of solid information you tell Wayne to get a face to face meeting with Juice. Wayne is asking why. Goes on to tell you that the guy Gemma ID’ed as the man she saw at Tara’s house...he wasn’t even in the state. Another drop of truth that is making you panic. You aren’t sure you heard him right and he clarifies that Chris Dun was in Vegas lock up on a drunk and disorderly. Another piece of the puzzle is locking into place and you demand Wayne get you in to see Juice. Let him tape the conversation if need be. Seeing how upset you are, Wayne’s asking what this is all about. You’re just telling him you want the truth or not. You have Chibs and Tig reach out to Otis to get word to Tully that you need a secure room to meet with Juice.”

“Why ask for a room from both Wayne and Tully?” Chibs asked.

“Wayne really is working on Tara’s case. He’s sensing a break but Jax isn’t telling him everything. Promising Wayne that they can tape the room is just to get Wayne to do him a favor. And the club has always used Wayne.”

“Meanwhile everyone is rattled with the Forum that is going on. You’re at Stockton expecting Juice to come in but Tully enters first. He tells you to relax, only way to get the room secure was if he showed up first. Tully will hand you a voice recorder of Lin admitting that it was Borowsky who ratted the club out to the Chinese over the guns. And that Juice did his job and killed Lin. You’re a bit sick at the thought that another person is dead possibly on a lie. Just the whole timing of everything is so screwed. Everything you set in motion is working along and you can’t stop it.”

“Tully leaves and Juice comes into the room. You tell him that you found out that Gemma was helping him hide. Asking why she would do that. Asking if she owed him a favor. He’s being distant...still protecting Gemma. Sensing him holding back you tell him that Abel said that Gemma killed Tara. Wanting to know from Juice before you have to send your five year old son to a team of shrinks to twist him up you need the truth. And that you know that Juice knows the truth. Juice proceeds to tell you what he saw when he found Gemma that night. Admitting to finding Gemma on the floor covered in blood, Tara dead next to her. Eli about to call it in. He killed Eli and got Gemma out of there. You prompt him regarding the Chinese. He tells you that the brutality of the Tara’s death...felt gangland. Didn’t want it to fall on brown or Nero. Told Gemma to use the Chinese. They came up with the story.”

“You take a moment to take it all in. The pieces now make sense. You tell Juice that Bobby is dead. Marks retaliation for going after Lin, based on the lie that he and Gemma told him. Juice tries to apologize but you’ve had it with him. Cut him off before he could say anything else. You thank him for telling you the truth. And that you’ll make sure it’s quick. And you leave.”

“Gemma gets a call from Juice, he tells her that he told you everything. That he had to. She hangs up on him. She starts packing a bag.”

“Back at Red Woody, Tig and you are trying to figure out the books regarding the club that Bobby takes care of and decide you need to patch in another jew as you can’t make heads or tails out of
the books. You come in and tell them that Borowsky ratted them out. Which complicates things for
the Forum. But you’re on the hunt for Gemma now. You call all the guys to search everywhere for
her. Chucky helps Gemma escape when Happy and Rat show up at her house.”

“You and the guys go to TM where Wayne is waiting for you. Pissed off that you screwed around
on him. That the room where you met Juice didn’t get taped like you promised. He pushes at you
for falling down on the job of being a husband and father. Baiting you into a fight. You punch
Wayne and take off.”

“You, Chibs and Tig head over to Borowsky’s but he’s not in. You decide to wait for him but the
cops are running your plates and you end up stealing a muscle car of some sort, while Tig and
Chibs do their best to slow down the cops chasing you. Racing across town to lose the cops that are
chasing after you. Wayne’s pressing charges for you hitting him and the cops have an APB out on
you.”

“You end up over at Marcus’s warehouse where you can hide from the cops. You call Nero asking
if he’s seen Gemma. Nero sensing something is up asks what’s going on. And you tell him that it
was Gemma all along. He tells you that he’ll call if she reaches out to him and hangs up.”

“Same time as that call...Nero is with Gemma. She’s at her old house where she grew up. Soon as
Nero hangs up with you, he looks to Gemma. Asking her if it’s true. She tries to explain her way out
of it by saying it was complicated. Nero yells at her and asks again if it’s true. She has no other
answer but yes. She watches him as he processes what she’s done. And it’s breaking him. His
thought of retiring with her...his support of her over these past few weeks...all of it was for nothing.
He can’t believe it. But tells her she better go. And she leaves. Knowing that there is no coming
back from this. She sees him crumple on the curb as she drives away.”

“Gemma’s next stop is Abel’s school. She lures Abel to the fence where she tells him she loves
him and gives him a ring with ‘sons’ stamped over top. Telling him it was his grandfathers and
your ring growing up. Handing it to him so that he knows where he belongs. Abel’s teacher catches
her on school property and tells Gemma that she has to report this. Gemma walks away and Abel
yells out a goodbye.”

“Jesus Christ.” Jax breathes.

“The guys show up at Marcus’s. You finally tell them about Gemma. That she lied and the guy you
tortured and killed wasn’t even in the state. You admit that you thought it had to be gang related.
And how very wrong you were. The mistake was yours. Every body and relationship that dropped
was your fault. You’ll tell them that you’ll sit down with Packer and come clean about what’s been
going on. You’ll also sit down with Marcus and Tyler to make things right with them.”

“Nero comes to offer you advice about Gemma. His advice is what gets through to you...allows
you to vent some of the pain you’re in. Questioning him how Gemma could do this to him...to
Tara. That despite it all...you still love your mother. But no matter Nero’s advice to you you know
what you have to do. And it tears you apart.”

“Since you don’t know where Gemma is at the moment, you take care of the local issues regarding
territory and business. Tell Nero to take Wendy and the boys with him to Norcos. You meet with
Connor, Marks is too hot for running any Irish guns. Instead it’s best to sell to Marcus. Connor is
pissed at the casual way you’re telling him who to sell guns to. He tells you that Roarke is in town
and the Kings won’t like dealing with brown. They won’t let it happen. Which means you have
more finagling you need to do. And in order to do it, you need to convince Wayne to let go of this
APB on you. Wayne’s pissed, but he knows that he baited you into the fight. To convince Wayne,
you tell him about Gemma. He’s crushed by what you tell him.”
“You get back to the studio and tell Packer and the Forum what really happened with Jury. The whole truth. Packer, it seems, that the Forum had decided in your favor until you showed up and blew everything out of the water. And since you did, its decided that you need to be voted Mayhem. The message of a President killing another President...doesn’t look good for the rest of the charters. And the Forum will accept only one decision. If the club fails to vote you to meet Mayhem...they’ll disband the charter. You tell them you’ll make sure the club votes the right way. But in exchange for the vote they want, you make them agree to allow black patch into the Sons. They agree. As a final word to the other Presidents...you tell them its been a privilege to wear the patch. Just sorry that you couldn’t live up to it.”

“Jesus fucking Christ. There is no way this is happening.” Chibs says harshly. Pulling at his goatee sending Jax a worried look.

“Well, soon as he leaves from the Forum, you press him over how it went. And he blows you off that it’s going to be okay, I promise.’ She sends Jax a hard look at that.

“You have to fix things with Roarke but when you walk into the shop one of Connor’s guys is dead another is beat up and bound. Connor is MIA. Roarke comes in and tells you that Connor has been using your war to sell with a rogue faction of the IRA outside of Marks and the King’s approval. Keeping the profits for himself, depriving the Cause of that money. He tasks you to find Connor and send him home in a box. And when that’s done, he’ll convince the rest of the Kings to try out selling to Marcus. You basically have no choice in the matter. You call up Tyler and have him reach out to Connor that will hopefully flush Connor out wherever he’s’ hiding. If Connor is fleeing, he’s going to need money.”

“Tyler is having issues as well. He needs help in taking out the last of the Chinese. Afraid that they’ll regroup. And you’ve gotten a call from Wendy double checking with you on going to Norcos with Nero. And that she got a call from your grandfather’s home, Gemma is there to see her dad.”

“You know where Gemma is now. You task Chibs to handle Tyler’s issue while you run up to Oregon. And it’s so freaking selfish of Gemma going to see her dad. He’s in the advanced stage of his dementia and she’s there to talk about her issues. Jesus. He barely remembers her. Her father has always been in her corner and she’s looking for someone again when she’s screwed up so badly. Going to her senile father...” She gripes at Gemma’s selfishness. For her talk of being a strong woman...able to stand up to anything...she can’t stand up for what she did. To admit the truth and take the consequences.

“Wayne finds Gemma at her dad’s place and he’s trying to get her to come with him back to Charming. He’ll have her arrested and save her life from when you find her. But she refuses to budge. She’s going through some old photos and school stuff she still has at the house. Showing off a paper she did on the importance of the 2nd Amendment back in the fifth grade Got a B plus on that paper, even then she knew where she was heading.”

“Wayne goes to call the local cops to help him when you walk in the door. He tries to tell you that he’s called the cops and they’re on their way. But Gemma yells back he hasn’t. Wayne is trying everything he can to get her out of this alive.”

“You tell Wayne to go home. And he says he can’t. Wayne pulls his gun and you pull yours. You tell him again to go home. And he realizes he can’t. That this is all he has left. You kill him. Walking over his body to sit down on the couch where Gemma hands you a photo of your grandfather from when he was in WWII.”

“She tries to tell you that she loved Tara and you cut her off. But she keeps going saying it isn’t an
excuse. That she barely remembers what happened. She requests that she be allowed to go out to
the garden. She goes into the backyard and you follow her. She can hear you behind her, hear you
lift the gun, drop the gun. She tells you she loves you. From the deepest part of her heart. You have
to do this. It’s who we are sweetheart. It’s okay, my baby boy. It’s time. I’m ready. You kill her.”

She pauses to look at Jax as he processes what she’s said.

“Wendy hears you come home and checks on you. The two of you have sex. The next morning
you’re up early, pulling on real motorcycle boots, your spiffy white sneakers are covered in blood.
You gather up all of your notebooks, JT’s manuscript, anything and everything that is Teller and
burn it all. You go to visit Opie and Tara’s graves. Leaving your rings with each.”

“At Red Woody everyone meets for church. You push off telling everyone what happened with the
Forum. Instead you vote in TO into the Redwood Original charter. Tyler calls that Connor has
reached out. But Connor sees you guys and realizes that the meet is a setup. You go chasing after
him but he gets away. You call Roarke’s guys to bring Hugh to the studio. Back at Red Woody, you
talk to Chibs regarding the Forum decision. He’s upset with the news, of course. But you talk him
to your way of thinking. Telling him this is how you become a leader, doing the shit that hurts the
most. Make him promise that he’ll do as you ask.”

“The Irish show up, Tig leading them up on the roof with you. As the Irish show up, you kill
Roarke’s men, freeing Hugh. You tell Hugh to call Connor and have him meet him at a warehouse
on the docks. That he managed to escape from Roarke’s guys. Connor meets with Hugh at the
warehouse. You guys come in and finally talk to Connor. He tells you that he’s been selling to
Salvadorans and Russians. That he can bring in whatever inventory he wants out of Dunglow. As
he’s talking, Roarke and his guys come in and you kill Roarke. Tig and Marcus kill the guys with
him. Connor is flabbergasted that you killed a King. You tell Connor that there’s a new plan.
Connor supplies Marcus with his guns and Marcus will protect him from any blowback from the
Irish. Hugh pushes Connor to take the deal. They’re dead if they go back to Belfast.”

“Jesus fucking Christ.” Chibs mutters.

“At TM you meet up with Nero. He and Wendy are leaving for Norcos with your boys. You ask
Nero to handle some legal paperwork. You leave Wendy the house and your piece of TM. Want
her to sell it all and take the boys out of Charming. Your piece of Diosa and Red Woody goes to
the club. Nero catches on to what you’re doing and you’re okay with it. The lies caught up to all of
you. You request that when the time comes, when the boys ask questions about you. That he tells
them that you were a criminal. A monster. Anything he has to in order to keep your sons out of
Charming and out of the outlaw shit. Have them grow up hating the idea of you.”

“Wendy and the kids show up for the trip and you say goodbye to Abel and Thomas. You help get
them in the car and you watch Nero and Wendy drive off with your kids. And you take your
father’s bike for the rest of your day.”

“You’ve filled in Tig on what’s going on and he’s in disbelief that this is happening. But he’s
behind you in what needs to be done.” She says to Chibs.

“You go meet with the DA, you go on record with who killed Tara. That it was Gemma in a fit of
rage. You give her the location of where Gemma is now. She asks about Lin and the others. You
go off record at this point. Tell her that Gemma and Juice concocted the lie. By the end of the day,
the violence will be over. She asks why at the end of the day. And you look back at her. Tell her
that she’s been fair with you and you wanted her to know the truth. The truth that the bad guys
lose.”
“You go off to take care of some last loose ends. You kill Borowsky, and then kill Marks as he walks out of the courthouse. At the warehouse, the guys have voted the Mayhem. You hand over your kutte. You say goodbye to the guys, leaving your gun on the table. You take his gun and instead of killing Jax, you shoot Happy in the arm. You tell Jax that you’ll tell Packer that you got away. You telling him that he’d never put this burden on him. Telling everyone that you got this and take off on your dad’s bike.”

“You ride out to the JT’s memorial on 580 and talk to your dad. How you tried to be a good father, a good husband, a good Son. The balance of family and outlaw living within the same man. Recognizing the struggle that your father must have felt then too. You apologize that it was too late for you. Gemma had plans. But it’s not too late for your sons. A cop comes up on you and you’re out of time. Leaving your helmet and shades behind, you take off after shooting at the cop.”

“You drive the same route your father took, leading dozens of cops who chase after you. You’re in this weird accepting place in your head. You’ve cleaned up the club...you’ve saved your sons...and you’re just...enjoying the ride.”

She takes the last toke on the joint, the smoke hazy in front of her as she forces herself to finish this. As she stubbed out the joint, her eyes locked on Jax’s. He didn’t look so good, she thought idly. Chibs was equally upset next to her. His thumb at her shoulder picking up its pace.

“You spot a semi coming around the curve ahead and it’s perfect. A slight shift and you are riding head on in it’s path. You raise your hands off the handlebar.” She raises her own hands up in the air, mimicking what she saw him do. “Look, ma, no hands.” Swiftly clapping her hands together.

The shock of the clap has Jax and Chibs jerking in surprise at the sharp noise. Only punctuated by the far off rumble of thunder of the storm outside.

“Piney, Armando, Clay, Opie, Bobby, Henry, Phil, V-Lin, Jury, Jury’s son, everyone at Diosa including Colette, Wayne, Tara, Gemma, and you...all of you dead.”

“Because of those letters. Because of what Clay and Gemma did to JT fifteen years ago, the lie they perpetuated to cover up murdering your father. And what they will do to get those letters in their hands first to make sure that they don’t see the light of day.”

“It’s already started.” She tilted her head to the side as she watched Jax grow alarmingly sheet-white. “The search for the letters...the mule vote...Piney threatening Clay...it’s already in play.”

And that was the tipping point, Jax was up and running down the hall where they heard him crashing into the bathroom. The sound of him losing his stomach. And she wondered how he was going to react when he looked at her coming back from the bathroom. This would be when he would either believe her or hit her. Angry and afraid of her. And she wasn't done.

Chibs grabbed her into a tight hold. Crying into her shoulder as he pulled her into his lap more firmly. “Oh God. Oh Holy God in Heaven.” He cried. Her hands running over his in sympathy.

“And you become the next President of the Sons of Anarchy, Redwood Originals Charter. Tig as your VP. Happy, Sgt at Arms.” She finished for Chibs.
“There’s still time. We can try...we have to try.” She said absently, her mind racing over the possibilities. Her hand patting at Chibs as he rocked against her. He upset with the demise of Jax, his family, and the club. Life as he knew it would be changed forever if things didn’t change.

“You didn’t say you were in the future for Jax and the club.” Chibs said, as he got hold of himself.

“I think I’m too new here.” She said thoughtfully. “My presence hasn’t affected behavior in anyone yet. I think we can skew events though. We know what to watch for.”

“Can we? Fuck...we should be packing.” He questioned. “I promised you that I wouldn’t let anything happen to you. If we stay…”

Pressing her lips as she looked directly at Chibs. Seeing the worry in his eyes and the indecision of if they should go or stay.

“Look, I don’t know. I tried fixing things before, didn’t have much success. I was alone in doing that. But with you helping. With Jax and Tara working with us...we might be able to save lives. The truth of what Gemma and Clay did...it can’t stay buried forever.” She saw him thinking at what she was saying.

“You knew all this...Hell...nearly all of this when you read Gemma, didn’t you? It’s why you were so affected by her reading.” He pressed, his voice tinged slightly in anger.

Ducking her head, she felt her face flush. “Saw some of it first through Tig. Gemma was a huge chunk. Jax...each one fills the gaps of the others. Gave me perspectives on each side of the same events.” She trailed off a little as he rolled his neck. “But I really think we might be able to fix things. Skew them in our favor. Save lives. Or at least try to.” She looked into his dark, worried eyes. “I don’t know about you, but I don’t think I could live with myself if I didn’t try.”

“Fuck, I can’t either.” He admitted after thinking it over. His eyes conflicted with his loyalty to the club and his need to keep her safe. And if they were going to help Jax and the club, they had to stay. Which put the two of them at risk.
She slid her hand to cup his cheek. He breathed deeply and leaned into her hand, pressing a kiss to her palm. His eyes capturing hers as he leaned in to kiss her properly. His hands at her hips, pulling her into his lap so her knees cradled his hips. Her hands buried themselves in his hair. Giving his scalp a gentle massage as they shared another kiss. “I love you.” He groaned as she held him.

Pulling back she caught her breath, her heart racing as she gazed into his eyes and saw his absolute love for her. And she couldn’t believe that they had fallen so deep with each other. And she felt so lucky. She didn’t know what she did to deserve a man like Chibs. She was just eternally grateful. “I love you, too.”

He pulled her into another kiss. Their foreheads resting to each others as they relearned how to breathe.

Another thump came from the guest bathroom, and the two of them remembered that Jax was still having his meltdown. Chibs heaved a deep sigh as he heard Jax, as well.

“Let’s get through tonight and tomorrow with Tara. See how they want to handle things. They have the most at risk.”

“How are we going to deal with this?” He asked, at a loss to where they go from here.

“Get Jax in here. We’ve barely started, I’ve barely started. We have work to do.”

“Love you, m ‘anam.” He said again, bombshelling a kiss again. She forced herself to slide off his lap so he could get up.

“Love you, too. Go, we have work to do.” She pushed him towards the bathroom.

Chibs moved down the hall to disappear into the guest bath. Hearing his voice rumbling as he talked to Jax. Jax’s shaky in return. Water ran as Chibs voice getting stronger as they talked.

She went to the kitchen and grabbed a couple of joints, setting one down by the chair Jax seems to have claimed. She lighting the second joint for her and Chibs as she sat back down on the couch. She could still hear Chibs and Jax still fighting him in a tearful voice. Her head pounding harder the longer Chibs fussed with Jax.

“Jackson Nathaniel Teller! Get your ass up and moving!” She yelled in their direction in her best drill sergeant-y voice.

Jax strode back into the living room, his footing unsteady as he knocked a shoulder into the wall of the hall coming back. His eyes hard on her, face freshly washed but still pale. Chibs gave her a mild glare for her impatience.

“Sorry, you were taking too long.” She apologized to Chibs, handing him the joint as he shook his head at her.

Jax pouting and and pulling on his goatee in frustration as he paced. “Jesus Christ, what the hell are we going to do?! We are so fucked!” He exploded. She’d rather deal with an angry and frustrated Jax than a weepy one.

“This is partly why I had Chibs secure your weapons. Make you stay overnight.” She said.


“Just Clay?” She leaded. Catching Chibs eye roll at Jax’s comment over killing Clay.
“Fuck! What the fuck is the matter with me?” Jax asked rhetorically, his frustration rising the more conflicted he felt.

Silently, she let Jax battle that over with himself. It was something they needed to delve into when Tara came over tomorrow.

“You’ve had a shock, Jackie.” Chibs soothed. “Ye’ can’t beat yourself up like this. We have a chance to fix things. If we don’t take advantage of what she saw…” He pointed at her. “…and told us, then we deserve to have the club disbanded.”

Jax ran a hand over top his head. “I don’t know. I don’t know how to even start to fix this. We need proof that this is going on.”

She sighed and crossed her arms as Jax was letting doubt of her reading affect him.

“Jax, what I just told you...was broad strokes. You have no idea of what or who I am. Did you not see? I was never in the picture. I’m barely here, I haven’t had an opportunity to try and change things.”

“You already started, m’anan. That dinner at Gemma’s. Taking her to task over Tig’s money. That was information that we should have known a long time ago.” Chibs corrected her. “That warning you put to Wayne...and I know you talked to Ope at the barn. You’ve been trying to fix shit since day one.”

She grimaced, scratching at her neck. “That’s not fixing things. Not really.”

Jax huffed and dropped back into his chair.

“We may be too late to save Piney.” She pondered aloud. “I don’t know him all that well. He seems pretty determined to try and thwart Clay.” She concluded back to the main topic at hand. Chibs settling back down next to her again. Holding onto the joint for himself. Their hands linking up automatically.

“God, he’s stubborn.” Jax grumbled.

“Jax, he’s trying. If I’m right and he’s bluffing his threat to Clay, with his health, he’s trying. He tried to get you to fix the club when he gave you JT’s book. It’s why you started Caracara. You had a vision...your father had a vision for the club. You lost your way to it, you were fighting all by yourself, its no wonder you let it go. Present events pressing on you to keep the club out of hard time, finding Abel, Zobelle. Shit happens and your plans for the future of the club got put to the back burner. With your near death in Stockton, your brain shifted to getting out, to getting Tara and the kids out. The gun sales moving from the Russians to the Galindo, that made sense. Way to cash out. Your ‘big plan’ Jax Teller’s Great Escape.” She couldn’t help her mocking tone.

“Don’t say it like that.” He pouted at her. Annoyed she was poking fun at his plan. She rolled her eyes back at him, she needed to kill this stupid idea of his.

“Jax, that plan, it never would have worked. Even without the bullshit of the Rico, Irish, and the cartel. You didn’t have a plan, you had a dream, not even that...it was a wish, a hope.” She waved her hand at him. “You didn’t even know where you were going to go. No research into schools for the kids, no research to what Tara or you were going to do for jobs. That’s how I know that your plan was no plan at all. Plus, you didn’t even include Tara in helping you putting your plan together. She’s going to be your wife. She might want some input in where you go.”

“I just need to get out, get Tara and the kids out.” He pleaded. Running his hand through over his
shorn hair again.

Silence fell over the three of them. She watched Jax as the stress outlining his every gesture and expression. The way he said that...like he didn’t realize he’d even said it. She saw Chibs looking at Jax in real concern, too. He flicked his dark eyes to her, sharing his worry over Jax.

“How long did it take for someone to find you?” She asked Jax softly. Jax’s head snapped up at her question. The hunted look in his eyes confirmed she was on to him.

“What?” Chibs asked in confusion, looking from Jax to her and back again.

She ignored Chibs question and kept her focus on Jax. “You’d been stabbed repeatedly at the phone banks in that hallway. Everyone ran when you were attacked. Alone on that concrete floor, bleeding out. The phones just out of your reach. How long did it take for someone to find you? Not to even start to patch you up, that took longer, too. Didn’t it? Felt like an eternity.” Jax went sheet-white again as she honed in on his fear so quickly.

“Jesus, Jackie.” Chibs breathed, his eyes wide in shock. “Weren’t any of the guys with you?”

“I thought it was fine.” Jax defended, his voice edging into panic. “Clay and everyone were busy with setting up the Galindo deal. It was just a quick call to check on Tara, she was going to go into labor any day. I thought it was fine.” His voice wavering as he fought with himself to keep from reliving that memory.

“Oh, God. Jackie.”

“Yes, but you had a very real near death experience. It scared the hell out of you. How close you came to really checking out. If any of those wounds were a few millimeters closer to your heart, you really would have died. You know it. The doctors told you. Looped up on medications as you were recovering, you were panicking. Fight or flight instinct flooding your system. It kept you occupied, thinking up your plan. You built it up in your own head, excited over it. Your excitement spilling over onto Tara when you proposed, telling her you have a plan of getting out. She offered to help, tried to talk to you, but you’d been thinking this plan up in your head so much you’d had it all set on how it was going to go. And it’s okay, Jax. To be excited about that. There’s nothing wrong in having something to hang onto when you feel like you have a target on your back. I’ve done it myself. More times that you can imagine.”

Jax looked to her, saw him assess her scarred cheek. Saw his flash of shame as he clued in that he wasn’t the only one who almost got killed. Chibs quiet next to her, his hand massaging hers.

“Anyway,” she mentally shook off her own near death experiences, “even if you managed to get your cash together, Tara and the kids packed up, you still wouldn’t have been able to leave. Even if the club wasn’t under the Rico or the cartel’s thumb. Gemma never would have let you leave.”

“Why?” Jax picked up the joint. “You don’t think I can get away from Gemma? Or that she has any say in what I do?” His emotions getting back under control as he lit the joint.

“She has more power over you than you realize. It started back when your brother and father died. You were what nine, ten years old?” She mentally reviewed her memory of Jax’s to figure out how old he was at the time.

“Ten.” Jax confirmed.

“You were in shock, grieving, reeling from losing both your brother and father so close together. Gemma crying and grabbing onto you for hugs.”
“So? She was grieving, too.”

“It shook you to see her so vulnerable. Making you promise her it’ll be okay, promising her that you’ll never leave her. You clung to her, she to you. The power dynamic of that event shaped what she is to you, what you are to her, what she can do to you even now. She shouldn’t have made you do that. She was the adult between the two of you.”

“But she needed me.” Jax said taking a toke on the joint, confused to what she was getting at.

Chibs sighed as he was realizing what she was driving at. She gripped his hand harder, to keep him silent. Letting her work at leading Jax through this. She was surprised a little that Jax wasn’t figuring this out yet.

“Jax, Gemma was already sleeping with Clay by then. She was the adult, she should have been there for you, but sought her own comfort with Clay or any other adult person in the club, Piney, Bobby, Luann. It wasn’t your fault. She was the adult. It was never your fault.”

“What wasn’t my fault?”

“How your relationship with your mother changed during that. You were a boy still, it was never your place to be there for her the way she you to be.” Giving him a shrug, “And, honestly, a part of you liked her attention on you. And it’s okay, it happens. You couldn’t’ve known what was going on at the time. Gemma’s attention was just...suddenly completely focused on you and part of you liked having her all to yourself.”

Jax looked perplexed as he thought over what she was saying. “I have no clue what you’re talking about.”

She waved her hand at him, “At the time, Gemma was running around taking care of Thomas who’d fallen ill, JT was going back and forth to Belfast. When he was home, things were rough in the house. Gemma yelling at JT, especially when Thomas went into the hospital. She was...vicious to him. So, JT didn’t come home, crashing at the clubhouse or the hospital. You barely saw him. She was sleeping with Clay the whole time. You were sort of left on your own; hanging out with Opie. Forgotten in the rush of things. Then when your brother and father passed, all her attention came onto you. You felt special and needed. The club treated you differently, too. Looked at you and saw the future of the club. All of that attention, fed into you.”

“You hate being called Prince Charming, but you use it too. You recognize the power of who you are and you use it to get what you want or need. And Gemma laid the groundwork of that entitlement in you, cultivated it over the years as you grew up. Children truly are victims to the adults around them.”

Jax tilted his head to the side as he thought about what she was saying and smoking his joint. “Have you ever been wrong?” He challenged her.

“No.” She let Jax change the topic.

“So, what hope do we have to change things?”

“Decisions haven’t been made yet to affect change. Given what I’ve read in you, Gemma, and Tig, we have a framework of what is in front of us. If we watch for the events unfold, we can try and skew the decisions. We know what the consequences are if things don’t change. I hope that I am wrong. I would love to be wrong. But so far, I’ve never been wrong. I mentioned before that I tried to change things before. I wasn’t successful at the time, because it was just me and I was already
under a lot of stress of simply trying to survive one day to the next. But I’m not alone anymore. You aren’t alone in this anymore.”

Jax didn’t look convinced. Not liking her wait and skew things plan. She wasn’t a fan either, but things were too volatile to attack it head on.

“Jax, we know what to watch for. We’ll talk to Tara tomorrow, hear her out. Talk to Piney, try and stop him from threatening Clay. But we’re probably too late with that. If we can stop Tig from racing off to try and take out Laroy, it’ll save Opie’s life...Dawn’s life. Damon Pope won’t have the Sons under his thumb.”

“That would be a blessing if we can keep Tig in check over that.” Chibs commented.

“It may be too late to save Piney, but even so we may want to let him play his hand out...as awful that is.” She winced, not liking having anyone lose their life for their plans.

“Why? Clay will kill him, Christ...Opie will go berserk and he’s been in so much pain already with Donna’s death. To find out Clay kills Piney now, too?” Jax said frustratingly.

“Will Clay step down if we ask him to?” She asked pointedly.

Chibs and Jax shared another look. There was no way Clay would step aside just on their asking. Not with the money to be made with the cartel.

“Fuck.” Jax swore as Chibs ran a hand over his eyes.

“Its awful even thinking it, I know. I hate it. But it might be better in the long run to let Piney do what he’s doing. Give him a purpose and a dignity...that he’s trying to make a stand after all these years of waiting for you and Opie to wise up. But in order to get Clay out as President, is if he’s moved from it. Having Opie shoot him, its a way of doing that. Once you’re in the President’s seat you can then steer the club where it needs to go. Especially, now that you know about the Rico and the CIA. But it’s manipulating Piney and Opie. I don’t like it, but it may be the only way...”

“You really think Piney’s doing that?” Chibs asked.

“Yeah. From what I saw in Gemma, it seems like he has nothing left to lose. Tara might know more of what’s been going on. I need chocolate, anyone want some?” She offered as she stood up.

“God, how can you eat with all the crap going on?” Jax complained.

“I’m high and I’m still trying to put weight back on. And you know what, Jax? Just because the club and you are having a crisis at the moment, doesn’t mean the world stops spinning.” She replied back to him from the kitchen. Grabbing her candy and three bottled waters.

“I know that. I’m not five.” He said peevishly at her. She handing him and Chibs the water and she sat back down next to Chibs.

She bit into her Reese’s peanut butter cup. Heaven. Whoever invented peanut butter and chocolate ought to have a Nobel prize in her opinion. And it was a compromise with Chibs for allowing her to have some peanut butter. It was loaded with sugar but it was oh so good.

“Are you sure about the Rico, that it not being that important to try and kill it?” Chibs asked getting her and Jax back on track.

“Pretty sure. And it’s probably already in the works right now, so I doubt we could kill it if we
wanted to. Romeo only uses it because its there, not like he expected to find it. But Romeo will keep it off our backs for us so long as we keep selling guns and muling their coke. Anything that threatens their supply lines they’ll freak out. And I don’t like how Luis is when things don’t go his way. I’d say leave it for now. See how things shake out.”

“We should try and get in to see Otto, at least. See what’s going on with him.” Jax said.

“Will we have time? Or can we? Clay’s going to want to get this cartel deal started asap.” Chibs said to Jax.

“Whatever we do, I know, no matter what, Tara does not see Otto. We don’t want that to happen. That’s like a rule. No Tara and Otto visits at all.” She waved her finger at them.

“And the cartel? What are we going to do with them?” Chibs asked.

“The cartel’s been voted. We can’t kill it now. Shit, we’re really screwed on this. Why couldn’t you have shown up sooner?” Jax complained to her.

“Oh, I’m sorry Your Highness. I didn’t realize my dreams were reality and that you needed me.” She threw back at Jax. He rolled his eyes at her.

“Oy, calm down. The both of ye’. Jesus Christ.” Chibs interjected. Taking another pull on the joint giving the two of them a glare.

“Like you said…the cartel is already set. Just need to get the Irish to sell the big guns to make Romeo happy. On the surface its a good deal. Lots of cash, which the club could use. Or so we’re told. And with the CIA helping the Galindo’s the risk of getting busted is pretty low.” She thought about it some more. Jax settled back in his chair as he listened to her talk out the problems at hand.

“I don’t like how the Galindo’s are tied to the CIA. It requires some thought. I don’t want to have to have them or the Feds be collecting proof of your gun sales and drug running while the CIA is clandestine-ing the illegality of all of this. If we manage to nip that in the bud, they can’t come after you and put you all in jail anyway after the club has done what they wanted for them.”

Jax smirked at her. “That’s a very outlaw way of thinking.” He teased.

“It would be something that they would do.” Chibs agreed with her.

“The whole Clay Galen BFF’s thing... Clay should be helping smooth relationships when you take over. But he’s going to pout for being pushed out. Best I can offer is not to go ballistic around Galen. The calmer you are around him, the better. But you have buttons that he’ll push.” She sighed as she thought over the dynamics regarding Galen and Jax. “You’ll get into a fist fight with him actually. He’s quicker than he looks, by the way. So keep your left up. Might want to get some sparring in to prepare.”

“You didn’t say that before.” Jax said with a raised brow.

She rolled her eyes. “Good God, if I told you every conversation and action you have, along with Tig’s and Gemma’s, we’d be here for the next six months. Had to edit what I saw down just to get through it all.”

“What about the letters?” Chibs asked.

“We need copies. Lots of copies. Might even want to have a set notarized and left with Lowen for safekeeping.” Jax said.
She paused, staring off thinking, barking out a laugh to her idea.

“What is it, m ‘anam?” Chibs prompted.

“Sorry. It’s just everyone is so worked up over those letters. Keeping them a secret. It’s stupid and not practical at all, I know. But I just thought how cool it would be to have JT’s book and his letters published. Have them out on bookstore shelves for everyone to read. Their secrets released to the world.” She giggled to herself over the idea. Jax and Chibs staring at her in horror. “Sorry, I tend to amuse myself.”

“Yeah, that’s not going to happen. Jesus.” Jax shook his head.

Chibs growled in her ear. “Later, I’ll make sure you’re properly amused.”

She giggled as she set aside her candy wrapper. Chibs giving her a kiss to her neck that had her shivering. Giving him a mild glare to behave, he just winked at her. Devious man. God...she loved him. Her attention swung back to Jax.

“Oh come on, change the names, dates and locations. JT had a voice, needed an editor, but he was a good writer.” She cajoled, still caught up in her idea.

“Yeah, well, I think he was tripping on acid in some sections.” Jax drawled, amused at her giggle fit.

“I could totally see it. The book hitting the bestseller list. Winning prizes. Maybe some rich movie producer wants to make it into a movie. All the while Clay and Gemma, even Wayne are having cows that its all out in the open.” She concluded. Chibs shaking his head at her.

“You are seriously demented, you know that right?” Jax said with a quick grin.

“I know. God, I know.” She breathed and calmed herself down. “There’s just so much to do. And Jax, I worry about you and Tara. The both of you.”

At Jax’s confused look she continued. “Jax, as far as Clay or Gemma know...you haven’t read those letters. You haven’t come here and had me read you. That is a lot of stress, knowing all this while having to play dumb and go out on wild goose chases all over kingdom come. All of it just to keep those two and the club in the dark until things are fixed well enough that the club can be shown the letters. That you and the club can deal with Clay and Gemma as it should be handled. But can’t right now because of the cartel, the Rico, the Irish, and Clay still as President. It’s going to be hard on you and Tara.”

“Shit. I’m thinking it might just be easier to pack up and go.” Jax admitted after a moment of thinking what she was saying. “But I can’t stand the thought of the club being crushed by Rico. To walk away is one thing, but to have it destroyed. I grew up with the club, my father started the club, my life has been the club. I can’t just let it die. Feels like I’d be killing my father if I let it happen.”

“Jax, sometimes, you love being in the club. It’s fun, like pulling pranks and coming up with creative ways of getting out of trouble with the law. Like when you figured out how to create a fake crime scene in Lodi, so that the crime tech geeks were distracted so that you could clean up Tig’s taco two-fer at the Bluebird warehouse.”

“You were there?” Jax asked.

“And saw it when I read you. And Holy Christ, you didn’t have to go after those idiots that cut you
off. You got freaking lucky that ax didn’t hit you in the head. Jesus, talk about road rage.”

Jax slapped his face with his hand as she admonished him from something he did years ago. Talking about it as if it were yesterday.

Chibs huffed a laugh at Jax as she took Jax to task.

Jax looked to Chibs, “I’m beginning to see why Tig is all weirded out.” Chibs flashed Jax the finger for his snarky comeback.

“The point is…” She glared at Jax for making fun of her. “…that the club, it can be fun. It hasn’t been lately, this need for money with Clay, steering the club into the cartel’s waiting arms. Dealing with Zobelle and Weston, Cameron kidnapping Abel. Nearly getting killed in Stockton. It’s been a lot of the crap you’ve had to deal with, that the club has to deal with. It all boils down to Clay and Gemma. The two of them running around thinking they know what’s best for everyone. Only to create more of a mess with their half-formed and ill-conceived notions of what needs to be done and why. And who has to deal with it, you.” She pointed at him. Letting Jax digest what she was saying.

“The club is more than just Clay and Gemma, Jackie. It’s Piney, Bobby, Rat, the guys in the garage, the croweaters, the families who depend on the club for jobs. The reach of the club extends beyond the table.” Chibs reminded Jax.

“Shit, if Rico destroys the Sons, it’ll mess with all of them, too.” Jax agreed, seeing the added dimension to the problems facing them.

Chibs sighed. “Aye. As much as Hale and the town hates us sometimes, the town needs us at the same time.”

“Look, decisions haven’t been made yet, we have time, not much but some. Gemma has no clue what she did when she grabbed me to throw me out of the garage. She must be panicking right now. Me, a teenaged girl, Chibs girlfriend, someone who should be kowtowing to her, is not under her control. The fact I’m at the table. A place that she is barred from physically. What must I be telling you guys in church? If you’re listening to me? Taking my advice? She must be questioning Clay like crazy when he gets home. Don’t be surprised if she approaches you about me.” She directed to Jax. “She’s already searched our things.” She looked to Chibs. Alarm hitting his eyes.

“What? When?” Chibs asked harshly.

“The other morning you tried to go to church without me. You dragged me in there after you yelled at Gemma for butting into your business. Gemma went into the apartment and searched our things.”

Jax sighing heavily recognizing that it would be something that his mother would do.

“Did she glean anything, m’anam?” His question loaded.

She knew he was asking about the trust. “She was jealous over the rings. Saw the paperwork but couldn’t figure out what it was in time and left it. She really debated about the rings though. God, if she took those, I’d storm her fucking house to get them back. You didn’t notice that they weren’t in that velvet bag?”

“I did. Thought maybe you took them out. That was Gemma?” Chibs asked, the two of them still talking about things that Jax was in the dark about. She sensed his curiosity, though.
She nodded.

“Fucking…oidchec a ’ghalla…” Chibs seethed.

“What rings? What paperwork?” Jax broke in, confused what had Chibs all upset.

“I inherited my grandparents wedding rings. My grandfather was a master jeweler, he made those rings. I couldn’t get to them back home. I knew the code to the safe, but they kept their bedroom door locked with a key. I’m many things, but locksmith isn’t one of them.”

“It’s why you stayed.” Jax concluded.

She took a beat before answering Jax. A little hurt that he’d think she only stayed for money and wealth. That she’d be that shallow. But she knew that he didn’t know her all that well and wouldn’t have said that if he knew her better.

“I didn’t stay because of the rings. As awful as it was in that house...that town, he is my father, it was the only home and family I’d ever known. I lost my mother at eight years old, in the blink of an eye. What eight year old could survive on their own? I had a routine. I adapted to my circumstances. I should have been killed in that car accident. The doctors said it was a miracle that I survived. For some reason, I’m meant to be in this life. Meant to be with Chibs.” She shrugged. Jax and Chibs shared another look. Chibs pressing a kiss to her hand.

Looking hard at Jax. “Meant to be here in Charming, in the club. Reading you, Tig, Gemma and who knows else in the coming days or weeks. From what I’ve seen, if I hadn’t been here to warn you of your future...people you love would be on their path of destruction. Maybe it’s my purpose for surviving that accident. To be here now...I don’t know. Chibs believes it to be true.”

“What I’ve told you tonight, what you feel right now, how scared and angry you are. Even hate me a little for poking and pushing at you. Jax, this was nothing compared to what I could do. And I’m giving you warning right now, tomorrow with Tara, and at times beyond if we manage to pull this club out of the mess, I won’t hesitate to make you see the truth. You’ll want to kill me for it. Nobody likes to see the truth of themselves, much less have someone rub their faces in it. I know what you and the guys are capable of when you are backed into a corner.”

“I won’t let anyone hurt you, m ‘anam.” Chibs reminded her.

“Don’t. I know you think you can protect me. Keep me safe. But don’t make that promise.”

“Nancy…” Chibs eyes sharpened on her.

“I can’t...I want to let you make and hold that promise. I do. But I know the reality. I know that things are dangerous. I know you’d move Heaven and Earth to keep me out of danger. But you need to understand, in order for us to fix things, we’re going to have to push people. Push Jax, Clay, Gemma, whoever else is standing in the way of our progress. I’ve had a target on my back since I woke up from the coma. You know that from the dreams. Like I know that you’d do anything to protect me from harm. I don’t know what is happening to us.”

“And I wasn’t kidding about possibly needing Romeo in the future. That future hasn’t been revealed to me yet. It just seems like the club and all this...its small potatoes to what we potentially could become. We talked about this.”

“Aye, I know. I don’t like it, though.” Chibs sighed.

“I know. I’ll reiterate that I’ll try and let you take lead on things. It’s the best I can do.”
Chibs pressed a harsh kiss to her temple. His acceptance of what she was saying. She squeezed his hand tighter, letting him know that she knew his stance.

She looked back at Jax. He was staring at her and Chibs, thoughts raced across his glittering eyes. Whatever conclusions he came to, he kept his conclusions to himself. “Jax, tomorrow is going to hard for you and Tara. Tonight was child’s play to what tomorrow will feel like.”

“You mean there’s more?” Jax asked a little horrified.

“Yes. You are already starting to realize it...but if we are to fix the club...you need to deal with it now rather than later. Now...where it is safe. And it's also time to get you and Tara on the same page.”

Jax frowned at her referring back to her stance that he and Tara weren’t communicating. She glared at him to keep him from making some stupid assertion again.

“Jax, I need you to understand that I’m willing to help you. I like you and Tara. You don’t deserve the fate I’ve seen in your future. Opie doesn’t deserve to die. The club and this town doesn’t deserve the pain that is coming for them. I truly believe I can help. But I can’t do it alone. I’m still healing and want to rest...get back up to a normal weight. And I’m telling you, my abilities are growing. I don’t know what is happening or why. Chibs is changing, too. We’ve got a learning curve going on here. I never dreamed I would find myself here or that my reading become more powerful. It’s freaking me out.”

Chibs massaged her hand.

She huffed and shook her head as a memory hit her. “Even Bobby told you. When you asked him for his thoughts on you going Nomad.” Jax looked at her confusedly as he tried to recall what she was referring to.

“He said that the club needs a psychic shiv.” She looked at Jax pointedly. “After reading Tig, Gemma and now you. He’s more right than he realized. Your psychic shiv has arrived.” She raised her hand up.

Chibs groaning at the ramifications of what her presence meant. Jax double-taking when he connected what she was saying. His eyes wide in recognition. “Holy shit!” He exclaimed.

“I’m not kidding about the history repeating itself. On a personal level, your relationship with Tara, to globally with the club. JT’s book...now his letters. How Clay and Gemma knee-jerk react to hide truth from you and the club. No secret can ever stayed buried. Not forever.” She warned.

“God, I’m exhausted. My head’s spinning and I don’t know how to get a handle on any of this.” Jax groaned.

“It’s late, you’ve had a shock. Jax, I want you to get some sleep tonight. Tara’s coming over tomorrow, we have a lot to talk about. She’ll probably fill in of what’s going on from her perspective. We’re doing recon. Like what you guys had to do with the Zobelle mess.”

“Yeah, except now, its inside our own club.” He pointed out.

Jax’s phone rang and she grabbed it while Jax was distracted with the thought of doing recon on the club. Jax looking at her confused as to why she wasn’t handing his phone over to him.

“Hello?” She said into the phone.
“Jackson?”

“Nope, it’s Nancy. How’s it going, Gemma?” She waved off Jax.

“Why are you answering my son’s phone?”

“Uhmm, because it rang. Why? Is something wrong?” She heard Gemma’s breathing grow more annoyed.

“Where’s my son!? What is he doing at Chibs?” Gemma demanded.

“Well, Jax came over to help Chibs. They’re filling me in on the in’s and out’s of the club. You know, since I was voted in at the table earlier. Didn’t Clay tell you?” She grinned as she dug at Gemma.

“They...they’ve voted you in? You’re at the table!?” Gemma yelled. She held the phone away from her ear at Gemma’s screech. Chibs raised his brows at the sound. Jax stood up in panic, reaching for the phone. But she shot up herself and circled around the sofa, keeping Chibs between her and Jax’s reaching hands.

“Yep, got a nifty title even. Seer of the Sons of Anarchy, Redwood Originals. Cool, huh? Bobby said he’d have the flash made up in a couple of days for my kutte. I wonder if I get business cards. I need to think of a logo.” She teased Gemma. Chibs shook his head in amusement, he couldn’t help the grin he sent her.

“Jesus...give me the phone.” Jax whisper demanding-ly to her. He circled and she stepped out of his reach again. Waving her hand at him to quit grabbing at her.

“No. There is no way you are at the table. Women aren’t allowed, its in the by-laws of the charter. We’ll see about this, soon as I talk to Clay and my son, you’ll be out on your skinny ass!” Gemma ranted.

“Well, I had to be voted in, since I’ve been dreaming about what’s already gone on in the club for the last few years.” She replied calmly. The more calm she was only seemed to make Gemma more incensed.

“Besides, it was a unanimous vote. And with the headaches Chibs and I have if we’re apart more than two minutes, kind of moot to not have me at the table. Since I’m a seer, I’ll just find out what’s going on anyway. You have any ideas for a logo? I was thinking of something to do with astronomy or something. You know, to go with the whole seer theme. Crystal balls are so passe.” She rambled, her high from earlier still kicking in. “Maybe a …”

“Put Jax on the phone!” Gemma demanded, interrupting her thoughts on business cards.

“Sorry, no can do. Jax dragged himself off to bed. Chibs pulled out the really good whiskey and got him smoking some pot. Didn’t think it was a good idea letting him drive. We called Tara and let her know he’s crashing here. Honestly, she must sleep like the dead, his snoring is really loud. It’s really late, Gemma, why do you need him, anyway? Have you fallen and can’t get up?” Jax set his hands to his head as he stared at her, not quite believing she was teasing the shit out of his mother like this.

“What, no. I’m just checking on him. And my son doesn’t snore.” Gemma defended Jax's sleeping habits.

“Wow, that’s creepy. How is it that you know or don’t know if he snores?” She paused and rolled
her eyes as Gemma huffed at her over the phone.

“Oh my God.” Jax’s voice barely audible as he swore, collapsing back down in his chair. Giving up on grabbing the phone from her. She sat back down on the sofa. Chibs stifling his laugh at her and Jax’s antics.

“He’s fine, Gemma. I’ll tell him you called. Good night.” She hung up the phone and powered it down so it wouldn’t ring again. Blinking back at Jax and Chibs. “So do I get business cards?” She asked innocently.

“I do not snore!” Jax blurted out. She couldn’t help her laugh. Chibs breaking down with her.

“Jax, I’ve barely started. Gemma has no clue what she’s up against. Clay has no idea what he’s really up against. Not with what we’ve learned tonight. Some harsh truths will be dug up tomorrow. I’m sorry for that, but you need to be prepared; you and Tara both need to be prepared. So get some rest, and we’ll get into it tomorrow.”

“I want Tara protected.” He said with sudden solemnity.

“Jax, she’s in the middle of it already, has been since she found those letters. Trying to keep her in the dark, it will only end in failure and hurting her. The things you and she will have to do to keep up the innocent act to all and everyone will be extremely stressful. Both of you need to be able to set that all aside and just be yourselves with each other...just to breathe at times. Releasing the truth of these letters is critical. Too soon and Rico will kill you. Too late and lives will be lost. The weight of that will be too much. You need her and she needs you. The stronger you are with each other, the better everything will be. So for right now, I don’t want you calling or taking calls from anyone unless its Tara and she knows you’re here. If its club business, Chibs will get the call. So get some sleep and if you snore, I’ll never let you forget it. And I think I really do want business cards.” She pouted.

“No cards. We’re outlaws, we don’t do business cards.” Jax growled at her.

“Mo chridhe…” Chibs warned in her ear, sending shivers down her spine.

“Fiitiinnnnne. No cards. Can I keep annoying Gemma about them though? That was fun.” She perked up at Chibs and Jax with her idea.

“Oh God. You are a menace. This is going to be a fucking nightmare.” Jax complained.

She giggled at Jax. “Jax, Gemma and Clay...they have no idea of who I am.”

“And who are you?”

“The fly in the ointment.” She said matter-of-factly, as if Jax should have figured this out already. Jax huffing at her explanation.

Chibs groaned checking the time. “Alright kids, time for bed. We aren’t going to get anything more accomplished tonight.” He stood up and pulled Jax up and walked with him to the guest bedroom, making sure he had everything he needed to crash for the night.

While she straightened up the living room and kitchen. As Chibs came back and checked the locks and turn lights off as they headed to bed themselves. They heard Jax moving around in the guest bedroom, the light flicking off from under the door as they passed.

She sighed as Chibs pulled her into him as they lay in bed. Relaxing from the liquor and the pot.
Letting go of the worry of the letters. “I love you. Thank you for helping me.”

“You were amazing. Glad that you didn’t pass out. Juice had a good idea there.” Chibs looked to her, her eyes worried as she thought about what happened tonight. “Hey, you okay?”

“Yeah. Just thinking things through..umm, tomorrow, its going to be hard.”

“Aye, you said that to Jax. Anything you didn’t tell him?”

“Well, Tara might get mad at us for not being honest with her...for why she’s coming over. And I’m pretty sure I need to do something that could potentially crush Jax.”

“What do you mean?”

“I think part of me being a seer, is being like a therapist. I don’t think I can help it. I could try, I suppose. But just coming up with marching orders, a battle plan for fixing the club...I don’t know. The things we’re up against, the history, the psychological ramifications. I don’t think I can just ignore it.”

“We’ll get through it, mo ghaol.” He crooned to her. Pulling her closer into his body.

“Thank you. Umm, if I do...you’re going to need to look after Jax. He’s going to be hit with a ton of bricks and he’ll need you.”

“Okay? What’s going to be sending him over the rails?”

“I’m going to try and avoid it if I can. But you’ll know.” She said. “I’ll have a better idea of what to do when Tara comes over. How to handle it.”

“Hey, we’ll get him through it. Him and Tara. I’ll be right there with you.” He promised to her.

She couldn’t stop fretting over the potential fallout of what she would have to do. “I pushed Jax tonight, tomorrow, it’ll be throwing him into the deep end of the pool. God, I can’t believe I’m talking like this. Not even legal to drink alcohol and I’m a therapist to the VP of an outlaw motorcycle club that runs guns and drugs. Couldn’t I have started out with someone easier? Like Tig?” She complained in frustration.

Chibs grinned at her. “Tig? I wouldn’t have pegged Tig as easy. The shit he gets into.”

“Tig is easy, he’s more flexible than you realize.” She grinned back to him.

“Fuck, next you’ll be telling me he’s going to be going to yoga or some shit.”

She laughed at the mental image of Tig in yoga wear in some weird ass pretzel move. “Just tell him its good for having epic sex. He’d sooo totally fall for that.” She suggested eagerly.

Chibs growled at her as he grabbed her tight. His eyes dark and glittering at her, his hands pulling her shirt off. “Can we please, stop talking about Tig? Kind of want to have some epic sex.”

“Hmm, okay.” She grinned back to him and leaned up to capture his lips in a deep kiss.

Chapter End Notes
Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
My heart = mo chridhe
nosey bitch = oidhche a ’ghalla
Chapter 53

Chapter Summary

Tara comes over

Chapter Notes

Hopping up and down...Tara's here! Tara's here!

Sorry, I'm excited to get into this part of the story. This is part of a bigger section, it was too big to post in as one chapter. Won't be as long as getting Jax's reading out. I think. Still working on it. Fingers crossed.

And any incongruity of the plots are my fault. Some of this I haven't gone over in a while. But I think I got it all to mesh pretty well.

Comments appreciated and welcome.
Enjoy!

Chibs had gone to answer the door as Jax watched her try and flip pancakes. Jax looked tired as he perched on the high bar stool. His eyelids at half-mast as he leaned his chin on his hand, elbow propped up on the counter he was leaning against. Sleep difficult with the revelations that was played out last night she guessed.

“Relax your wrist, you’re thinking too hard. In fact, don’t think just do.” Jax suggested, drawing her attention back to the pancakes before her.

“I am relaxed.” She looked up at him briefly to dispute his thought on her state of relaxation.

“Had some epic sex, some pot, I’m relaxed. You’re just making me nervous staring at me all amused at my spatula ineptitude.” She complained as she flipped one of the pancakes. Mentally swearing as the pancake collapsed over onto itself, quickly scraping the dough back over to finish cooking.

“Yeah, I heard the epic sex.” Jax drawled smirkingly. His eyes lighting up at her blush.

She sent him a glare. Which only made him laugh at her even more. Shaking her head at him admonishingly, he is such a tease. God. She let him have his fun, knowing he wasn’t going to like what was going to be discussed today.

“You’re just jealous, laddie.” Chibs said with a satisfied grin of his own. Tara following behind him. Her brown eyes looking around nervously.

Jax swiveled to look at Chibs, smirk in place. “Didn’t realize you still had game, brother.” He teased Chibs.
Chibs scowled at the insult and swatted the back of Jax’s head as he came around behind Jax. Coming back to her and the cooking fiasco she was making of their breakfast. “Bloody wanker.” Chibs grumbled next to her.

Jax just grinned and smoothed out his hair, sending them a knowing look that he deserved the hit. His arm out to Tara who quickly went to him.

Chibs pulled her close, giving her a wink as she gladly handed the spatula back to him. The current pancakes were done and she held the top up out of the way so he could slide them onto the platter with the others, setting the top back down to keep them warm.

Jax and Tara kissed and held each other. The fight from yesterday seemed to have calmed with some time for each of them to think. And well, her yelling at Jax for being an idiot might’ve probably gotten through Jax’s thick skull.

Tara looked stressed out and tired herself. Jesus Christ, two kids, one a newborn, dealing with work, Gemma, and the letters. It’s no wonder she’s looking a little worn down.

“Thanks for coming over Tara.” She said as Tara pulled back from Jax’s welcoming hug and kiss.

Tara smiled politely. “Thanks for inviting me. Is there anything I can do to help?” She asked peering over into the work area of the kitchen from her spot at the breakfast bar/island.

“You can grab the juice from the fridge. Glasses are over in that cabinet.” Chibs waved a hand directing Tara.

She already had a tray out for the platter and the dishes. Going to the drawer with the silverware she counted out forks and knives.

“Jackie, get off your lazy bum and grab the tea. We’re eating out on the patio.” Chibs told Jax and everyone.

Jax and Tara took up their assigned tasks and went out through the sliding screen door to the patio.

Chibs took up the heavy tray and she snagged the maple syrup and powdered sugar, following him out onto the patio. Shutting the door behind her.

Tara and Jax had set the glasses around the table and were settling down in their chairs. The storm from last night had cleared out and the sun had burned off the dew and leftover rain off the table and chairs.

A small warm breeze trailed and played through her loose hair as she sat down herself. She sipped her juice and watched Chibs, as he handed out plates of pancakes to Jax and Tara.

Jax enthusiastically shook a copious amount of powdered sugar over his pancakes. She couldn’t help chuckling watching him, he was like a little kid. Tara rolling her eyes at Jax, grabbing the sugar out of his hands. Admonishing him over keeling over in a diabetic coma the amount of sugar he added to his pancakes. He just grinned and grabbed up the syrup and poured the syrup generously over his pancakes.

Tara caught her amused grin and rolled her eyes over Jax’s production with his breakfast.

Chibs slid a high stack of pancakes in front of her and she sighed. Still not used to eating so much. Tara must have caught her reaction.
“You okay?” Tara asked.

“Yeah, just gearing up to actually eat.” She said, frowning at the large amount of food he’d put in front of her.

“Just eat what ye’ can. You’re fine.” Chibs assured her and pressed a kiss to her temple. She smiled at him and picked up her fork. Tara looked to Jax who simply shrugged at her.

“You really should have someone look at you, have some blood work done.” Tara suggested.

“No. I know you mean well, but I’ll never go to another hospital again if I can help it.” She said. “It’s so cool we can eat outside in February.” Changing the topic.

“The novelty will wear off.” Jax smirked.

She glared at him. “You are a deputy downer.” She accused, waving her fork at him. “It’s sleeting in Chicago, try walking to school in that...and then you can complain. Make you appreciate all this.” She twirled her fork gesturing to the nice weather they were having.

“I always hated the wind chill.” Tara offered. “Standing to wait for the ‘el’ and your face goes completely numb, feels like your skin’s been sandpapered when you finally step inside.”

“Hail’s no fun either.” She added. Tara nodding.

“Oy, eat.” Chibs reminded her.

She grumbled but took forkful of pancakes. Satisfied, Chibs dug into his own stack of pancakes. Their bare feet tucked in with each others to keep their hands free to wield fork and knife.

She got half-way through her pancakes when she had to call it quits. She was getting better. Annoyed that she still felt so full after her meals. But she knew she had to keep up getting in calories. Her ribs weren’t as prominent as when Chibs first found her. But she knew he still worried.

Settling back in her chair with her tea as Jax and Chibs grabbed seconds. Watching Jax as he seemed to finally relax. The pressure of the club, the letters, and his reading seemed to hit the backburner. Tara unaware of what was about to happen, took her cues from Jax. And her own body language relaxed as she finished her plate.

“These were really good. Was the mix from a box?” She asked.

“Nope, made them from scratch with fresh blueberries.” Chibs answered.

“Ugh, I’m jealous. Things are so hectic with the kids and work...I barely have the energy to keep up. Much less cook from scratch.”

Jax and Chibs both finished their plates and only a couple of pancakes were left. She piled the plates back onto the tray, taking it back into the kitchen to be cleaned up later. Heading back out and into her seat again.

“So, uhm, what happens now? You’ve read the letters…” Tara broached nervously.

She gave Jax a loaded look to start to fill in Tara. If he didn’t, she was going to have to. She wanted to see how he would tell her about the reading and his plan. What they were facing.

Jax sighed and looked to Tara. “After I left the house last night, I drove around and came here. I
didn’t know what to think. I’m so angry and afraid. What these letters would mean to the club, to us. Chibs made me promise to come talk to him and Nancy before I did anything. It was only that promise that Clay is still breathing. I can’t believe you held onto these. That you weren’t going to show them to me. After talking with them, I understand why you didn’t want me to read them. I am sorry for yelling and scaring you last night. I was just in such shock.”

“Jax, I wanted to show them to you. I was scared how you would react. And you were so excited about getting out...I just...I knew that if you read the letters, they’d just push you deeper into the club. I’m sorry.” Tara bit at her lip as she searched Jax’s eyes for his reaction.

“I know. Nancy, she told me I was an idiot for leaving the way I did. I know why you kept them from me. I still have plans of getting out. But I can’t just leave, not with what I learned about what Clay did to JT and what is going on with the club.”

She and Chibs kept silent as Jax fumbled his way through the quagmire of information he had to tell her. She could see Jax trying to soften the blow, thinking about what he had to say.

“Nancy, she’s been voted into the club. She’s at the table.”

“You were?” Tara glanced at her, not sure to believe what Jax was saying.

“Yes. I had to be.”

“I thought that women weren’t allowed at the table.”

“They aren’t. But she’s a special case, her bond with Chibs and her abilities. We had to vote her in, and after what I learned last night, if she’s right, she’s the only one that can save us all.” Jax told Tara, who looked to her in confusion.

She shifted at how Jax was pinning the salvation of the club on her shoulders like that. Glancing at Chibs, his eyes catching hers at that wording himself.

“Bond? Abilities? I don’t understand, what does all this have to do with the letters?” Tara looked from Jax to her and back again.

Jax smoothed his goatee down as he tried to formulate a response to Tara’s question. And it was clear he kept Tara in the dark about her. Even with her spilling Gemma’s secret regarding Tig’s money on their trip to Oregon. That would have been a perfect time to tell Tara about her psychic abilities. But no. Of course not.

“Jesus Christ, Jackie…” Chibs growled at Jax, echoing her own frustration with Jax. He tried to keep Tara safe, but in so doing, only makes her a bigger target.

Tara looked to Chibs. “What am I missing? Someone talk to me.” She demanded.

Jax simply looked to her to save his ass.

“Tara, first I want you to know that the things we need to talk about, this house it’s Switzerland. Okay? You need to know that. Whatever you need to say or what any of us says here, it stays here. Stays between the four of us.”

“Okay…” Tara hesitantly agreed.

“I knew you were stressed over something at the potluck at Gemma’s. After reading the letters, the fact you kept them hidden and safe for as long as you have...I’m impressed by how you’ve kept
your cool. But, the letters...what they contain...you know how dangerous that information is.”

Tara heaved a deep breath as she listened. Jax took up Tara’s hand in sympathy to her stress.

“When I read Gemma, I was concerned greatly for your safety. For Jax’s and your safety. I want you to know that you can speak freely here. You don’t have to carry this secret anymore. In fact, you may have information that we need to know to handle things going forward. Jax was stuck in Stockton for much of what you’ve been going through this past year.”

“Uhm, okay. I’m confused, what about my safety?” Tara questioned. “And how did you know about the letters?”

“Tara, I’m psychic. Anyone who touches me, I’m forced to see that person’s life. Their entire past, present and future. The club had me read Tig at church as proof, Gemma tried to kick me out of the garage and grabbed me. It’s from Gemma that I knew of the letters. Chibs figured out how they got here.”

“It was a guess on my part.” Chibs supplied.

“Psychic? There’s no such thing.” Tara reeled back at the notion. “I mean...I heard Tig say something at the potluck, but I wasn't sure if I heard right.”

“Babe, she’s the real thing. I didn’t want to believe it myself. But she knows things...things about the club...things about Tig....things about Gemma....and things about me. Nancy read me last night.”

“What are you talking about?” Tara questioned, still panicking.

“Tara, you know...I told you that I was in a car accident when I was a kid. I was in a coma. When I woke up, I read people. Doctors tried to figure out what was going on with me at the time. It only made things worse, the more tests and touching the did to me. I kept passing out, puking my guts out. And you’re a doctor...you know what tests you’d run if you had a kid with my symptoms. They couldn’t find anything. Eventually, gave up and sent me home, saying it was just my imagination due to the grief for my mother’s death. Or it was the medications. But it never stopped.”

Tara stared at her like she had sprouted a second head. God, she hated trying to convince people of her abilities.

“Tara, Nancy knows things about the club...things that she couldn’t have known.” Chibs tried.

“She’s been voted into the club as Seer. It was safer for her and us if she was at the table.” Jax told Tara.

Tara still didn’t look convinced. “Tara, I knew who everyone was before Chibs ever found me. I’d been having dreams about him and the club. I knew who you were before we ever met.” She tried again.

“Hold on, there’s no such thing as psychics. I don’t...I don’t understand.” Tara freaked out.

And she couldn’t blame her. Tara being a doctor, a scientist at heart. Needing hard concrete proof. Not some cockamamie story of psychics and readings. But, they didn’t have all day to prove to Tara that she was a seer. They had more important issues to talk about.

“Tara! You bailed out Tig when everyone went to Belfast to find Abel. You shot Joshua and called
Jax. He was still alive when Jax showed up. Joshua’s last words ‘Once a bikers slut.’ Jax killed him before he could finish that insult. You started freaking out, Jax comforted you and then, because its you two...you have sex not five feet from a dead body.” She rolled her eyes at that memory. Jesus, and Jax had the gall to tease her about her sex with Chibs.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs muttered in surprise. “When was this?”

“When you were trying to pull the slugs out of Cameron's ass.” Jax admitted.

Chibs threw his head back, rolling his neck. He caught her amused look when he settled back down again.

Turning back to Tara, she added a few more details since Tara was looking wide-eyed between the three of them. “You’re favorite book is ‘The Jungle’ and then will crave steak after reading it. Gemma took you to Caracara to practice shooting; where you two shot up Ima’s car. Which I find hilarious because Gemma is a terrible shot.”

Tara’s face paled as she spilled out information that no one but Jax or Gemma knew.

“It sounds ridiculous, psychic. I like seer better. But who knows, I mean its not like I went to school and got a degree to call myself a psychic. Or a seer. I just know that I’m reading anyone who I touch or touches me. Except for Chibs, thank God.” Chibs hushed at her, pressing a kiss to her temple.

“What?” Tara’s eyes went wide. “You told her?” She accused to Jax.

“I didn’t tell her anything!” Jax waved his hands up in the air. “It’s like she said. She read me last night. She knows all the stuff I ever did or will do. She knows. She read Tig, knows why he’s afraid of dolls. She read Gemma. Freaked the hell out of everyone at the garage. It’s why I gave them JT’s book to read. She’s been seeing and reading things going on with the club, and at the time, she wasn’t telling us anything. I almost didn’t believe Chibs when he called about the letters. I couldn’t believe that you had them...held onto them. Weren’t going to tell me about them.”

“Jax, I was afraid that they would only pull you deeper into the club. You told me you have a plan to get out. I thought, it was safer to keep them hidden.”

She couldn’t help giving a short laugh when Tara mentioned Jax’s plan. Jax glared at her but turned back to Tara.

“I know. And I still want to get us out, to safety. But my plan, God, I’m having to adjust it. Things are more complicated than I realized when I made you that promise.”

“I don’t understand...what complications?” Tara shook her head.

She looked to Jax pointedly.

Jax sighed in frustration. “If what she told me last night is true...the club is in deep shit trouble. Nobody knows how bad things are. Not even Clay. I only know because Nancy read me. Told me last night. Again, we need to check it out. But what she’s said...it’s plausible.”

“What trouble?”

“Because of our retribution to the Russians over my attack in Stockton, we needed to find a new buyer for the guns. The Irish need to sell the guns to keep their Cause running. And because we took out Jimmy O’...the Irish opened their entire inventory to us.” Chibs grunted next to her, still
not liking his hand in how things ended up regarding the Irish.

“Clay worked a deal with the Galindo cartel while in Stockton. The club voted to sell them the
guns that the Russians weren’t going to be buying anymore. I didn’t know until Clay and I met with
Romeo...that part of the deal was to mule coke back up into Northern Cali. Clay never told anyone.
Romeo brought it up at the meeting and he was forced to tell me about it.”

“But...I thought the club doesn’t deal with drugs.”

“We don’t. Clay set up the muling behind the club’s back. Just as the Irish need the cash from the
gun sales for their Cause, the Cartel needs the cash from the coke sales to fund their war efforts
south of the border. Cash to buy the guns we are selling them.”

“Oh my God.” Tara breathed.

“I confronted Clay, told him that the club hadn’t passed on the muling, yet Romeo is already
putting together the first shipment of coke for us to mule in a couple of weeks. Clay told me that
his hands were going, he hadn’t saved any money for retirement, brought up his worry for
Gemma’s well-being if he couldn’t ride anymore. That he needed this deal to cash out. I was
pissed. But I negotiated with Clay, that for my vote and help in passing the mule vote that when
Clay steps down, I would walk free of the club myself. Take you and the boys out of Charming just
as I had planned. My plan, originally, was only for the gun sales. But now with the muling, we’ll
be bringing in a lot of cash our way. We’d be set until we settled someplace new.”

“That was your plan?” Tara’s brows shot up. “Jax, I offered to support us. I can afford it. You’re
not just running guns, but drugs, too! After what you went through with Wendy and Abel. How
could you do that, Jax? You just got of of Stockton by the skin of your teeth, that was short time. If
you get caught trafficking drugs... Jesus, what the hell were you thinking!”

“I know, I don’t like it either. Clay killed Keith McGee in Belfast for the very same reason that
he’s doing now. I couldn’t believe it. I don’t like it either, but to get us out clean from the club,
with the cash we needed to leave. I felt I had to support Clay in this scheme. And I told you that I
don’t like the idea of being supported by you. It’s not right, me not bringing in the money to
support my family.”

Jax took a breath and looked to Tara again, speaking in a calmer voice. “Look, the things I learned
from Nancy reading me...I can’t leave now. Things are much more complicated...if I leave
now...the club will suffer. Clay needs to meet Mayhem...but I can’t do it now. Outside forces are
making that too much of a risk.”

“Jax...why? Why can’t we just go? What outside forces? Why not just leave? Use the letters to get
out.” Tara’s voice growing more hysterical.

Chibs shot her a worried look as they saw how stressed Tara was getting. This on top of what she’s
had to deal with regarding Gemma and hiding the letters.

“Because, its not just us.” Jax said. “If it was just you, me, and the kids dealing with Gemma and
Clay, then yes. I’d agree to pack up and go. But it isn’t. It’s the club. The people who depend on
the club for their livelihood. Opie, Bobby, Chibs, Nancy, all the guys at the garage, Lowell, Dog.
the prospects. And, I grew up with the club. As much as I hate it sometimes, I love it as well. We
do good when we can. We support each other when one of us needs help.”

Jax ran his hand over his goatee. “I had Tig go with Chibs on his rescue operation to get Nancy. I
took one look at Chibs, he talking about headaches and dreams of a girl who needed his help.
Pacing and chain-smoking, the pain in his eyes. He was going to drive across the country by himself. I was worried he’d stroke out or crash his bike in the middle of nowhere. I ordered Tig to go with him. Tig called and kept us in the loop of where they were and what was going on. Tig said it was the hardest ride he’s ever done. Tig, himself, was freaking out by how hard Chibs pressed his ride."

Her breath hitched as Jax spoke of his experience of Chibs so far out of control and in so much pain. She and Chibs already talked about it. He promised he wouldn’t do that again. But it still scared her that he put his life at risk like that. Her eyes going to Chibs. He took her hand and pressed a kiss to her palm. She gave him a watery smile and he winked to her that he saw her worry for him. Acknowledging that he had someone to worry for him. That he wasn’t alone anymore.

Jax and Tara glanced their way but Jax turned back to Tara.

“I can’t just leave the club. We have a chance to save the club from Clay and this cartel deal. And you read JT’s book. You know the vision he had for the club. For it to go legit. If I leave now...it’d be betraying him. Nancy’s right, we have a chance to fix things. Or at least try. Because this cartel deal is much more complicated that anyone realizes.”

“What complications?” Tara drilled for answers.

“Like I said, we need to check into it, but if Nancy is right...the cartel is being helped by the CIA. And the club is under investigation again for Rico. The CIA will keep the Rico on ice, so long as the club gets them their guns and mules their coke. If the deal falls apart, the Rico will fall on us and it will take down everything.”

Silence fell over the four of them. Tara pressed a hand to her forehead at the news, struggling with the bomb that Jax just told her.

She distracted herself by the feel of Chibs hand holding hers and the trill of the birds that flitted back and forth from a row of bushes off to the side of the house. Letting Tara have the time to wrap her head around with what Jax was telling her.

Jax took in Tara’s silent reaction and bravely continued. “If you have a job offer coming, I want you to tell me. I want you to be happy, to be safe. If leaving with the boys, me joining you later...it’ll be hard because I do love you with everything I am.” Jax’s voice quavered from his own emotions at the possibility of Tara leaving and taking the boys with her.

Tara breathed, started to speak, only to break off as thoughts raced across her face. But then she looked to Jax resolutely. “When I read the letters. Realized what happened to JT. You had just been attacked in Stockton, nearly killed in that horrible place. I went to Margaret. I broke down in her office. I was close to my due date with Thomas. My hormones were all over the map. I was scared what would happen to me, to the boys, if you didn’t make it out of Stockton. If you were killed next time. I would be trapped in Charming with the kids. Gemma would never let me leave with the boys.” Tara broke off, trying to keep her composure.

“Jax, you don’t know how overbearing she can be. At first, her coming over all the time was a help. With work, the boys, by myself, even with Neeta. She was a help and I let her in.” Tara’s voice took on a panicky tone.

“She forced herself into the delivery room with you.” She interjected. Tara jerked to look at her, surprised that she knew that bit of information. “I read Gemma.” She shrugged.

“Yes, she did. Now, it’s worse. She just walks right into the house, it doesn’t matter what time of
day or if I need her there or not. She just lets herself in. Using the boys as an excuse to be there.”

Tara glanced at her. “I couldn’t believe how you spoke to her in her kitchen. I’d never seen anyone stand up to her the way you did.” Tara shook her head.

“Margaret is helping me putting my resume together. She and I got close when we were kidnapped. She was an old lady, Jax. She was in the life.”

“I didn’t know that.” He said quietly, listening to Tara.

“I didn’t either until they checked her for ink. The guy she was with, she was in love with him. They were both on drugs and overdosed. She woke up, he didn’t. She got herself clean, a job. She’s got a husband and kids now. She’s helping me find work.” Tara admitted with a guilty look.

“You didn’t think to tell me that?” Jax blurted out.

Tara reared back at Jax’s harsh tone.

“Jax...let her finish talking.” She sent him a warning look.

Tara looked bewildered that she stood up to Jax.

“Tara, please...continue.” She prompted.

“Uh, well, getting hired to another hospital or practice. It takes time. Interviews, surgeries and studying new techniques.” Tara shifted her eyes to Jax. Whatever Tara needed to say had her nervous. But it was important enough for her to press on. She nodded to Tara her support.

“Jax, if you were killed...I needed to think about what I would do. What would be best for the boys. I couldn’t trust Gemma. I have no other family. I love you, Jackson. But I am looking for other work. Even with your plan of getting out...I’ll still need to find work.”

Jax leaned back in his chair. From his expression, he had no clue that Tara was already on the job hunt and didn’t bother to tell him.
Chapter 54

Chapter Summary

Tara unburdens.

Chapter Notes

Warning: There is talk and discussion about domestic violence and abortion.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I thought for so long about those letters. Debating with myself if I should give them to you... when to give them to you. Do I give them to you while you were in prison? I was afraid of what you might do. That you might lose your chance at parole. That our boys would grow up without their father. And that Gemma would teach them the ways of the club. To grow up with our mistakes.” Tara shook her head, the fear evident in her voice, body and spirit.

“But most of all, I’m scared that if we take too long...we’ll never make it out of here. I’m willing to let you find a way to get out. But with Margaret on the case...I may have to go. I’m sorry.” Tara was weepy by the time she finished.

She frowned as Tara was so insistent on leaving Charming. Jax sighed and ran a hand over his eyes. Seeing him hear Tara’s reasoning for leaving. And even though he offered to let her go...he hates to have her actually do it. Digging deeper into his well of abandonment issues. But nagging at her was Tara’s view that the only way of changing her life for her family was by leaving.

She jerked upright in surprise, taking a deep breath as a connection struck inside her. Tara’s admission triggering a memory of what she’d seen in Jax’s read. Her sudden movement drew everyone’s attention to her. Whatever Jax was going to say in response to Tara’s admission, interrupted.

“Sorry.” She apologized absently. “You’ve been wanting to tell him that for a long time now, haven’t you?” She questioned Tara. “You tried to tell him but he proposed and the conversation took a different turn and your need to tell him all that was pushed to the back burner.” She concluded. “Oh God.” She breathed as the connection solidified.

Tara looked at her confusedly, to look to Jax and Chibs for an explanation of what she was talking about.

Her hand fell to the table with a heavy thump as she glared at Jax. Grabbing her napkin, throwing it at Jax. He jerked and caught the napkin in surprise with a confused look to what she was doing throwing things at him.

“What?” Jax sputtered at her.

“This is what I’ve been talking about.” She pointed at Jax. “You cut her off and didn’t let her tell
you what’s on her mind, worrying at her.” She waved her hands mockingly at him. “You come in
with your ‘Big Plan’...asking her to marry you. Didn’t give her a chance to talk to you. Listen to her
before throwing your two cents in.” She ordered Jax. Giving him a look he deserved. Only to turn
her glare to Tara.

“And you…” She pointed at Tara. “....didn’t bring it up again. Thinking it didn’t matter. It does.
Don’t ever stop talking to him. Out of everyone...you are the one he needs to listen to. He needs
that information. If he jumps over you and you never get to finish what you need to tell him, he’ll
go running off thinking everything is hunky dory, when it’s not.”

“Uh, well, he proposed. It was a surprise.” Tara tried to explain.

She shook her head, ignoring Tara’s explanation. “Jesus, you tried again. Probably didn’t realize
you were even doing it.”

“What?” Tara looked at her in confusion.

“M ‘anam? Want to fill in the rest of the class?” Chibs asked her.

“The morning after Opie and Lyla’s wedding. The two of you were in the kitchen having breakfast,
you were telling Jax about the scheduling of the boys, who has them when and where, getting
ready to leave for work. He, at the kitchen table with Abel, looking lost and slightly horrified by
the new schedule. Overwhelmed by it all, still adjusting to being home and Dad again.”

Jax and Tara looked at her as they too, remembered that morning themselves. Tara looking a little
more shocked than Jax since he had more time to come to terms with her knowing him so deeply.

“Tara, you said to Jax...him being home and around more will be a big help, daddy.’ You being
home will be a help. It was subtle. The two of you were joking about the phrasing. Ooohhh, that’s
good.” She sighed as she plotted out the meaning of that phrasing. “It was a cry for help. Christ.
And you simply tell her that you didn’t want to disrupt the schedules. Way to go Dad...so much for
your help.” She finished sarcastically.

Jax and Tara glanced at each other. Chibs slid a hand over her shoulder to go to her nape, his
fingers massaging her tight muscles as she was lost in the memories...analysing what happened.

“Of course, Gemma comes right into the house.” She rolls her eyes. “You escape to work. And
Gemma gives you her ‘You doing okay, baby?’ . Studying your reaction, to get a sense where your
head was at. She was testing you. Seeing if you’d read the letters yet.” She shook her head at the
mess going on right now. “Fucking hell. Making sure she had her claws in you.”

“What?” Jax questioned.

Refocusing back to Jax and Tara, ignoring Jax’s question. “But that throw away sentence you said
to Jax.” She shook her head. “That was a plea for help. It was a joke when you said it, but you
meant it. You are worried about who is watching the boys. What Gemma or whoever the
babysitter is telling your kids. What they are doing where you can’t see or hear what is going on.”
She turned her eyes to Jax. “You being home, she has an ally. You need to support her with how
she handles the boys. Tara’s too scared to go up against Gemma directly. But you aren’t.” She
pointed to Jax.

“But...I didn’t intend all that. I really could use the help. The schedule is crazy.” Tara appeased,
looking between the three of them.

“No, I know. You weren’t consciously aware you were doing it.” She waved her hand distractingly
towards Tara’s reasoning.

“Jesus.” Jax shifted in his chair and pulled out a cigarette.

“Interesting...” She mused. Her eyes widened and she hissed, grabbing Chibs napkin next and threw it at Jax again. “Idiot!”

“Now what!?” He glared at her, catching the napkin easily.

She leaned into him. “What happened next, Jax? You and Opie go off to the Wahewa and get held hostage by those moronic Russians. *We want our guns.* The two of you held hostage, laughing your asses off that Opie should have stayed home in bed with Lyla, the porn star.”

She huffed at Jax for his idiocy. “Lucky for you Romeo and Luis showed up out of the blue, saved your collective asses. The same day that Tara was trying to tell you that she needed you! Idiots.”

She growled in frustration.

“Hey! That wasn’t our fault. Ope and I didn’t know the Russians were there. We were outnumbered.” Jax tried to explain to her. But it was Tara’s reaction that had Jax looking to his fiance.

“You were almost *killed? Again?*” Tara breathed at Jax. Her dark eyes wide as she stared at Jax in horror.

“But, it was fine.” Jax soothed.

But Tara was angry, rightfully so. Learning that Jax was making jokes about his life like that. She saw Tara fighting with herself, trying to control her anger and fear.

Chibs slid her a worried look as the conversation went silent. As Tara worked to control herself. And she could tell that Tara’s had to do this for a long time. Not just with Jax. All the times Gemma pops up unannounced must wear on her. All that emotion being stuffed inside herself...that’s not good. And Jax...just letting her do it. God damn it.

“Tara…” Jax tried again.

“Let him have it, Tara. He needs to know. He needs to learn this.” She encouraged to Tara in a soft voice. Tara’s pained eyes met hers.

“What?” Jax asked cluelessly. Soon as he utters that question though Tara slaps him hard and swift across his cheek. Jax’s head snapping from the recoil and in surprise by Tara’s attack.

“Holy Shite.” Chibs tensed next to her at the suddenness of Tara’s attack. She checked Chibs but turned back to Jax and Tara.

“You promised me! Barely twenty-four hours. You *promised* me!” Tara waving her engagement ring in his face. “You can’t go a day without putting your life at risk. To tell me it was *fine!* What the hell were you thinking! What would happen to me and the boys if you were dead! I’d never get free from Gemma. God damn it. And you laugh it off. What the hell is going on in your head!”

Tara continued slapping at Jax. Except for that first slap, she glad Tara’s slaps were mostly girly slaps, and not actually doing damage to Jax.

“Tara, babe, I had it handled.” Jax tried to appease her, his hands taking hers to stop the slaps. But she shook him off.
“No! You didn’t! You were nearly killed, and you think you had it handled?! You are not eighteen anymore. You are a father with two children, who love you and depend on you! Stop thinking nothing can’t happen to you. Because what happens to you, happens to me and to your sons!” Tara was shaking, her tears running down her cheeks.

Jax made to say something to comfort her. Shocked at how upset Tara was. Tara huddled on the far side of her chair. Getting as far away from Jax she could get without leaving the table. Her hands swiping at her face.

She pointed at Jax, stopping him from reaching to Tara again. “Jax, don’t. Not yet. Just sit there and listen to her. Let her do this.” She ordered.

Returning her attention back to Tara. “Tara, how many times have you felt this way? How long have you been wanting to say all that?”

Tara looked at her, her breathing hitching and hiccuping.

She held Tara’s look. “It’s safe here. Let it out. How long? How long have you been holding all this back?”

“A lot.” Tara broke. “I...I can’t count the number of times. Its not just Jax, but Gemma, the club. The violence. I’m a doctor, a healer. I fix hearts in babies...not even a day old. Even I can’t believe I’m doing it, holding a scalpel, sometimes. I left Charming to go to college. But to escape it, too. I wanted Jax to come with me.” Tara pleaded. Shifting her gaze to look at Jax.

“I tried to tell you. Gemma was all over me. Dictating that I wasn’t good enough, not tough enough for you...for the life. I even got caught shoplifting, the petty crime to prove to Gemma that I could handle it. Thought it would make Gemma back off, know that I could be tough enough. But even then...when you weren’t around, she told me that I would never have you. I tried so hard. But I had to get out, before I turned into something that I didn’t recognize or like. I know you see it as a betrayal, leaving the way I did. But I couldn’t take it anymore. I had the opportunity and I took it. I wanted you to come with me, I begged you to come with me.”

Tara took a breath. Her voice steadier. “When I got to Chicago, I focused on my education and career, and then I met Joshua. Years had passed and I thought I was done with Charming. I still missed you.” She glanced at Jax.

“A part of me, even then, was always and will always be in love with you. But.” She leaned her elbows on the table, her hands twisting around themselves. Her eyes downcast.

“I tried to have a life, to move on. He was charming and sweet, at first. I didn’t see it happen, I was deep in my residency. He started stalking me. Asking me where I’d been. He...he hit me. And...and...” Tara’s voice grew shaky again. Her non-explanation to her ands...she knew that things were bad when she and Joshua were together. That she was a victim of domestic violence...it was a blessing she managed to escape. Chibs took her hand again, giving her a supportive squeeze. Jax leaned back and his eyes teared up as he listened to Tara’s pain.

She shot him a hard look to keep him silent and stop him from doing anything to stop Tara from continuing her story.

Tara took a deep breath and visibly took hold of herself. “And it took me a long time, because of who he was, his connections. The police, his superiors, they didn’t believe me. Had to go to three different judges until I finally found one who would sign the restraining order.”
Tara looked at her and she saw the deep hurt that was begging to be purged out.

“It’s okay, Tara. Let it out.” She repeated softly.

“I found out I was pregnant a few days later. I knew it was his.” Tara admitted painfully, not able to look at Jax or anyone at the table. Her tears rushing back.

“Tara…” Jax tried to take hold of Tara. Tara flinching at his touch.

“Jax. Let Tara talk.” She glared hard at Jax again for trying to hijack the conversation.

Tara wiping at her eyes and glancing at the three of them.

“It’s safe, Tara. Whatever is said here, stays here.” She reminded Tara again.

Tara gasped a breath. “I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t have his...that monster’s child. I was scared he would kill me. What kind of father would he have been. I had an abortion as soon as I could get an appointment. I used an assumed name. I left Chicago, came back here. I really didn’t know he was going to follow me. I did everything I could think of to make sure he didn’t find me. But he still found me.” She brushed away her tears angrily. Angry at herself for not covering her tracks as well as she thought. God. She didn’t know that it was never her fault.

“That night...he was going to rape me, get me pregnant, thinking we’d be a ‘happy family’.” Tara said hysterically. “Saying we’d have a do over.” Tara swiped at her tears again. “I shot him...I shot him and called you. And we did what we did.” Tara fell silent, the knowledge of Jax killing Joshua and whatever he had to do to protect her.

Tara was pale and drained.

“And now, you’re here, again.” She said gently. “Jax, in your life. Gemma...again. But the stakes are higher now. You have the boys to worry about. You’re not just you anymore.”

“Oh God.” Tara broke. Her hands covering her face.

Jax leaned forward, his hands clenching. Eyes tearing up himself as he watched Tara fall apart.

“You want to believe in what Jax is saying, what he’s promising you. But you find out things, things that he’s done or may have to do that puts him in harm’s way. Puts you at risk. Puts the boys at risk. It’s why you held onto the letters all this time. You know the danger that Clay and Gemma are.” Tara looked at her. The fear in her eyes.

“Tara, this fear...it’s normal. Even without the club, Jax and Gemma’s relationship, Gemma’s control issues...in a normal society, outside the club, would scare the crap out of you or anyone else, too. The fact she’s got hat boxes full of guns in her closet, the way she talks and treats people who defy her, makes your fear and anxiety skyrocket. Fight or flight. We all have a breaking point.” She said gently, Tara swiping away her tears. “Add in the letters...it’s no wonder you’re at a breaking point.”

“You don’t bail, Tara.” She said determinedly to Tara. “Jax, you said that to her in the heat of an argument. To you,” she directed to Jax, “her leaving is bailing...giving up.”

“But Tara doesn’t fight the way the other women around the club fights with each other. Like everyone is in a cage match to be the top dog. Tara doesn’t process fighting that way. She talks to you. Tries to make you hear her. Gets frustrated when she’s ignored or not heard. When she sees she’s not getting through...she leaves. She protects herself in flight, but only when she’s fought the
way she knows how. And her form of fighting is talking to you.”

Turning back to Tara. “And Tara, you can’t let yourself get sucked into Gemma’s tutelage in her way of fighting, the club way. You have nothing to prove to anyone. Not to the club, not to Gemma, and not to Jax. You are a doctor...a surgeon...educated. You worked hard for your career. If an intern or a resident treated you the way Gemma does...you’d hand them their proverbial heads on a platter.” Tara gulped at how harshly she was being spoken to.

“Don’t let Gemma goad you into shit just because she tells you what to do.” She shocked Tara up. Bolstering up Tara’s self-confidence.

“Margaret hears you, though. It’s why she’s helping you with your resume. She knows what you are doing. Knows what the risk you are running by sticking with Jax and the club.”

“Tara, your relationship with Joshua, you did what you had to do to protect yourself. Shooting him...you were protecting yourself. You aren’t to blame for what Joshua was.”

“But I killed him.” Tara said.

“No...it was Jax who gave Joshua the kill shot. Not you. He did it for you. He did it to protect you. He did it because he loves you. There isn’t anything in this world that he wouldn’t do for you. And if it wasn’t Jax taking him out, Joshua most likely would have killed you eventually.”

“But I’m a doctor, ethically bound...I should have tried to help him. Called an ambulance...the police.” Tara fought her.

“Yes, you could have. Maybe should have. But he tried to rape you. He attacked you and would have raped you if you hadn’t shot him. He could have dragged you out of the house and driven you off to God knows where. And he very well could have killed you. Men like that...when their targets defy them...their lives are in danger. You are very lucky to have survived a man like Joshua.”

She caught Tara’s eyes again. “A person like that... Love to him...is stalking to everyone else. Sex to him...is rape to everyone else. He was a violent and broken person who took advantage of people through his badge. You did what you had to do to survive. If it wasn’t you, it would have been some other woman. And she might not have survived. Joshua was not your fault. Stop blaming yourself. That includes the abortion. There is no shame in taking care of yourself. There’s no one here blaming you...except for yourself.”

Tara was shaking and crying again. Nodding that she heard her. Jax quiet and kept watching Tara. Swiping away his own tears.

Turning to Jax again. “So, when Tara hears you say things, promising her that things will be different. But your actions don’t hold to what you say. She doubts you. Stops talking to you. Next thing you know, she’s gone and you think you don’t know why...your feelings all hurt. But if you actually stop and think about what she has been saying to you, you already know why. She was fighting for you.”

Jax ran his hands over his face and over his hair. She saw the shock of the burden Tara had been carrying.

“The two of you are in a delicate situation. The club is in a delicate situation. Everything that I saw happening in the future...it centers around those letters. We can’t kill the guns or the muling overnight. Dealing with Gemma and how she has infiltrated your life. That is a dangerous situation. In order for us to prepare, we need to get you two on the same page.”
Jax and Tara both had confused looks. “You will learn things, hard things. Things that you need to learn so that you can seek comfort and support with each other when it feels like everyone is out to get you. But what you learn today and going forward will help you decades from now. If you had managed to get out of Charming, you two still would have had problems with your relationship. Because the two of you never learned how to listen and communicate with each other.”

She gauged Jax and Tara, deciding they needed a breather. “Take a moment with each other. Now...you comfort her.” She nods to Jax.

“Let’s get the kitchen straightened up.” She prompts Chibs. Chibs taking her cue, already helping her up and going back into the kitchen. Leaving Jax to pull Tara into his lap.

Soon as they were inside, she swiped at her eyes. Trying to keep her breathing even and controlled. Feeling oddly purposeful and yet panicky, just a little bit. Like she had discovered something about herself that was always just a step away. Waiting patiently for her to find it.

She always had a sense of what she was supposed to do with her ability, but nobody trusted her until now. Piecing together the memories from her readings, tying them to the clues that Tara revealed. Bringing it all together so it made sense so that everyone can heal...to create a new path forward.

“You okay?” Chibs asked.

She couldn’t speak, she was still gripping onto him hard. Trying to get her balance both within and without. Ending up nodding to him.

Tilting her head so their eyes met. She gave him a wary smile. He scooped her up into his arms. Their eyes connecting as he gave her a smile back. “Hi.”

Her smile grew. “Hi back.” Her heart sped up in her chest. She was so grateful for Chibs. For his unwavering support.

“You are amazing.” He purred.

“I love you.” She said. “I’m not just me anymore.”

“Aye, we’re an us.” He replied as they swayed a little.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
**Chapter 55**

Chapter Summary

Homework

Chapter Notes

Sooo, real life has exploded and made a mess of my schedule.

I thought I’d be able to post up a mega chapter...but it's too big to wrangle as one piece. And you would have a much longer wait for a new chapter. So here is a smaller section of the mega chapter.

Thank you for your patience and comments are appreciated. They let me know if you love or hate what I'm writing.

They finished cleaning the kitchen. Chibs stashed his cigarettes in his pocket along with a joint. She shut the dishwasher and he pulled her into his arms again. Leading her back outside to rejoin Jax and Tara. The two of them seemed to have calmed down. Tara back in her chair, but they held hands.

Jax and Tara looked up as they approached. Chibs sat down, pulling out a cigarette and lighting it. She still stood, looking over Tara and Jax.

“Feeling better?” She asked Tara.

“Yeah.” Tara replied breathily. “I do. I didn’t realize how much I needed to get all that out.” She gave Tara a nod. Taking in how she seemed less tense and a little calmer, still worried but her stress level was down a notch or two.

“Good. And you?” She directed to Jax.

“Better, worried still.” He said.

“Yes, but did you learn? How you see and hear her?” She asked pointedly.

“Yeah.” He said as he shifted in his seat.

“Good.” She said as she sat down. Chibs taking up her hand to hold, their fingers woven together loosely. “You two have homework.” She grinned at Jax and Tara's confused looks.

“What?” Jax asks.

“Look, if we are going to try and fix the club, fix the future...You two need to have discussions with each other. I want you two to sit down think and talk about your future. What do you want for yourselves? Personally and professionally. What do you want for your kids as they grow up? Plan
how you are going to achieve that future. Really nail it down. Even talk about how you’re going to parent your kids as they grow up. Do you want Gemma teaching them? Because she will. And it won’t be how you want them to learn how to behave.”

Tara pressed a hand to her lips at the thought of that, her eyes bugging out. Jax frowned looking confused.

“You will also make an appointment with Lowen.”

“Why? For what?” Jax and Tara questioned her on top of each other.

“You need to put together your wills. End-of-life decisions. Decide who will take care of the boys if the two of you can’t do it. The decisions you make are between the two of you only. Not Gemma’s, not Clay’s, not the club’s, not even Chibs or myself should have any say in what you agree to do.”

“Having these decisions taken care of...it’ll be one less thing you have to worry about. You’ll find peace of mind that the decision has been made and agreed to. Tara, you especially.”

Jax looked at her doubtfully.

“Chibs and I had our wills done the day after we returned from Illinois.” She explained.

“You and Chibs?” Jax questioned to Chibs, surprise on both Jax and Tara that they’ve done what they’ve failed to do in years.

She glanced to Chibs, letting him take lead if he was going to tell them about the money or not.

“Aye, we aren’t married. If something happens to her, her bastard father will have say over her care. I fought it when she brought it up. Surprised as you are now. But she explained her reasoning. I want her protected.”

She gave him a swift kiss on the cheek. His eyes catching hers as she leaned back in her chair. His hand squeezing hers.

“Plus, its a tax thing.” She swivelled her attention back to Jax and Tara. “The State and the IRS will eat your estate alive if you don’t have a will. Get it done. I’m not going to let this go until you do. So, save ourselves the grief and just get it done.” She glared at Jax.

He raised his hands up in agreement finally.

Her eyes going to Tara. “I’m surprised at you Tara. That you haven’t made any plans like this already, especially the end-of-life decisions. As a doctor, you’ve seen what families go through.”

“I know. I know. I’m just so busy with the boys, work, and Jax coming back from Stockton. We really haven’t had time to talk about it. But you’re right...we do need to get the paperwork in order.” She agreed, looking to Jax. Him nodding back to her.

“And that’s a problem. I know time is little and far between. Between your work, the boy’s schedule, and the club’s business dealings...time will be scarce so it’s doubly important that you two make that time as productive as you can.”

“These discussions and decisions...you don’t have to agree with each other. But, both of you need to get your thoughts out and debate the issues. Hear each other out, find the common ground.”
“And if we can’t find a common ground?” Jax questioned.

“Then you come to us. Nancy and I will referee if need be. But try and resolve shit on your own first. And give us a call before showing up.” Chibs said. She smiled to him that he was with her on this plan.

“Jax, you need to let Tara process and think out her responses. She takes more time before responding than you do. She’ll even need a few days to come to a decision, so don’t assume that she’s settled on something at the end of that particular discussion session. You latch onto an idea and run with it. Tara, you need to stand up for yourself more. Don’t let him run roughshod over your opinions. Blend the doctor with your personal life.”

“What else are we going to talk about?” Tara asked, latching eagerly onto her idea.

“At first, and most pressing is the wills, the end-of-life decisions...who will take care of the boys. After that, whatever you want to talk about.” She shrugged at them. “What is going on in the club, the latest batshit, crazy thing Tig did. What the latest scandal is running around the hospital, to the state of the world economy. What you want for yourselves when you hit retirement. The boys will grow up and leave the nest, hopefully to college and to their own lives, you two will still be together. Do you want to travel? Hobbies you want to try? Just start talking. I don’t care, everything and anything under the sun. Even something as stupid as the latest Bachelorette episode.”

“What? Why?” Jax spluttered in amusement. “I get the wills and stuff, but seriously, the Bachelorette?”

Rolling her eyes at Jax. “It was an example. And you know that, quit making this a joke. The point of these conversations is to get you two to learn about each other. To learn how to fight and how to agree to disagree but still come to an agreement. It will strengthen your relationship with each other. Living here in Charming, living the life in the club, under the overwatch of Clay and Gemma has kept the world view of everyone narrow and blind to the possibilities.”

Tara nodding her agreement with her assessment. Jax glanced to Tara and sighed as he was being overruled.

Quirking a brow at them. “And no sex during these talking sessions.” She decreed.

Chibs quickly stifled his laugh at her directive.


Glaring at him for even questioning her. “You two already know how good the sex is. Your sex life isn’t the problem here.”

Chibs snickered next to her. “Aye, sex-ing it up next to a dead body...it better be good.”

Tara blushed harder, Jax groaned at Chibs teasing.

“Oh for the…” She glared at Chibs. He just shrugged and gave her a wink. Freaking incorrigible.

“These discussions are to teach you how to use your words and how to listen to each other.” She leaned into Jax and Tara, “These sessions are going to help you. Even after, if and when we avert disaster...these conversations you two have, will help you as you go deeper into your life, your relationship. Decades from now, each conversation layers the foundation that is your relationship.”
“Jax, ask Tara out on dates. Tara you don’t have to accept if the schedule doesn’t permit it, reschedule it. Tell him that though. Tara, ask Jax out. Same deal.”

“Are you serious?” Jax questioned. He sharing a disbelieving look with Tara.

“Yes. Dead serious. Make the time for each other. Things in the club will be busy, so carve out some time. It is important. As the stress of dealing with the club and Gemma builds…you two will have each other to lean on. To bolster each other up to continue to fight the next day and the next. Chibs and I will help where we can. And when things are safe enough, the club will help you.”

“You’re talking like we’re going to war.” Tara said worriedly.

“Tara…ever since you found those letters…you’re already in a war. But while you’ve been fighting it all by yourself, you now have Jax and us to help you. But this communication issue between the two of you needs to function. Even without the club, Gemma, the letters, the two of you would still be operating on half or false information. Eventually it’ll catch up to you and you’ll fight and break up. Bitter and confused. Talking and fighting, communicating is critical between you two.”

“But…” Tara stumbled as she processed what she was saying.

“The moment you stop talking or listening to each other is when things turn to crap. And with Jax in the club, he hears you Tara. The things you tell him, he carries it with him. It affects how he functions in the club, at the table. Do you understand what I’m saying? You can’t ever stop talking to him. Telling him what is going on. The more open you are with each other…the better you are at your jobs. You can focus on that and not have to worry about what is going on at home.” She paused, making sure that both Jax and Tara were listening to her.

“He nor you are a mind reader like me.” She couldn’t help her grin at what she just said.

Chibs huffed a laugh at her turn of phrase. Jax slapped a hand to his face, while Tara blinked at her.

“Unfortunately, Tara, Gemma will fall on your shoulders much of the time. I’ll try and divert Gemma and spin her up to focus on me as much as I can.”

“What?” Chibs questioned her, looking sharply to her.

She turned to Chibs, seeing his worry at what she might do. And not liking it at all.

“Babe…”

“No. I don’t like it.” Chibs seethed next to her.

“I know you don’t. I don’t like it either. But the ball is already rolling on it. Just me being here in Charming is enough to get her annoyed. Being a member of the club…at the table…how I teased her at that potluck…then again last night when she called.”

Chibs shook his head at her. “Ye’ don’t know…ye’ can’t make yourself bait for that woman…She could hurt you. I promised ye’ I’d never let anyone hurt ye’.”

“Chibs….the odds of her grabbing me again are low. You are with me all day and night. I’m riding with the club on business. You and the guys being around me will force her to watch what she does or says. In the meantime…I’ll be keeping her attention on me. Gemma’s already infected their home and lives.”
Chibs seemed to relax a little at her reasoning. Still not quite on board with her plan...but at least thinking about it.

“Infect? That’s a bit harsh.” Jax argued.

She looked to Jax, “No, it’s being kind. We don’t have time to pussy foot around your feelings about your mother. I wasn’t kidding last night, Jax. Your mother is obsessed. She pathologically lies and browbeats everyone around her. She’s been doing it for a very long time. Tara, you saw a hint of what Gemma is.”

“What?” Tara asked confusedly, the conversation moving fast.

“When the guys were going after Weston and Zobelle, Gemma took over driving from the grocery store.” She glared at Jax and Chibs. “Since when does Gemma or anyone but club members get to leave the compound when they are on lockdown?”

“Oh, we had Kip escorting us to the store.” Tara explained.

She sighed, annoyed at the idea of a prospect having to deal with Gemma and her whim to go to the store while the club was dealing with the Zobelle and Weston. Remembering how Gemma forced Tig to let her go looking for Jax when Cameron had a bullet in his ass. Tig couldn't keep Gemma in one place...Kip didn't stand a chance with Gemma. Thus, it was Gemma’s behavior got Kip killed. “The very word, lockdown...it means to keep people from leaving or escaping a facility. What is the point of a lockdown if nobody adheres to the meaning of a lockdown?”

“We were running low on supplies at the clubhouse.” Tara said.

“Then the club needs to figure out a way of keeping the clubhouse stocked at all times.” She said sharply. "So that these runs to the grocery store aren't needed. Seriously...more paper towels or soda is more important than your lives? And I’m not fighting you over this, Tara. But what happened during that...it’s nothing to what we have to deal with in the coming weeks and months. The people that the club is dealing with is much more dangerous than what Zobelle and Weston were. Do you understand? Gemma says she needs to go shopping...she goes without regard to her or anyone else's safety...in a lockdown.” She shook her head at Tara.

“She was following Polly. Do you see what I’m getting at? How Gemma was talking, how she was meant to do her part, be a fierce mother. Her husband and son risking their lives to defend her. Convincing herself she was doing her part by taking out Polly. You heard it in her voice, her psychosis leaking out. It scared the shit out of you, you tried to talk her into turning around.”

“Oh my God. Abel was in the car.” Tara filled in, her voice panicky.

“Didn’t you ever wonder what would have happened if Gemma had simply gone back to the clubhouse? Or had stayed in the clubhouse under lockdown just like everyone else? Kip probably would be alive now. Abel may never have been kidnapped.”

“I...God, I should have insisted. I should have gotten her to turn around. I…” Tara’s eyes went wide in horror. Her stress level ratcheting up.

“Babe, there wasn’t anything you could have done. Gemma was set on a mission. You would have had to tackle her to stop her.” Jax said.

“He’s right, Tara. You wouldn’t have been able to stop her. You had to protect Abel. You did that.” She confirmed.
Tara looked guilty. “Not very well. Abel did end up kidnapped and Kip was killed.”

“Don’t do that.” She glared at Tara. “Don’t let Gemma’s words put that guilt on you like that. Jax heard your voice on the phone, he knew in seconds that you were in trouble. He dropped chasing Zobelle to go racing to you. You did what any responsible person would have done. Gemma was wrong to put that on you like that. If you had put yourself between Cameron and Abel, as Gemma suggested to you...you would have been dead along with Kip. You want to blame someone...blame Gemma. If she had stayed in the clubhouse instead of running all over kingdom come...that whole thing...that was Gemma’s fault. Not yours. So stop doubting yourself. Plus, without the club going to Belfast to find Abel...Jax never would have met Trinity. Or Maureen never would have hidden those letters in his bag.”

“Fucking hell.” Jax moaned.

Tara blinked, "Oh my God."

She couldn’t help her grin as she watched Jax and Tara realize how things came to be. How things could have been different. “Welcome to my world.” She shrugged.

Jax gave her a look of horror then to Chibs, “You are a very brave man.” He complimented Chibs. Chibs just rolled his eyes, waving the finger to Jax.

“Okay.” She breathed. “So wills...custody of the kids. Think of contingencies. I know you think Opie would do it and he probably would. But what if he’s not around. Who then? What about Wendy?”

Jax’s face soured along with Tara’s.

“She gave up her rights when she left.” Tara said quickly.

“I know. But Tara, I know what Gemma did between you and Wendy. Pitting the two of you off each other. Created her own little cage match to see which one of you would be victorious in her mind as to whom was more worthy of Jax, of taking care of the kids.”

Tara frowned at her.

“Wendy is just as much victim as anyone else. In my reading of Gemma and Jax, Wendy will be back. She’ll be clean. She’ll be shaky at first, but she will pull her life back on track.”

Jax made to say something but she kept going, not letting him get a word in.

“Does she deserve to be welcomed back with open arms? No, of course not. But she is Abel’s mother, whether you like it or not. And if you think about it...when Abel gets older...he’s going to have questions. Any child does whenever one parent isn’t their biological parent. It’s easy now to keep Abel in the dark while he’s three...four years old. But, he’ll find out sooner or later, he’s a smart kid. Would you want that for Thomas if you die, Tara? To have him wonder what happened to you? To be kept in the dark of who you are?”

She saw Tara think about what she was saying. Jax was still being mule-headed over Wendy.

“Wendy’ll show up at the most inconvenient time. Her timing sucks, there’s not much to do about that. But what you can control is how to work with her. Your reaction to her return won’t be as shocking or scary because you’ve already talked about her. Made decisions on her before she’s even here. That is what you can do right now. I know its a touchy subject, she has problems. But don’t discount her. See how it goes. Wendy really will get herself back on track.”
“You really don’t think Gemma is good for the boys at all, do you?” Jax asks. Tara gulped at that idea.

“No. And neither does Tara. It’s her and your opinion, together, that matters regarding who should raise your kids.” She pointed Jax to look at Tara. Reminding him that Tara’s opinion matters in this.

“Uhm...what about you and Chibs?” Tara asked. “Just for curiosity sake.”

Her brows shot up in surprise at Tara’s question. She went still and looked to Chibs. They hadn’t talked about kids. God, she didn’t even think she’d live to have kids. And with her reading, she didn’t know if she could hold kids without reading them. How would that work? Her mind spinning at the question.

“Jesus Christ, we’re still getting to know each other. I’m...we’re honored ye’ would consider us. But I think we’d have to take a pass.” Chibs said quickly, his hand squeezing hers.

“It doesn’t have to happen right away, who you decide on. But start the conversation, at least.” She added, getting back to the matter at hand. “Go talk to Lowen, she’ll talk you through your legal options.”

“How did you get to be so smart?” Jax asked. “I mean...you’re eighteen...Jesus, I think of how I was at your age and the shit I was doing…” Jax broke off as she glared at him for his idiotic question.

Chibs was groaning next to her.

“Jaaax…” She drawled. “I’ve been reading people for a very long time. Most of people’s problems are because they don’t communicate effectively. You have no idea how frustrating it is for me. Watching people screw themselves over because they didn’t talk or ask for help, repeating the same lessons over and over again. It’s really annoying. So do me the favor...listen and do what I’m asking you to do.”
Chapter 56

Chapter Summary

The final piece clicks into place...

Chapter Notes

Whew...this is a big chapter with some big paragraphs (sorry). I tried my best to cut this down to size. But I was on a roll with the writing of this. So, if it seems too long or repetitive...that's my fault.

I'm just going to go hide in my stocked bunker now....

“So, what are we going to do with the letters?” Tara asked.

“We’re going to make copies of ‘em.” Chibs said. “Lots of ‘em.”

“I already made a copy for work.” Everyone looked to her at that tidbit of news. “Margaret found Gemma in my office the other day. The originals were in my desk at the time. I took the originals to the storage unit, leaving the copies in my desk.” She clarified.

“Has Gemma confronted you about the letters, yet?” Chibs asked quickly. The three of them all leaned towards Tara at Chib’s question. Tara shooting them a confused look.

“Yeah, yesterday actually. She had the cover note. Told me she found it in Abel’s coloring books.” Her dark eyes flaring fearfully. “How did you know about that?”

“From reading Gemma.” She answered. “I knew she was going to do that. Jesus, you hid the key to your desk, its why she confronted you. If she found that key, she would have taken the letters from your desk. That was a good call making that copy. Because, Gemma will task Wayne to break into your office and desk to get them. He might be there now, actually.”

“God damn it. That duplicitous bitch!” Tara burst out in anger and frustration. “I swear to God, Jax...your mother is a real problem.”

“I know.” He groaned.

“No, you don’t know.” Tara corrected Jax swiftly. “I have patient files in my office. There is such a thing as doctor-patient confidentiality! I could be sued if anyone finds out their medical records were messed with. God, this is my work she’s screwing around with.”

Jax sighed, running his hand over his face. “Look, I’ll talk to Gemma…” He tried to appease Tara.

“Jesus Christ....” Chibs swore at Jax’s answer to Tara’s rant. “Jax...how many times have ye’ said that over the years? Has talking to her ever worked before?”
“Well, what do you want me to do? It’s the only thing besides maybe hogtie-ing her…” Jax replied back.

Chibs groaned at the futility of that idea.

“Gemma’s behavior isn’t Jax’s fault. His knee-jerk reaction to dealing with her in things like this...he just can’t help himself.” She shrugged to Chibs. Tara swiveling her eyes from her to Jax as she listened in. “Clay does it, too. The club follows their lead regarding Gemma.”

“Hey...that’s not true.” Jax argued defensively.

“Yeah, you do. But we’ll get to that in a bit.” She ignored Jax’s angry glare, turning back to Tara thoughtfully. “If Wayne takes the copy in your office...Gem... she gets a set of burned papers from Wayne. He tells her it’s the letters in your office. She’s already read some of them before Margaret burst in on her at your office. She knows you pulled the accident report, it’s what set her off, that you have suspicions about JT’s accident. She’ll give Clay the burned copies. Telling him that the issue of the letters is put to bed. Piney nor you have any proof of your claims of what they might have done to JT. The lie protected. They’re burned enough she doesn’t know they’re copies, yet.”


“We definitely should have Lowen notarize each letter. Make an additional what...ten sets, maybe? Just to be safe.” She looked to Chibs, who nodded his agreement to her plan. Jax shrugging that he was fine with it. “We may need them even after Gemma and Clay are dealt with, other charters might want to read them. Know the truth of what happened. I still like the idea of publishing them in a book.”

“Not going to happen.” Jax reiterated his order.

Tara’s jaw dropped at her idea but kept silent as Jax upheld his position that going public with the letters wasn’t to be.

“**Fiinme**.” She eye rolled him. “Soon as the time is right, we want to make sure all of them are read. Not just what Gemma deems what you and the club needs to know. I know you were hell bent on revenge as fast as possible. But the cartel and the Irish, it’ll muck things up a bit.” She sighed annoyingly.

“Why...You’re talking like we’re not going to confront Gemma or Clay with these letters. That you want to keep them secret...drag this out. Why?” Tara questioned again. Her doubts and fears rising up again.

“Tara, there are several factors weighing on keeping them secret for a bit longer.” She held up a hand, raising her index finger. “One is the mess the club is in. If the Irish don’t sell the guns to the cartel...the cartel will send the Feds on the club with Rico, landing everyone in jail. You’re hopes of getting out with Jax and the boys will be dead if that happens.”

Adding her middle finger. “Two, you and Jax aren’t ready to leave Charming. That homework I told you to do...that wasn’t just for what is going on with the club and the letters. That’s for you and Jax on a personal level. No matter where you two landed...you would still have this communication problem. And Jax certainly isn’t ready to leave. He feels that his job skills aren’t up to par for living on the legal side of the law and society. His brain is hardwired for outlaw. Breaking that thinking pattern is hard to do. Again, the homework for you will help with that fear. From the sound of things...your own job search is still in its early stages.” Tara slumped as she set
her straight.

Her ring finger joined her index and middle fingers as she made her points. “And three, in all of my
time and number of people I’ve read...I’ve always held out hope that my warnings would avert
disaster. Given my circumstances back home...I didn’t have much luck. But even so, I’ve always
held out hope. To give people the chance to come clean. To learn from what they are doing will
affect their future. If nothing else, if the club asks why we didn’t bring these forward as soon as we
had them, we could say we wanted to see if Clay and Gemma would wise up and do the right thing
on their own.”

Tara sighed heavily.

“I don’t see how Clay will ever change. He’s hell bent on this cartel deal and the money it will
bring. Gemma, maybe.” Jax said.

The silence among the four of them went hard at Jax’s hope of Gemma’s redemption. Tara looking
to Jax and her. Chibs very still next to her. Jax unaware of what he’d said.

Grabbing a joint from Chibs shirt pocket and lit it. Giving Jax a cool look. “I doubt that very
much.”

“Why?”

She slid a warning look to Chibs. “Jax, last night you said something interesting. You said ‘I need
to get out’. You said it out of frustration and repeatedly.”

“So?” Jax asked confusedly.

“I don’t think you realized you even said it. Or so many times.” She set the lighter on the table
before her.

Jax’s forehead furrowed in thought. “I...I was healing from the stabbing in Stockton. Worried
about Tara and the boys. I wanted to get Tara and the boys out.” He reasoned to her, like it was the
most obvious thing in the world.

“Nope...that’s not it. I don’t think you meant Charming...or the club even. It’s much deeper than
that.” She shook her head at him.

“What?” Jax and now Tara looked at her in confusion. “Of course I did. I made a plan of getting
out of the club...Charming.” Jax reiterated again.

Frowning at him as she breathed out a plume of smoke. “If we waved our magic wand, if Clay and
Gemma, the Irish, the cartel, the Rico all of that were out of the picture. If the club was running
legit...Would you be as worried to get out of Charming?”

Jax shifted and looked to Tara.

“Don’t.” She halted Jax from amending his answer to keep Tara happy. “Answer the question...for
yourself Jax...Would you be running for the door to get out if things weren’t as messed up as it is?”

“Well, honestly, no. All my friends are here, I like working in the garage and hanging out with the
guys.” He sheepishly shrugged apologetically towards Tara. Tara frowning at his answer.

“Tara, same question. Is it Charming, the town itself that is pushing you to get out? Answer
honestly.”
Tara sighed as she thought about her question. “No, the town’s fine, I guess. Margaret is pushing me to find other work. My skills aren’t being fully utilized in such a small town. St. Thomas really isn’t set up for a neonatal surgical unit. And I wish that the schools were better. I want the boys to go to college and have a chance to have their own lives without the pressure of becoming members of the club.”

“What are you digging at here?” Jax asked.

“Because in my readings, despite what Clay says, Charming Heights is a go. It’ll flounder a bit, but it’ll happen. Those homes will sell and the people moving in...they bring in a lot of money for the town as property and sales taxes. Especially if the town goes into a gentrification and remolds the downtown, bring in better schools. In fact, those new people will demand it from the city and school boards. Their property taxes will pay for it. They will expect results.”

“Charming isn’t unlike Naperville. Chibs and Tara’s been to Naperville, they know what it’s like there. Charming could be completely changed for the better in a few years.”

Chibs scoffed next to her. “The way those bastards treated you there...I can’t believe you’re selling us on this.”

She looked to Chibs. “I’m not saying it doesn’t have its problems. It does. But, the public schools there are top notch. Nearly every high school senior goes onto college. It’s expected of them. People move to Naperville just to have their kids go to those schools.”

“But with the club, won’t that scare the new people out?” Tara debated.

“It could, but I don’t think so. Naperville, besides the parking issues, their number one problem is heroin overdose. And nobody talks about it, its too unseemly.”

“Really?” Tara asked. “It looked...so clean...whenever I was there.” She shrugged searching for the right description of her experiences of Naperville.

“Yes. Every year the school has a mandatory assembly to teach us about the perils of drug use. It was a joke among the students.”

“Shite...I think I was there for that. You left in the middle of it.” Chibs interjected excitedly. “I wasn’t sure why...it looked boring as shite. I’d’ve left, too. But you had this weird stare down with the cop there.”

She swung her eyes to his. Jax and Tara silent as they watched her and Chibs digress onto one of his dreams.

She sighed and took his hand. “I left when the Chief of Police started speaking. Talking about coming to him and his officers if anyone needed help. I couldn’t take the hypocrisy. I’d gone to him for help before and he did nothing except put me back in that house.”

“Fucking asshole.” Chibs growled out. To which she merely shrugged. It was in the past and they were safe now.

“But to get back to the point I was making, for all the antics going on with the club...it does keep the drug dealing out of Charming. I wonder if Naperville had a club like the Sons there, if there would be a drug problem there or not. Clay and Gemma created this town, forcing out improvements to the town. Keeping it trapped in their vision, kept it under their control. They don’t like change; change that threatens their power over the town. But its a fools paradise. Change is inevitable. It’s partly why Clay and Gemma got all freaked out when you started talking about
ending guns...questioning Gemma about JT’s original vision for the club.”

“Well, that didn’t work.” Jax griped.

“We talked about this last night. I told you that you had the right idea...but you were trying to do it all on your own. Then with the knowledge of Clay and Tig accidentally killing Donna. You challenging Clay at every step of the way. Again, nobody else knowing what it was that had you at war with Clay at the time.”

Jax ran his hand over his head in frustration.

“And Tara, with the property taxes going up and increased population...revenues going to St. Thomas will increase. It could become a trauma center. Or you could head the creation of a top-rated neonatal unit at St. Thomas. Stop limiting yourself in thinking that to be better as a surgeon you have to leave. Because it isn’t true. You want to leave because of the way the club is now under Clay and Gemma’s leadership. Which I don’t blame you for. Anyone in their right mind would high-tail it out of here.”

“The truth you know about what Clay and Gemma did to JT. The truth you wanted to protect Jax from…” She shook her head at Tara. “Tara, Jax would have found out anyway. And it wouldn’t have been the whole truth. Gemma won’t give Jax all of the letters. She’ll burn the letters that incriminate her and Wayne.”

“Jesus Christ.” Tara breathed.

“Jax would be running on half the information, all his hatred pointed at Clay, when Gemma and Wayne also had their part and deserve their punishment as well. The level of power he wields in the club, to have him knowing half-truths...has to end. Both of you trying and protect each other by not telling each other the things that the other needs to know... Stop it. Stop that thinking right now. Because it will only hurt you in the end. And that end is what we are trying to avert.”

She took a drag on her joint. Watching Jax and Tara as they digested what she was telling them. Tara’s brows furrowed as her stress level rose.

“Have you talked to anyone about these letters? About JT to anyone?” Jax questioned Tara.

“Uh, I tried to talk to Piney. He was JT’s best friend back then.” Tara blinked as she responded.

“What did he say?” Chibs asked.

“He didn’t say anything. He shut me down, saying that the past was dead and it should stay there. I just wanted to know what kind of man JT was. You were still in Stockton.”

Jax looked to her and Chibs with a worried look. She merely raised a knowing brow at the two of them.

“What?” Tara asked.

“We think Piney is threatening or will threaten Clay with those letters.” Jax said.

“What? But I never showed them to him. He hasn’t even seen them.” Tara said alarmed.

“Piney voted against the muling. He’s made it very clear at the table that he hates the cartel. He’s challenging Clay over it. If he had enough details, it could give Piney enough to threaten Clay to get rid of the cartel or he’d release the letters. And the table, if they saw them now, Clay would be
“killed.” Jax said.

“So, then, let’s kill the cartel deal. Use the letters to get out.” Tara pressed.

“We can’t.” Jax grimaced as he had to kill Tara’s idea of getting out. “There’s a Rico case building against the club. The CIA running with the cartel.”

“God. Does Clay know about the Rico? The CIA?” Tara asked again.

“No, I didn’t know. Nancy picked it up when she read me last night.”

She snorted. “Guess again…”

“What?” Jax questioned with a swift turn of his head.

“You had me read Tig. Even Gemma will find out. I got most of the details of the deal from you...but the Rico and the CIA that was Tig.”

Chibs sent her an amused look, his lips curling to a grin.

Jax slapped his hand to his forehead. “*That* would have been information you could have shared after reading Tig…” Jax complained.

“Yeah...*right*. You...none of you would have believed me. And if I brought up the Rico or CIA before you guys had the chance to vote on me...Chibs and I would have been gone before you could blink. You're still fighting me on what I'm telling you.”

Jax groaned. “Well, it’s not everyday you run across a psychic.”

“Since I’ve read Tig, I’ve been hearing a song over and over again. It’s driving me crazy. I didn’t know what it meant until I read you.”

“What song?” Chibs asked.

“It’s not really a whole song...” She scratched at her cheek. “...just a phrase, a name over and over again. Rico Suave.”

“Fuck.” Jax said. Everyone looked at him. “I was hoping you’re wrong about some of this.” He said. “And no, nobody knows besides us. Like I said, we need to do some investigation in this.”

“Jax, in all my readings, I’ve never been wrong. If anything my abilities are getting stronger and it’s freaking me out. Not just me, but Chibs too, is changing. His protectiveness of me. The tattoos. God only knows what else is going to pop up with us. And you know a Rico case will kill the club. This isn’t Stahl you’re dealing with here. And, for some reason, I have a sense that we need the cartel. Like we are going to need their help in some way.”

“How can a cartel help you? The club?” Tara asked.

“Don’t know. Too soon to know. Not enough as happened to shape that future, I guess. What we need to focus on is your communication skills with each other. Because Chibs and I can’t be with you both at the same time. I’ll be riding with Chibs and that’s with Jax and the club. Tara, as I said before, you’ll have to bear the brunt of Gemma’s insanity. I’ll try and do what I can to distract her from you as much as I can. Just me being at the table where she isn’t allowed is enough for her to focus some of her attention on me. I already started last night when she called Jax to check on him.”
“I’m confused, I’m not sure what you mean.”

“Tara, Piney... he’ll come to you. Ask you for the letters. Even try and demand them from you. If he’s threatening Clay with them, he needs to have them. Gemma and Clay already know they exist. Gemma’s already tossed your house looking for them and now your office, threatening you with her little sob story. That guilt trip she laid on you, it was pretty much all lies. She knew what she was doing when she started sleeping with Clay behind JT’s back. Gemma is more calculating than anyone realizes, using the club for her own purposes. It’s disgusting.”

“I...she said that they would hurt Jax, pit Jax and Clay against each other again. That she was grief stricken when Thomas died, had started falling in love with Clay. Humiliated JT over that.”

“Really? How did Gemma know that JT and Maureen were having a relationship? This isn’t the first time she’s searched through your, Jax’s, or Clay’s things. She has zero concept of personal privacy. She did it to JT. She found one of his love letters to Maureen. She knew he was having an affair, but she was having an affair, too. Mentions that JT is spending too much time in Belfast, that he’s talking to a priest. Gemma thinks JT might be looking to get a Catholic divorce so that he can be with Maureen. She feeds just enough information and suspicion into Clay’s ear that he does look into what JT is doing after one of their sexathon sessions. Clay finds out about the meeting with Kellen isn’t over a divorce, but over the guns. Either case, the both of them decide that JT had to go. One over money, the other over a vindictive heart. Gemma had no qualms about JT dying. She would rather him dead than him divorcing her for Maureen. The humiliation of that, she couldn’t stand to have anyone leave her. Nobody leaves her.”

“Oh my god. I can’t believe this is happening.” Tara said.

“Tara, it’s happening. You’ve been feeling stressed out, debating what to do with those letters. Trying to find out what happened to JT, what he was like as a person. Debating on showing them to Jax or not. You were going to give them to him, but Jax proposed and was all excited over his ‘big plan’ of leaving. He was so excited and determined that he had a way out. You shut down and kept them safe and hidden. You’ve had the boys to worry about, too. All that stress, the level of acting you’ve had to do to keep them a secret is wearing on you. I saw how you hung around me at that dinner. How everyone stared at me for how I spoke to Gemma and even Clay. The muling vote was still being debated, I was outside and Bobby asked me my opinion. I warned the table that if the muling passed, it would set a path for the club that was bloody and more involved than they realized. Once I read Jax, I knew that the mule vote was just for show. It was a sham. Clay already told Romeo that the muling was part of the gun deal. It pissed off Jax, that while his plan for escape was just on the money from the gun sales, now includes muling coke. Clay, once again, dragging his father’s club deeper into the cesspool.”

Jax and Tara shared a look.

“But Tara, Gemma and Clay know the letters exist. They don’t know what all is in them, not knowing is killing them. Driving them to do things to get them in their hands. Piney is bluffing his threats to Clay with their existence to get the club out of the cartel deal. Everyone will come after you to get those letters. I can hear the stress in your voice, the panic and fear. Its why we are talking now. You and Jax, the two of you have to communicate. The minute you stop talking to him, he’s running off on bad information and running the club in directions that he’d never take if he knew the whole truth. Even now, he’s lying to himself.” She waved at Jax.

Tara looked to Jax at that last bit.

“Jax, Gemma had a larger role in what happened to your father. It’s in the letters. You read them. But when you talk about them, you’re anger is directed to Clay alone. Not to Gemma, you’re annoyed with her, but not as rageful as you are with Clay.”

“She’s my mother.”

“Yes, she is, you have half her DNA. But your loyalty, strength of character, love, and forgiveness...that didn’t come from Gemma. She didn’t teach you those qualities. Those came from JT. You forgave Wendy when she went into premature labor. Helped her into rehab. What did Gemma do during that? She gave Wendy the hotshot of drugs while she was still recovering herself. Gemma never forgives.”

“That was Gemma?” Jax questions, looking from her to Tara.

Chibs grumbled next to her. This was all new information to him too.

“It was. I suspected it and tried to get Gemma to cop to it. Told her that we’d had security cameras in Wendy’s room.” Tara confirmed.

“What? Why would you do that?” Jax’s voice raised up, looking at Tara like he’d never seen her before.

“God, Jax, it was so long ago, and we weren’t even back together. I saw Gemma how she was. I worried about how you were going to take care of Abel. You couldn’t even see him the first two days he was in NICU. Wendy was horrified by what she did to Abel. And to have Wendy try and overdose. How? Who would have given her drugs in the hospital? What kind of person does that? I just...I couldn’t help myself to challenge her on it.” Tara admitted.

Jax’s jaw dropped as Tara explained what happened while he was running around with the club.

“Jax, Gemma manipulates people. She’s a liar. I told her that to her face when she forced me to read her. I saw her panicking and fighting over those letters. She lies so well that you don’t even realize she’s doing it. Half the time she believes it herself. The decades of lies. I need to get out.”

Jax sighed, irritatingly. “I don’t know what you’re getting at.”

“Have you gotten the boys in daycare yet?” She directed to Tara, ignoring Jax.

“Umm, they’re on the waiting list still.” Tara said confusedly as the topic of the conversation shifted so abruptly.

“Daycare?” Jax questioned.

“Yeah, I’ve got the boys on the waiting list at the daycare at St. Thomas.”

“You do?” Jax was agog by this notion of daycare.

“The kids, they need to socialize with other kids their age. Plus, it’s easier for me with work and the schedules.”

“Yeah, okay.” Jax said with a frown. Everyone watched Jax fight with the knowledge that Tara was seemingly rushing to get the kids into daycare without talking to him about it first. The silence growing as the three of them watched Jax. Chibs shot her a questioning look to her.

“Wow. Jax, what’s the matter?” She criticized archedly.
“I just didn’t know about it until now. But Tara’s right.” He acquiesced.

“Right about the schedule? Or the making friends and socializing outside of the club?” She drilled at him.

Jax gave her a frown as he thought about it. Tara watched Jax for his answer. But he took too long to answer the question and Tara jumped in again.

“Jax, I didn’t tell you because the wait list is like a couple of months long. You were in Stockton. Juggling the nanny’s, Gemma, and my work is a nightmare. But children need to socialize. They need to learn how to make friends and how to play and compromise with other kids. There are studies of the benefits of daycare.” Tara detailed, defending her choice regarding the issue.

Chibs took Nancy’s hand in his as they settled back to watch Jax and Tara.

“Gemma won’t like it. It’ll be a battle with her.” Jax said finally.

“Jackson, is Gemma their mother? No. I am. You are their father. We decide. Gemma has no say in this at all.” Tara said angrily.

Jax squirmed. “I know. Christ I know, I can’t believe this. Yes, you’re right. Okay, daycare. What the fuck is wrong with me?” He said to himself in frustration. Tara happy with her victory over the daycare issue didn’t see Jax’s reaction.

She mentally sighed as their communication wasn’t still clicking into place yet. Chibs saw it and shot her another look of disbelief.

“We talked about this, Jax. You and Gemma are too attached, it happened a long time ago. She leaned on you when she shouldn’t have. She put you in that role. Made you keep her there inside you. And the two of you never broke that bond. Gemma never let it be broken. It’s why its such a threat to Gemma when you thought about leaving Charming to go with Tara to Chicago. That bond, over the years, its morphed and solidified. It’s become an obsession with Gemma. She calls it love. It’s what twists you up. Conflicts you between Tara and Gemma affects how you and Tara parent your kids.”

“I can’t believe this.” Jax huffed. “I can leave. I can leave Gemma. I have.” He argued. But, the more he said it the more it sounded as though he was trying to convince himself.

She shook her head at Jax. “No, you can’t. Because she won’t let you go. And a small part of you doesn’t want to go, still clinging to the promise you made her when you were just a little boy.”

She took another drag on the joint, gearing up for what was next. Jax glaring at her, making him sound like a timid mama’s boy.

“And you never left. Even stuck in Stockton for fourteen months. She knew where you were. She has her eye on you practically all day every day. Even when you went with Bobby to Indian Hills...Gemma nagging Clay for letting you go on your own. She even calls you late at night to check on you. She did it last night. I’m surprised she hasn’t hauled ass over here first thing this morning.” She watched Jax struggle.

“I’ll simplify it for you.” Leaning closer to Jax. Her eyes locked on his confused blue ones. “Ask yourself...does Tara call you nearly every five minutes? Does Tara demand that you call or visit her at the hospital while she’s at work? Demand or tell you what you should do regarding club business? Make you fix mistakes that puts the club at risk?” She raises her brows at Jax, holding his blue eyes. “Are you in an intimate relationship with Gemma? Or Tara?”
Jax’s eyes went wide in shock at what she was implying with her questions. She felt Chibs grip her hand tighter. Tara looked between her and Jax as they held their little showdown, trying to piece together what it was that she was driving at.

Tara breathed as she looked to Jax, the wheels turning. She taking Jax’s hand in hers. “Jax, did Gemma?...Did she hurt you?” Tara asked carefully, her meaning hung heavy over the table.

“No! God, no! She never did that!” Jax exploded in a rush. Ripping his hand from Tara’s in shock, understanding what Tara was asking. His head whiplashing between Tara and Nancy.

“Not physically.” She said grimly. “But emotionally...psychologically, she did.” She confirmed grimly. “I read her Jax. I read you. I know what she did. I know how it felt from your perspective and hers. She did hurt you.”

“No…” Jax shook his head emphatically.

“Step back and analyse her behavior. Whenever you have girlfriends or even the croweaters around, she hates them. Talks disparagingly about them. When you married Wendy, she hated Wendy, calls her a junky whore in front of everyone...including Wendy. Helped Wendy try and kill herself with that heroin she brought into the hospital. How she treats Tara, not just when you were in high school, but even now. She pits Tara and Wendy against each other.”

“Anyone you show an interest in, Tara, Wendy, croweaters, Gemma reacts like a jealous ex-girlfriend than your mother. How she refers to you, my son. Refers to Abel and Thomas as my kids. My family. My club. She hurt you, Jax. Uses the pain of losing JT and your brother to keep your heart open to her. Uses that bond to keep you where she wants you. Every time she tells you how much she loves you and misses you. How much she does to protect you. It’s not said out of a mother’s heart to her son. But that of a jealous ex-girlfriend.”

Chibs hissed quietly next to her. His hand tight around hers as he was processing what she was laying out.

“Gemma literally means it whenever she says she loves you.”

Jax shook his head harder. “No. God, no. She’s my mother. She can’t…” His voice breaking.

“Gemma is a very sick woman. You are coming to know this. That truth, that feeling of being trapped, its bubbling up inside of you. Your ‘plan’ of getting out. I need to get out.”

“Oh my God.” Tara breathed in horror as Jax turns sheet white.

With Tara’s gasp, she focuses her attention to Tara, accusation in her voice. “The way you and Gemma fight over Jax’s attention, his affection and love. Back and forth. He’s mine, no he’s mine. Like Jax has no say, no choice. But he is a person, a man of free will.” Tara gulps in shame.

“Wendy realizes what it is that Gemma is doing, she’ll fall for it but then remember and will step out of the game. She’s smarter doing that than anyone else. There is no fight if the other person refuses to fight. Removing themselves from the field of battle.”

She looks back to Jax, his eyes pinned as he stares at her. His body stiff and strung tight. “Gemma suffocates you. Tells you who your family is and isn’t. Tells you she loves you. She thinks she protects you. Does things you don’t know about, gets into trouble, makes you clean up after her; even bad behavior on her part is attention you are giving her and not Tara or anyone else. Like a rebellious teenager. She sees how happy you are with Tara and the boys and she gets jealous. Or even if she’s feeling neglected by you. She’ll create drama so that you are forced to pay attention to
her again. Anytime someone tells her what you did or said to help them, she’s interrogating them to find out what you did for them. Daring to do something for someone other than her. She wouldn’t have held a gun on Stahl if it was Clay working this deal with the ATF over the identification of the Kings and Jimmy. She only did that because you were the one that was doing it. Anything you are doing...she infiltretes. But she does it behind your back, without all the facts, she does it over and over again, making everything worse. Making you have to cobble together the deal when Gemma skips off with you to go to Belfast. Deciding for you that she has to go with you to Belfast.”

Jax ran his hands over his face and beard.

“How much of your life has been spent revolving around Gemma? Shit that she did that you and the club had to fix if she had simply towed the line like an old lady is supposed to.”

“No, she doesn’t do that.” He breathed.

“Yes, she does. On a some level, you know this. When you were recovering from your attack in Stockton, you were alone for the first time in a very long time. Clay and the guys inside weren’t allowed to visit you. Even Gemma and Tara couldn’t get in to see you. Everyone’s influence over you lifted. And in that brief moment of time, you were free. Free to feel your own emotions, your own thoughts and opinions. How odd that is...trapped in a prison and it was the most free you’ve ever been in your entire life.”

“It’s why you came up with your exit plan. But you were also drugged up to the gills so your plan is...flawed to the nth degree.” She shrugged, the complete idiocy of his idea of an escape plan.

“But, even so, you were thinking for the first time for yourself. And you thought of Tara and your kids, their safety. You are a good person, Jax. You are intelligent and you love Tara and your kids with everything in you. You deserve to be happy. You deserve to have a life of your own choosing.”

Chibs shifted next to her.

“I wonder what would have happened if JT succeeded all those years ago. Gotten the club out of guns, managed to get the divorce from Gemma. The courts would have forced Gemma to let you go see your father in Belfast. You might have met your sister as a kid. What if you had managed to defy Gemma and leave with Tara for Chicago? You would have met other people, lived mostly on the legal side of the law. Gotten a job and be happy with Tara. Build a life and friends outside of the club and Gemma’s influence.”

“The idea of you and Tara deciding on daycare, your thoughts turn to Gemma and her reaction.” She shook her head.

“Jax...you have a stalker. If Gemma could get away with it, she would get rid of Tara, move you and the boys into her house. Even sleep with you. Her domination of you and your life utterly under her control. And she calls that love. I need to get out.”

Tara’s jaw dropped as she listened to what she was hammering at Jax.

“You are in a cage of her making, just as she keeps her birds caged, wings clipped so you can’t fly away and leave her. Tosses your house like a warden, tells you how to think and what you should do to take care of things. She’s done it to you for a very long time. Systematically ripping your independence down. And it started when your father was hit by that semi.”
“How?” He croaked. Tara staring at her in shock.

“The doctors told Gemma to not extend his life on the machines. That he was too badly wounded. It would have been kinder to let nature take its course. Instead, she told them to put him on life support. You were scared of the hospital already because of Thomas. It was a place of bad memories and it scared you. You tried to hide at Opie’s house, huddling under his bed or in his closet. As Gemma barged into Mary and Piney’s house, literally dragging you into the car and to JT’s side.”

Tara started crying, hearing about what was done to Jax. But she stared back at Jax who paled even further. She hated how she was tearing Jax’s life apart, that she had to do it. Watching Jax for him to tell her to stop. But he never did. He needed to hear this and he knew it. His silence permission for her to continue.

“For two days, you watched the man you loved, one who was so filled with life and vitality reduced to a state that you didn’t even recognize him. Would have passed his bed unwittingly if Gemma hadn’t sat you down next to him. To watch Gemma bawling and praying, grabbing onto you, telling you to pray for his recovery. Holding you close and making you promise to never leave her. And you did. How could you not? You were so traumatised by the violence of Gemma’s caterwauling and seeing the ruin of your father. For two days this went on. I need to get out.”

Tara gasped, her hand covering her mouth. Chibs wiped at his eyes. Jax started tearing up himself.

“Gemma knew what she was doing. All those tears and prayers were an act. It got her sympathy from the club, it solidified to the club that she wasn’t an adulteress, wasn’t a murderer. So that when JT died, she could marry Clay and everybody thought their relationship was on the up and up. She set the wheels in motion for JT’s murder. Clay never would have gone through with getting rid of JT unless it was Gemma telling him that JT had to go. Telling him just enough information and suspicion of what JT was doing in Belfast so much. What would Gemma’s life been like if she didn’t marry Clay, the new president? She would have been on the outs of the club. You would never be regarded as the heir-apparent your entire life. She would have had to have gotten a real job to support herself and you, and she hated that idea. She has a cushy gig at the garage. Show up when she likes and leaves when she likes. The men around her kowtowing around her, never questioning her. She had to marry Clay and stay as the old lady of the President of the club. She likes her queenship and the power it gives her. I need to get out.”

“Soon, Clay will be on her radar. She’ll write him off just as easily as she did JT, you are VP, the next in line. You would never turn on her. She’s made sure of that. She’s molded you into her ideal of what a man is. Soon as you hook up with Tara, Wendy, or anyone who has your attention, even JT’s book, now the letters, she goes on red-alert. She has to control the narrative, she has to know that you aren’t listening to alternate viewpoints other than her own. I need to get out.”

“You think Clay is the most evil person because he was the one that set the scene for JT’s demise, that the actual blood is on his hands. No. Clay is the elephant in a china shop. You see him coming a mile away. His only play is through violence and guns. Gemma, on the other hand, she’s a black widow. Weaving her webs, decades, layering her deceptions to the point where nobody questions her. Her web of lies have become the truth that everyone believes, in and out of the club. Even Gemma believes the lies. She’s built them up so much in her head for so long...to her...they are truth. But they are not truth, they are lies. The blood fills and spills all around her. I need to get out.”

“Fast forward to when Abel was born. You didn’t see him right away. You distracted yourself with going after Wendy’s dealers and club business. Gemma calling you practically every five minutes
telling you to go see your son. You were scared shitless. It was your father all over again, Abel born with a hole in his heart and half his stomach outside his body. You were sure he wouldn’t survive. The only way you could protect yourself from feeling that loss, to not feel the fear and have to promise Gemma to never leave her, was to not see your son. But you did, it took you two days; just like it took your father to pass away. She hurt you and she continues to do it.” She fell silent, everyone was stunned. Watching Jax, waiting for his reaction. “I need to get out.”

“Oh, shite.” Chibs breathed in shock even though she warned him last night. “Jackie, even when you were going to go Nomad, you changed your mind. When Clay told us about her rape. You were going Nomad. Only then, Gemma told the truth and you stayed. Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Ye’ can’t leave.” Chibs said in a breathy groan. She nodded as Chibs looked to her. “Oh my God.” Chibs swiped at his eyes.

Jax was literally stricken, as Chibs pointed out just how far Gemma would go to keep Jax from leaving.

Tara gasped, “I was trying to get Gemma to talk to someone about the rape. Made an appointment for her with a therapist. She never went. But you and Clay that night. Oh my God. She used that. Used her rape to keep you from going Nomad, from leaving her.”

“She told you, too. The next day, you went to check on her, on how she was doing after telling them such a traumatic event. Gemma told you, her telling the truth made Jax and Clay snap out of their bullshit. You and Clay worked together soooo well to take down Zobelle after that, didn’t you? She manipulated you and Clay. Then she went on a drunk and drugged pity party, thinking that Clay wouldn’t want her anymore. That she’d been violated.” She cringed. “Saying that a man likes to own his pussy. Her’s was violated. But it was a sign for her, that her position as Clay’s old lady, her queenship, could be at an end. She didn’t have a backup plan in place yet. Tig had gone to her house that afternoon to gather up guns for your vendetta against Weston and Zobelle, Tig and Gemma almost had sex then.”

“What!?” Everyone said in unison.

“I said almost. Tig stopped it, used his brain before it got too far. But Gemma, during that, she was...shopping.” She said distastefully. “Shopping for a new man, because she thought Clay wasn’t going to want her after being violated. It was cold and calculated. Gemma always lands on her feet. Think, if Clay was gone, if you left Charming, what would become of her? Who is most likely to become the next President?”

“Bobby.” Chibs said. Jax nodding with him.

She shook her head. “No, Gemma never considers Bobby as President material. President material is someone who is willing to kill for her if she asks for it. Bobby is too peacenik for her. To her it was between Tig and...you.” She looked pointedly to Chibs.

“What?” Chibs jerked. “No! Not fucking happening. Fuck no!”

“She tried to hook up with Tig, see if she could stand to be with him. But Tig stopped and walked away. Gemma saw you in the garage having a crisis. Gave you her shoulder to cry on. Threw her suggestions at you to help you make up your mind if you were going to tell the club about Stahl’s offer or if you were going to rat. You were more grateful to her after that, weren’t you?”

“Jesus Christ.” He said shakily. “Aye, I suppose. But I never would have slept with her.”

“Perhaps, but Gemma has a hold on you now. Because of your gratitude, she can come to you and
ask you to do something for her. Tell you her opinion on an issue that the club may be voting on, she’s in your ear. Fix or kill someone for her if she had good enough reason for it. And if she really put her mind to it, she’s utterly convinced she could get you into her bed. And she won’t love you or Tig, even though she says the words. Her obsessive love is centered on Jax alone. She’s done it before.”

“JT.” Tara painfully said.

“When JT was going back and forth to Belfast and pulling away from her, she found a love letter to Maureen, she got angry and decided to work on her next move. Started sleeping with Clay. Got Clay to kill JT. Clay did it over guns and money, Gemma it was over jealousy; JT dared to find happiness with Maureen and not her. She marries Clay, keeping her in her queenship and Jax, you were being groomed to take over when Clay had to step down. Gemma keeps bringing it up to Clay, even now. For when he has to step down because of his hands, that you will follow in Clay’s footsteps and leadership, not JT’s weak, introspective philosophy of what the club is and should be. Even when you admitted to Clay you were wrong that he didn’t burn down Caracara, Clay still wanted you to leave, to go Nomad. He saw you as a threat to his position as King. Even though Clay was telling Gemma that he’s trying to pull you in...to be a real father to you...but you weren’t having it. Not from him. Lying to Gemma. I need to get out.”

“To Gemma, she told JT about Charming, she’d run away from home at sixteen, vilified by the town. Her mother, Rose, and Gemma never seeing eye to eye. Gemma getting arrested for disorderly conduct. A black sheep of the reverend’s life. Gemma was viewed by the town as a troublemaker, treated as such.”

“She ran away vowing to herself that she’d be back and everyone in this town would kiss the ground she walks on. Comes back to Charming with JT and the club. A club of bikers, men who weren’t afraid to defend and fight with blood and bullets if it came down to it. Gemma’s the queen, rules these men, runs the town. Makes the the people of this town who disrespected her when she was a wild, out of control teenager, respect her. Takes great pride in lording over her status. She created this club, brought it here. Helped set up rules and modes of conduct for the club and even the women, too. You think that she is not in church? Bullshit. She’s in your heads. She’s been there for years. I need to get out.”

“The guys had their say in the business they ran, but everyone treated Gemma as the queen she expects to be treated. They trust her to tell her their secrets to, confiding in her as they are having crises in their lives. And she manipulates them, using the information that they give her either out of concern or bullying them into telling her what’s going on. Then running to Clay, to you, to Tig, to anyone who she thinks can influence the vote. And tells them her opinion. Turning her opinion so that you think it was your idea. And that is why she is so dangerous, add in that she’s willing to kill when it’s necessary. And worse, when she’s panicking or emotional, she’ll tell Clay information that he uses for his own gain. Her not realizing that what she says has very real consequences. Her loose lips to Clay will put Tara’s life at risk. Telling Clay about her upcoming trip to Oregon for a conference.”

“What trip?” Tara asked confused. She waving her question off, staring at Jax. Knowing that Jax understands what she is referring to.

“Jax, you never had a chance of leaving. Going Nomad, she stopped you from leaving. She even can’t let you go to Belfast without her to find Abel. The risk of you finding out the truth was too great. She had to be there if that truth ever came out. Had to be the one to tell you her version of what happened. You actually felt sorry for her, that JT stepped out on her. When you were thinking of going to Chicago with Tara, she asked you what you were going to do. A GED and an okay
mechanic. How would you support yourselves? She planted that doubt in your ear and it stuck with you for decades. She doesn’t even have to say it again. You used it when Tara suggested that she could support the family."

"Holy..." Tara breathed, shooting Jax a shocked look.

"Everything Gemma does and hears, she filters it to how it will affect you. Tara, you told Gemma that you’d told Jax about Joshua. Trying to get through to Gemma to go see your therapist friend about her rape. To get her to talk and process what had happened to her. You didn’t notice it, but Gemma went on red-alert when you told her that Jax helped you during that. Gemma, she asked you if Jax knew. What Jax did when he found out. Gemma didn’t care about her emotional pain from the attack, she wanted to know what it is that you got Jax to do for you in dealing with Joshua. That you might have power over Jax. Able to turn Jax’s attention away from her. Gemma is obsessed with you. She lies to you, she lies to everyone to get them to do what she wants. I need to get out."

“Oh my God.” Tara said, her face paling.

“Subconsciously, you know.” She turned to Jax again. “You were recovering from a near death stabbing in Stockton, alone and away from everyone. You were thinking for yourself for the first time in a very long time. You owned that plan. Not anyone else, you. But the depth of your need to get out, its deeper than you realize. It’s not Charming, its not the club...I need to get out.” She stressed the ‘I’ in the sentence that Jax had been saying last night.

“It’s Gemma.” Jax whispered.

“Yes. She brought the club to Charming, instructed you on who you are and your status with the club. Built up your confidence that you would take the gavel. She married Clay to keep that dream alive. She kept you from leaving for Chicago with Tara. She kept you from going Nomad. She searches your house, the apartment, goes behind your back with Stahl, Polly, now with the letters, she’s on the hunt for them along with Clay. Dragging Wayne into it again. Spinning shit up just to keep you here, in the dark and uninformed. To keep you from knowing the truth. That she helped murder your father. That she set the wheels in motion on that. Because if you knew, you’d be out of here at best, at worst, kill them both. Fuck, even the playground on the lot. Surrounded by chain link fence.”

“What? No! The prospects put that together.” He argued, his body stressed. Ready to hop out of his chair as he glared at her angrily. His eyes screaming at her to not go there. And yet, he isn't telling her to stop. Tara looked confused at the turn of the conversation. Chibs tensed next to her.

“Gemma ordered that playground. The slide, swings, the astroturf, even that ugly chain link fencing...she ordered it all. It showed up while you were in Belfast. The prospects put it up, but she created it, just as she created Charming for the club, for you. In her mind, the club is hers. Her gift to you, her love. And now your kids, play in that playground, behind that chain link fence. She’s training them, even now, that the club is the life. To get them used to being behind chain link fences. To become frequent flyers in the prison system. Gemma is your warden, her unrequited love for you. I need to get out. She hurt you Jax, she did it so well, you don’t even realize she’s done it and continues to do it. Daycare is very important.”

“Oh my God!” Tara wailed in horror.

"Shite. Shite. Shite." Chibs said as he saw the big picture of what it was that Gemma did and does. Jax jerked up suddenly, his eyes wide in panic, running around to the side of the house. The sound
of him losing his breakfast. Tara shaking and making to move to Jax at the sound of his purging and hoarse cry.
Chapter 57

Chapter Summary

Nancy and Tara

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay. Had problems writing this and the upcoming parts. It was sketched out, so it took a bit of planning and editing.

Finished school and, of course, started learning about wordpress so I can earn some side money building websites. Got a little obsessed with that.

What does everyone think so far? too much? too little?

Thanks again for reading and sticking with me. I have tons more to this story. It'll sync up with the canon episodes soon. Need to get Tara and Jax back on even-keel. Gemma's been too quiet...plotting something dastardly again.

“Hold up, Tara.” Stopping Tara in her tracks. “Chibs?” She asked to him.

“Got it.” He moved to follow after Jax, briefly setting a hand to Tara’s shoulder.

“What? Jax...He needs me…” Tara flustered, still half out of her chair. Her eyes going from her to where Chibs stalked off.

“Let Chibs take care of Jax. He needs a male figure to lean on.” She explained.

Tara still not convinced, looked from her to the Chibs back, as he turned around the side of the house. “Look, if you go after Jax right now, he’ll pull away from you. You’ll get hurt with him pulling away, and that isn’t conducive to your relationship.”

“I can’t believe this. I never knew that... What are we going to do? Oh my God...the kids. I need to call and check on the kids.” Tara cried as she made to stand up again.

“Hold off on calling the kids, Jax will want to hear them, too. And you did know.”

“What? No...I...” Tara’s eyes flew to hers, as she sat back down abruptly.

Giving Tara an irritated look. “Yes. You did know. Your attempts to get Jax out of Charming. To go with you to Chicago. Letting Jax convince you about his plan of getting out. Any of this ringing a bell? You know how toxic Gemma is. You may not have had all the details...but you knew that something wasn’t right. The faster you accept this the better. We can’t have you going all wishy-washy right now.”

Tara studied her as she finished off her joint. “You realize that what you just did...no therapist in
“Tara, you weren’t here last night. I’ve been laying the groundwork for that since he showed up. And Jax could've stopped me. But he didn’t.” She caught Tara’s eyes. “Jax had the capacity to stop this. But he knew, he needed to hear it. He needed to confront this.”

“But…he could have hurt himself. Still could. You’re not a professional psychiatrist, equipped to handle a situation like this.” Tara argued.

“Tara...Why the hell do you think I had you come over today?” She barked at Tara.

“Uh...well…” Tara stumbled and blinked, at her harsh tone.

“Whether you believe me regarding the psychic stuff or not...I read Gemma. I read Jax. I know them. I know what’s going on. And Jax was already figuring shit out. What do you think would happen if Jax figured it out while he was in a shootout? Or in some other equally dangerous situation? It’s not just him that is in danger. But everyone around him, including you and the kids. I doubt he would have survived it if he was all on his own and this realization hit him over the head.”

“Sorry.” Tara offered meekly.

“Don’t be sorry. Help him. Tell him what is going on. Tell him what Gemma is teaching you. I had Chibs take his weapons and keys to the SUV when he showed up. I made this place as safe as it could be. I’ve been leading Jax through this since last night.”

“God. I’m sorry. I don’t mean to be a bitch. I’m just worried for him...for my boys.”

“I know. You love him. If you'd done that to Chibs, I'd be challenging you, too. But he’ll be better now. He has a strong sense of self. I wouldn’t have done this...like this if he didn’t. He loves you Tara. Jax didn’t tell you what all is going to happen in the future if things don’t change.”

“What?”

“He wants to protect you. I told him it was foolish thinking, since you're in the middle of this already.”

“What doesn’t he want me to know?” Tara asked, her backbone strengthening.

“Things are going to get bloody with the club. And between Gemma and Clay.”

“Yes, you’ve said that.” Tara pressed.

She sighed, rubbing at her eyes as her headache increased. “Clay will kill Piney. Opie will shoot Clay over Piney’s death. Your hand will get broken in a van door that slams shut while men are trying to kidnap you.” Tara’s eyes widened at that. “Your hand will heal...but it’ll take time.”

Giving Tara a hard look. “Gemma will kick Clay out of the house over your attempted kidnapping. He’ll beat the living crap out of her.”

Tara’s jaw dropped.

“And don’t feel sorry for her. She pulled and shot at him with a gun in that fight. Gemma will get blackout drunk and pick up random men in skeezy bars. One will steal her wallet and SUV. Jax and the guys will have to go track the guy down for her. She’ll hook up with a guy named Nero.
He runs an escort service.”

“Jesus Christ.”

“She’s going to try and get Jax to kill Clay for her. She’ll keep Nero around and try and get him more involved in the club. And he will. For a time. He’s a nice guy, he’ll try and get her to retire with him to his uncle’s farm. But he doesn’t know Gemma. He doesn’t know how far she’ll go to keep the people she wants around her.”

“That’s us.” Tara breathed.

“No...it’s Jax and your kids. As long as you are still in the whole club way of living...she won’t have a problem with you.” Tara’s face paled at that.

“Gemma will get so bad that the one chance you give her to watch the boys, she’ll be high and swerve head-on with a truck. The headlights making her swerve off the road, crashing her SUV and nearly killing Abel. She’ll lie about what happened just to keep herself in the boys lives. Clay helps her with that lie. But it’s Nero that will tell Jax the truth.”

“Things with the club are precarious because of the Rico and the CIA. You’ll offer your services to Stockton prison so that you could convince Otto to recant his statement for past crimes in the Rico. Tara….you do not go see Otto...ever. You hear me. Don’t do it.” She pointed at Tara with a warning look.

Tara’s brows furrowed at the stress of her order. “Why not?”

“Otto’s price for his recantation is too high. He’ll get you to bring in a crucifix he’d given to Luann. Gemma will bring it to you.”

“But if Gemma nearly kills Abel...there’s no way in hell I’m asking her for anything.” Tara pointed out.

“You say that now...but then...you are desperate to help Jax. And Gemma will hop to whatever you say just to have the chance to get back into your good graces.”

“What does Otto do with the crucifix...you said the price is too high.”

“Otto will kill a nurse in front of you with the crucifix. Making you an accessory to murder. Otto’s actions will kill his part of the Rico...but it puts you in a tough spot where you face real jail time. Thus, my order that you do not go and see Otto. Or try and help Jax with the club business.”

“But…I can’t not help him.”

“You getting arrested for accessory to murder is not helping. I know you are thinking that you’d sacrifice everything so that Jax can finally be free of the club. But it won’t work. Getting involved with the club side of things is not your place, beyond the patching the guys up. I’d suggest you work with Chibs to get him more trained in the patching up part of things. But I don’t know if we’ll have time. Your focus should be on the boys and protecting them. Being the emotional support that Jax needs. And he will be the support that you need to get through all this. That is why you are here. Why I’m giving you and Jax homework to work on your communication skills.”

She cracked her neck, trying to ignore her headache.

“What else aren’t you telling me?” Tara questioned.
“You sure you want to know?”

“Yes. I need to know.”

Crossing her arms, “Gemma practically moves into your house to help Jax with the boys while you are in county for your bond hearing. She’s in hog heaven. She’s got Jax, the boys all in the palm of her greedy hand. When you get out...you are quiet....more reserved. Still cordial to everyone...but not really back. You’ll meet with Lowen quite a bit regarding your case...and other things.”

“Other things?” Tara questioned, biting at her lip.

“Jax and Gemma find out that you are planning on divorcing Jax. Petitioning for full custody of the kids. Wendy and Margaret help you with your plans.”

“Seriously?”

“As a heart attack, you’ll send Wendy to spill information in Gemma’s ear. Get her more and more worked up. An emotional Gemma is a violent, irrational Gemma. When she hears you're setting up your will...that you're going to have Margaret become custodian for the boys...”

She took a breath. Looking to Tara to see if she wanted her to stop. But only saw determination.

“Gemma will fly into a rage, attack Margaret and you at the hospital. While Gemma and Margaret have their scuffle, you're running to your office and Gemma will track you down. You’ll get in a physical and verbal fight with her. You’ll throw yourself against the corner of your desk.”

“What?”

“God. You’ll fake a pregnancy. I suspect that in order to get the order of protection against Gemma, you’ll have to go to such extremes just to get Jax to sign the papers. You’ll ‘miscarry’ and Jax signs the papers to legally shut Gemma out of your and the boys lives. But Gemma will figure out the scheme. Wendy will fold under Gemma’s questions.”

“And you want us to consider Wendy as guardian?” Tara astonishingly questioned.

“I told you that Wendy has problems. She’ll always be a recovering drug addict. And in the end...it’s Wendy and Nero who will take the boys out of Charming.”

‘What? How?’

“Gemma tells Jax to check more into what you are doing before completely shutting her out. That’s when he finds out about your plans to divorce him. Take his sons from him. He’ll feel betrayed by you. He’ll actually apologize to Gemma for not believing her in the first place. Apologizing to her in front of the club, Gemma’s so fucking proud of herself. To be vindicated that way. And you are placed on 24 hour watch by the club. Making sure you don’t go anywhere you’re not supposed to be. Certainly not with the boys.”

“Things with the club will get worse. You’ll obtain evidence of a crime that the club has done. It and your knowledge of what the club does...it’s enough for the DA to get you into witpro for your testimony against the club. You’ll run with the boys but you don’t go to the DA.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t read you. But it doesn’t matter because Jax and the club will find you. You beg Jax not to kill you in front of the boys. Tell him that you did your best to get them out of a
life that Jax himself was trapped in. Jax is shocked to hear you talk like that. To see you shaking in absolute terror of what you think he will do to you. It’s enough to wake him up. To remind him what you mean to him. He makes a deal with the DA. He’ll turn himself in. In exchange your charges are to be dropped. He’ll tell the club that you can take the boys wherever you want. That you will have the full support of the club to whatever you decide.”

“So it works out, then.” Tara face relaxed in relief.

“It would...except nobody told Gemma about Jax willingly making the deal. Gemma will be drunk and high when she finds out about a deal. She automatically assumes you ratted since you ran off with the boys. Gemma attacks you in your house. You’ll see the insanity in Gemma’s eyes and try to run out of the house. But she’s on you.”

She looked to Tara, seeing her crestfallen look.

“Gemma will kill you. It’s violent and bloody. Jax will find you. His grief...it’ll be so deep. He’ll shut down. The man you know and love...” She pointed off to where Jax and Chibs disappeared to. “...won’t exist anymore. With you gone...he’s a man that had his heart and soul ripped out and burned in front of him. He’ll truly become the monster you are afraid of.”

Tara swiped at the tears falling down her cheeks.

“Gemma will tell Jax that she ‘happened’ to drive by your house that night. Saw a Mercedes and a chinese guy running down the side of the house. Given how violent the attack was, Jax and everyone will believe it. She’ll even point out one of Henry Lin’s men as the guy she saw. Even torturing and killing a man who supposedly killed you won’t slake his lust for vengeance. He’ll take down Henry Lin and his entire crew. In the process, starting a gang war on the streets from Oaktown, Stockton, and Charming. Black, brown, white, yellow...nobody is left untouched by the war Jax starts.”

“Oh my God. I...what about the boys? Surely, Jax would take care of them.”

“He’s so emotionally gutted, he can’t. He can’t see them. Not right away. Gemma swoops in and has them moved into her house. Wendy will come back from rehab and help her with the boys. Abel will be old enough to pick up on what is going on. He’s a smart kid. And Gemma...her mental and emotional state will deteriorate. She’ll have conversations with you. Like you’re actually talking to her.”

Tara’s hand dropped to the table, stunned as she considered what she was telling her.

“I read an article a while back...I’m not sure if I remember the details right. It was about the hereditary or genetic risks of Alzheimer’s.” She remembered absently.

Tara jerked upright at that. “Ah...ohhh...Gemma’s father, Nate, is in a home with advanced Alzheimer’s. You think Gemma has it?”

She shrugged. “It’s something to think about.”

Tara rubbed at her eyes in thought.

“In either case, just keeping to the lie...it weighs on her. And you know how she gets when she doesn’t want to tell anyone anything. Like her rape. How many people were put at risk because she failed to tell someone about it. Waiting for when she had to tell, if ever. Same thing. With her rape, nobody in the club died as a result of her lie. Chibs was hurt in that car bomb, but he lived.”
“Oh my God. I fucking tried to get her to see a therapist.” Tara railed.

“Yeah, I know. Like I said, Abel is a smart kid. He’ll get into fights at school so he’s sent home. Eventually, hurting himself.”

“Oh God.” Tara cried.

“When questioned, Abel will tell everyone that it was Gemma who hurt him. The school will call in social services. They’ll force Jax to pack the boys up and move them back to your house. Wendy moving with the boys to help out. Gemma no longer able to see them or risk having Abel and Thomas taken away into the system. Jax tells Abel that Wendy was his first mommy. Thinking that it’ll help Abel not be so sad or depressed with you gone. But it’s Abel that questions Jax if that was why Gemma killed you. So that Wendy could be his mommy.”

Tara swayed in her chair.

“Jax will spend the night thinking everything through. Trying to pinpoint who told him what and when that led to this. Either somebody lied to him about the Chinese...or Abel, his five year old son, is psychologically damaged and needs a team of therapists.”

“Pieces of the puzzle fall into place and he finds out that his mother lied to him. And by this point, the body count is sky high. Jax will be forced to kill Wayne. He’ll kill Gemma, crying while he does it. Because, despite everything, she’s still his mother and he still loves her. He’ll clean up the mess he’s created as best he can. The price for his war...the club will be forced to vote Mayhem on him. The forum will demand only one answer, if the club fails to vote their way...they’ll disband the charter. Jax realizes it. Accepts the terms. He’ll burn all of his journals and JT’s letters, his book, anything Teller...he’ll burn it all. The kids will be packed off with Nero and Wendy to Nero’s uncle’s farm. Instructing Nero to tell Abel and Thomas that he was a monster. To scare the hell out of them to keep them from falling into the violence of the club.”

She took a breath. Tara silent as she listened. “He’ll take JT’s panhead out on 580 and ride it head on into a semi-truck. Peaceful that he fixed what he could and ready to find you in the next life.”

Tara paled.

“That is what Jax faces. That is what he is trying to protect you from. The question is...are you willing to help him avert that tragic end?” Challenging Tara.

“All this...just makes me want to run. Take the boys and run.”

She nodded, letting Tara think.

“I’d have to leave Jax. He won’t go, not with the club under Rico or this CIA business. God. It’s partly why I love him. His protectiveness of the club. Of his father’s legacy. I’ve left him before...it was unbelievably lonely without him. And to possibly tear the boys away from their father... I can’t do it. God help me, I can’t do that.” Tara concluded.

Tara pulled out of her own thoughts to look at her. “Jesus. You knew I’d say all that.”

She rolled her eyes. “I suspected.”

“I don’t know if I should be mad at you or not.” Tara huffed.

“Tara, you have a choice. I’m not going to make it for you. If you do stay...things are going to be incredibly hard. As far as Gemma or anyone knows, we haven’t had this talk. I haven’t read Jax.
Jax hasn’t read or know about the letters. Gemma’s already threatened you with that note. And Jax, despite going through all this...he still will have a hard time believing me. He’s grown up under Gemma’s tutelage. Habits are formed and are hard to break. Just ask Wendy how hard it is to stay clean. She could be clean for the rest of her life, but she’ll still crave that high.”

Tara sighed heavily. “Wendy…”

“Like I said, she’ll be back. You and Jax need to talk about her. You need to get your wills and legal shit done asap. I know for myself, having mine done...I feel better that things are in place. And I think your fear of Wendy is partly because Jax actually married her.”

“What? No. I’m not afraid of her. She nearly killed Abel with her habit. You have no idea how bad it was. Abel, statistically, shouldn’t have lived.”

She frowned at Tara’s reasoning. “I know you’re talking like a clinical, doctor about this. But he did live. You helped save his life. So quit dwelling on the what should have been and concern yourself with what could be. Prepare for that. Don’t let Gemma tell you how to raise the boys. They are your kids...how do you want them to grow up? To become upstanding citizens of the world? To help rather than take? To forgive rather than hold grudges? To love rather than hate? You already know what to do. Stop doubting yourself. Stop it. Because if Gemma senses your wafting, she’ll keep on infiltrating your life. Teach the boys about the life of the club. Just like she did to Jax. Don’t let Gemma do that to your family.”

“Shit. You’re right.” Tara ran her hand through her hair.

“I really hate it when I’m right.” She groaned, flinching as her headache flared.

Tara shot her an amused look.

“Come on, let’s get lunch started. Looks like it might start raining again.”

Tara glanced at her watch. “Damn, feels like the day barely started. Yet not.”

She stood up, Tara following suit. “I have the worst sense of time. Back home, going to school, that kept me on a schedule at least. The breaks were hard. Reading people...tracing decades of time and how everything relates to each other.”

Shrugging at Tara’s curious look. “And direction. Soon as we hit the Rockies, I lost my direction.”

“Kind of makes sense, you grew up in the midwest. Everything is pretty much in an orderly grid system.”

“And flat. Don’t forget flat. Let’s just say, I was just glad Chibs was driving...riding. Going uphill on some of those hills and mountains. And don’t get me started on the danger signs for rockslides. Good God.” She griped.

“It just takes getting used to.” Tara grinned back at her.

“Well, I’m kind of hoping for an earthquake, just to feel what it’s like. You always hear about California’s quakes, but I wouldn’t know what to do in case it actually happened.” She griped lightly.

“Chicago gets quakes.”

“Little ones, like, in the middle of the night. Once every other decade if there’s a blue moon kind of
thing.” She huffed back, as Tara chuckling at her descriptiveness.

They started pulling food out from the pantry and refrigerator. Heating up chicken noodle soup and preparing the fixings for sandwiches.
Chapter 58

Chapter Summary

Chibs and Jax...

Chapter Notes

Warning, lots of swearing in this chapter.

He ran a hand through his hair as he went after Jax. His thoughts racing. Fuck. What Gemma did to Jax. Gemma...fucking Gemma. He didn’t want to believe it...but the more he tried to deny it, the more it hammered at him. There was no way to cover this shit up. Truth wills out. Fuck.

Turning the corner he saw Jax had his hands pressed to the side of the house. Bent over as he spit bile down into his shrubbery. Shit.

As he approached, Jax stiffened. And when he got close enough to touch, Jax flinched out of his reach and started pacing.

“Don’t.” Jax shook his head. “Just fucking don’t.”

He sighed and lit a joint as he watched Jax. When holding out the joint as Jax paced back and forth. Giving the boy a hard look, making him take the joint.

“God damn it.” Jax drew on the joint angrily. “I don’t...I don’t...” His voice broke, hands and arms punching at the sky only to fall defeatedly at his sides.

“Jax.” He crooned carefully, taking Jax in his arms for a hug. Jax fell limp in his arms, grabbing him hard to keep him on his feet. Feeling the harsh breathing against his neck he gripped tight.

Being the strength that Jax needed. “It’s okay. You’re okay.” He said gruffly.

“What... Chibs... What am I? I don’t know who I am anymore. God. She lied to me. My own mother. She... My entire life! What am I?” Jax cried harshly. His body tense as he tried to keep from completely falling apart. He hugged Jax tighter at the pain in his voice.

Pulling Jax back, keeping his hands on Jax’s arms. Looking directly into Jax’s watery, blue eyes.

“What... Chibs... What am I? I don’t know who I am anymore. God. She lied to me. My own mother. She... My entire life! What am I?” Jax cried harshly. His body tense as he tried to keep from completely falling apart. He hugged Jax tighter at the pain in his voice.

“You are a strong and loving man. A father to two boys who adore you. And you love them so much, you’d tear your own heart out for them. You are soon to be a husband to the love of your life. And you are hers, just as much as she’s yours.” Jax’s breathing hitched as he listened to him.

“I watched you grow up since you were a boy. You’re a good man. A good leader. I love you like you’re my own son. Nothing you could do or whatever shit was in your past would make me think any less of you. I’m proud of you. I’m here for whatever ye’ need.” He said gruffly, his own emotions swirling up to strangle his voice up tight.

“Focus on Tara and your boys. They hold the keys to who and what ye' are. It’s right there in their
eyes. Never doubt their love for you. *Never* doubt that. You hear me?” He gave Jax a solid shake.

Jax nodded that he heard him. But he didn’t think Jax was believing him, Jax’s eyes not tracking his. God damn Gemma, he cursed silently.

“Did you know? Did she tell you?” Jax’s voice accused, pulling out of his grip his hand waving wildly off back to where Nancy and Tara were.

“No.” He shook his head.

Jax glared at him as if he were lying to him.

“Just said she was probably going to have to throw you into the deep end of the pool. That was all.” He lit a cigarette and glared at Jax for doubting his word. “I didn’t know. She wasn’t sure she would have to last night. Just said that she’d need me to look after ye’ if things went bad. Take another hit on that.” He ordered with a nod to the joint still in Jax’s hand, forgotten with the storm brewing in the boy.

“Jesus. ’If things went bad’...well, it’s pretty fucking bad, Chibs.” Jax paced a tight pattern, pulling on the joint.

“Aye. Shits definitely hit the fucking fan.” He agreed neutrally, his eyes tracking Jax’s movement back and forth.

Jax gave a harsh laugh. “Fucking Clay with his cartel deal. The CIA, Rico...the letters. That’s just the fucking club. Gemma…” Jax broke off abruptly.

He simply watched and listened to Jax as he vented.

“Fuck. I remember Gemma dragging me out of Ope’s house.” He waved his hands as he breathed out the smoke. Pressing the heels of his hands to his forehead.

“Mary yelling at Ma to let me go. Gemma yelling back. I was fighting her grip. I can *feel* the scratches she left from her nails as her hand twisted my shirt up. Dragging me through the house to the car. I didn’t want to go. She fucking *made* me go. Fuck. How could I not put that together. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. And this shit of Gemma wanting to sleep with me?...How did things get so wrong? I can’t stop remembering...She killed him....I can’t stop remembering…” Jax’s eyes taking on a spooked horse look as the memories and emotions ripped through him.

He took hold of Jax’s shoulders again. Forcing him to stop his pacing. Forcing him to look him in the eyes. “Breathe.” Jax fought his grip, he just held on tighter. “Just breathe. You’re going to have a panic attack. Focus. Breathe. That’s all you need to focus on right this minute. Just breathe. I’ve got ye’.”

Jax settled and breathed deeply as instructed.

“Good. You’re okay. Just keep breathing.”

“Jesus. The kids…” Jax groaned.

“They are fine. Alita has them. They’re fine.”

“They are not fine! *Not* with my mother!” Jax stressed. Whatever calm he had achieved was obliterated with his panic about his kids. And while he agreed protecting the kids needed to be worked out. But, Jax was still on the brink of a full-blown panic attack at the moment.
Jax gasped as he couldn't get air, his face losing all color. Jax’s eyes wide and unseeing in his panic. Fuck. He forced Jax’s head down to his knees. Jax struggled and fought his unrelenting grip.

“Jax...quit fighting me. You’re brain’s racing a million miles away on ye’. Calm down and breathe.” He ordered, keeping Jax bent over so the blood wouldn’t rush out of his head making his panic worse. Worried he’d have to sedate the boy if he didn’t get hold of himself.

But Jax seemed to be listening to him finally. His chest expanding and contracting deeply. Resting his forearms on his knees.

He reached down and set a couple of fingers over Jax’s wrist, glancing at his watch, timing his heart rate. It was fast, but with him breathing now, and the pot he managed to inhale probably will start to kick in any moment now.

“I know ye’ think everything is turned to shite right now. I know shite is piling on. I know ye’ think ye’ have to shovel it all by yourself...but it’s not true. I’m here for ye’. Tara is here for ye’. Nancy is here for ye’. We aren’t going to let you get buried. Just keep breathing, Jackie. That’s it lad. You’re okay.” He said calmly. He tested how relaxed Jax was by rocking him. Jax’s body swayed slightly under his hand. Good.

Jax gave a final deep breath and his entire body relaxed finally as his panic eased off. Jax nodded and moved to stand upright again. “I’m okay.”

He helped Jax upright again, keeping a hand on his arm to steady him. His color back in his cheeks. And his eyes didn’t have the spooked horse look it did a few minutes ago. “I’m okay. I’m okay.” Jax said shakily.

“I know. Just making sure you don’t pass out on me.”

Jax huffed a dark laugh as he wiped at his eyes again. “Well, you seem to have all the practice lately, carrying an unconscious Nancy around.”

He rolled his eyes at Jax’s dark humor. “Aye, well, she’s ninety-five pounds soaking wet. You’re fucking heavy, ye’ fucker. Had to help Ope haul you’re drunk ass to the shower if ye’ remember.”

Jax couldn’t help a short laugh to his snarky response. “Sorry. Fuck. I never felt that before.” Jax said lighter and a little breathier. Blinking in a bit of surprise to how his emotions flew from absolute fear and terror to an odd calm so quickly.

“I know. It happens.” He gave Jax a reassuring squeeze at his shoulder before letting go of him. “Ye’ had the shite knocked out of ye’. I’d be surprised if ye’ didn’t have a meltdown after that.”

“Fuuuck.” Jax cursed again. “I get why Tig’s so freaked out now. Fuck there’s something about her...her look, her eyes...I don’t know what the fuck it is...fucking freaked me out. Even her voice...She was talking to me...us like normal...but it was like she was talking inside me somehow...and the memories just rose up in me. Fuck...”

“I know.” Jax glanced at him, his response not in the right level of tone for him. Rolling his eyes back at him. “I know. Jesus Christ. Ye’ think I was making shite up in my head about her?”

Jax’s eyes quicksilvered at some thought that crossed his mind, he braced himself for whatever dipshit thing he was thinking. Jax’s lips curled into a smirk. “Jesus, how do you have sex with her? I’d be having a fucking heart attack.”

Slapping a hand to his forehead and sending Jax a scathing glare. “Idiot.” He swore back at Jax.
“And it ain’t your concern, now is it?”

“Epic sex, indeed.” Jax couldn’t help saying. Repeating Tig’s phrase from church and their display of their new tattoos.

“Christ.” He groaned as Jax teased him. But he’d rather have Jax throwing out jokes and teasing the shit out of him instead of flipping out again. “Finish that. Fucking good weed I give ye’. Don’t fucking waste it.”

The two of them stood and smoked. He glanced up at the sky and noticed it clouding up again. He missed the weather report last night.

“What are we going to do, Chibs?” Jax drew his attention again.

“Well, we’re going to finish smoking. Go back to our women and figure shit out.” He said obviously.

Jax rolled his eyes at him, not letting him get away with that answer.

“Fine. Nancy told us what we need to do. You and Tara start doing your homework.” He grinned as Jax heaved and pouted at the reminder of that.

“Homework. I’m not some teenager in school.” Jax whined, sounding just like the teenager he was complaining about.

He shrugged, taking another draw on his cigarette. “I saw Tara’s reaction to this homework idea...you’re not getting out of that. Might as well man up about it. It’s not going to kill ye’ to talk to your fiance, Jackie.”

“Yeah, you’re right on that.” Jax shifted turning quiet all of a sudden. “God Tara.” He groaned.

He caught the worried look in Jax’s eyes and how he shifted nervously on his feet.

Shaking his head, what an idiot. “Calm down. She’s fine. Worried, but fine.”

“But…”

“She loves you. You think this would scare her off? Tara’s a good girl, put up with you all these years. Takes care of your kids. Held shite down while you were inside...fucking strong woman you got there.”

“I’m surprised she didn’t run after me.” Jax said.

“You think you’d let her help you just now?” He challenged.

“Probably not.” Jax admitted.

He grunted as the two of them fell into silence again as they smoked.

“Any ideas other ideas what to do about Clay? This deal with the cartel? Galen?”

“Until we know more...there’s nothin’ we can do. We can’t force a vote...the guys...we’d have to bring up the letters. They’d force a vote on Clay. If he and Galen are as tight as we suspect...that’s no good. The Rico and the CIA would fucking annihilate us. It’s too soon like Nancy said. Best let things play out for now.”
“Christ. Wish I never made that deal with Clay.” Jax sighed in defeat.

“Oy, it’s done. No use cryin’ over it. We know what’s coming. I’ll put a call in to Belfast. Check on how cozy Galen and Clay are. I’ll go check on Piney tomorrow after making the copies.”

Jax paced a little more, taking the final pull on the joint. “I don’t know what to do about Gemma. I’m trying to think what to do...I can’t come up with a plan for that.”

“I don’t know either. I don’t like her spreading her poison in our ears like she’s done. Not with club business. God knows what Clay’s fucking telling her. Everything probably. That’s his decision, though.”

“Jesus, I can’t trust her around the boys. Not after this.” He waved his arm around, emphasizing the weight of the truth they all had to bear.

“I know. I wouldn’t either. But you go on the attack with her, she’ll attack back. People get hurt when she’s like that. You know that. Once the boys are in daycare, her time with them will be limited. Make sure there are people around when she’s with them, maybe.”

“Fuck, she’s going to go nuclear with the daycare alone.”

He frowned at Jax, giving him a hard look. “Jackie, I’m not telling ye’ what to do. She’s your mother. But Nancy hit it spot on how Gemma treats people. Even with the club. I don’t like that she was snooping in my shit. Throwing Ima at me just to try and break me and Nancy up. Trying to toss Nancy off the lot. I told ye’ before, I won’t put up with Gemma’s games no more.”

He paused. Jax heaving a sigh, still in a quandary.

“But she is your mother. You and she have deep history. Not all of it good. What she did to you...that never should have happened. Not to anyone. It’s not right. If you want to cut her out. I’m behind ye’.”

“Is that what you would do? Cut her out completely?”

He shifted at Jax’s questions. “I told ye’, it’s not my place.” He tried to get out of this.

Jax’s eyes imploring him to help him with this.

“I don’t know. It’d be satisfying to be sure, to just cut her out. Confront her with all of it. But doing that...it’s short-term. It’d feel good at first. But I think you’d have regrets later. And Gemma wouldn’t let you push her out. She’d find a way to get back in because of your history. Add in the mess of the club….maybe a long game is better.”

“Long game?”

“Aye.” He pulled out of his own thoughts to look at Jax directly. “How satisfying would it be to try and...I don’t know...reform Gemma. We’re already doing a long game with Clay and the club. Nancy said Gemma was like a bratty teenager...treat her like one. Don’t let her see the boys until Gemma’s got her shit together.”

“Parent my own mother?” Jax asked. His brows rising up in astonishment at the idea.

He shrugged again. “It’s an idea. Talk to Tara. See what she wants to do. We’re going to be busy with Clay and the club...it’s Tara that has to deal with your mother for the most part.”
“Yeah.” Jax replied.

He couldn’t help his snarky grin. “There ye’ go, laddie. Your first homework assignment.”

“I. Am. So. Fucked.” Jax groaned at the reminder.

He chuckled in amusement. “Come on. My head’s ready to pop off. We've got to go back. You feeling better?”

“Yeah. Thanks.”

He slapped a hand to Jax’s shoulder as they began walking back to the patio.

“Hey, Chibs?”

“Hmmm?”

“You know there’s food hidden in the guest bedroom, right?”

He jerked to sudden halt. Jax stopping with him. “What?”

Jax shrugged. “Just candy...powerbars in the nightstand drawer.”

He ran a hand over his goatee. “Okay. Okay.”

“Okay?” Jax questioned.

“Nancy...she’d hide food up in the joists of the basement back home. She must feel she needs to do that still. Don’t let on about it. Okay?”

“Yeah, sure.”

They set off again.

“Must have been pretty bad for her.” Jax said after a moment.

“Aye. It was. She’s getting better though. She’s going to be fine.” He reassured not just Jax, but himself as well. He didn’t know about her squirrelling away food until now. But it makes sense. Give her some time to heal and settle, to trust that he’d never let her go without. Not ever.

Jax nodded. “Yeah. You love her?”

“Don’t be daft.” Chibs gave Jax a glare. “Love her just as much as you love Tara and your boys. Come on, let’s get back. My head is killing me.”

“Yeah, shit, there really is no running from the truth, is there?”

“Do you want to run? Or do you want to fight and make things better? Seems to me you have a chance to change your life and the lives around you for the better. Only way you could have done that is if you’d known the truth as ugly as it is. How you handle the truth and its consequences, it speaks to your character. And you always try to fix things for everyone, not just for yourself.”

“That’s not true. I helped Clay pass that mule vote. I did it to get money so I could get Tara and the boys out of Charming. That wasn’t helping the club.” Jax said despondently over his part of the making of the deal and the danger the club was now in.
“Aye, but it was helping Tara and the boys. You didn’t do it just for yourself. That would be Clay. You are not Clay. JT would be proud of you Jackie. I’m proud of you.”

“Well, it doesn’t feel any good, so I don’t think you should be so proud of me.”

“Mince. Don’t be telling me how I feel. I know you’re feeling like shite and your world feels like it’s been torn apart right now. But that’s right now. I think in the coming days and weeks...your opinion’ll change. Without Nancy telling you the shite you needed to hear, we’d be heading into a long and bloody war.”

He noticed that Nancy and Tara disappeared from the patio, as they turned the corner of the house to the backyard.

“Mince? What the hell does that mean?”

“Fuck me. It means rubbish.” He said irritatively, his headache screaming at him.

“Tig’s right, you are getting more Scottish by the day.” Jax commented.

“I am Scottish, ye’ fucker.” He retorted to a grinning, unrepentant Jax. Huffing when his glare didn't diminish Jax’s amusement, he turned to go back into the house where Nancy was. Jax following after him.
Chapter 59

Chapter Summary

Lunch and plans...

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay, this was a section that I hadn't written completely out. I had a general idea of what I wanted to get in here but getting the words down...that was harder. Had to write, end up deleting it, rewriting it several times. Hopefully, my grammar isn't completely horrendous.

Ended up doing quite a bit of research into the Troubles, and the IRA history. The Hooded Men exist. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hooded_Men_1971 I wasn't even going to put that in, but it worked as backstory. Let me know what you think.

Happy Father's Day to any of the dad's out there reading this. And I think with the post of this chapter, pushes this story over the 250k words mark. Holy cow. I did a word count a year ago and it worked out to around 1 million words. And that didn't include the road trip chapters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She looked up from cutting a tomato for sandwiches when she heard the door to the patio open. Chibs and Jax entering. Tara stirring a pot of soup on the range behind her.

Chibs glaring back at Jax behind him, his expression lighting up at seeing her as he stalked towards her. Scooping her up into a deep hug, she pushed her face into the curve of his neck, capturing his spicy scent. Just his warm scent uncoiled her headache. Groaning softly as she fell deeper into him.

Her arms slid up his chest to curl around his shoulders. Fingers carding through his hair, where he groaned and swooped more fully against her. His arms tightening around her, hands falling to her hips. They swayed and made soft sounds of relief as their headaches backed off. She felt his lips at her shoulder, his whiskers tickling at her skin. Making her shiver at the sensations.

“You okay?” She murmured.

“Getting there.” He groaned.

She vaguely heard Tara and Jax, their voices and movements were mere background noise.

“Jax okay?”

“Getting there.” He repeated.

She sighed that he was so reticent to her questions. Pulling her head back she looked Chibs in the face. Brushing a loose lock of his hair back, curling the errant lock behind his ear, he shivered
under the gesture. Eyes darkening, he swept down to capture her lips in a heated kiss.

Her back bending back under the force of his weight and urgency. Tilting her head to make the kiss easier and deeper, his tongue teased at hers to chase his. Her heart raced. Her bones turned to jelly and it was only by Chibs hands and the hard edge of the counter that kept her in a somewhat upright position. His hands moving to help her legs settle around his hips as their kiss deepened. Oh God, she thought as she felt Chibs press his hard cock into the cradle of her hips. Swaying and rocking against both the counter and the front of Chibs.

“Soup’s ready!” Tara announced eagerly. The metallic clap of a tapping ladle interrupted her and Chibs.

She and Chibs, both, jerked and stiffened at the animated, cheerful tone in Tara’s announcement. She gulped her laugh back remembering they weren’t alone.

Chibs swearing, resting his forehead to the upper cabinet as he fought to calm himself. She made to get her feet back to the floor, but his hands still held her in place. Unwilling to let her go just yet. But froze when she felt his hard cock. Ah. Okay. Maybe staying still would be better at the moment. She felt her face heat as she realized how close she was to having her way with Chibs in front of an audience. She turned her face into Chibs neck and chest as his harsh breathing echoed in her ear.

Growling, Chibs turned to the owner of a loud clearing of a throat. She huffed and peaked around Chibs, too.

Jax smirking back at them, his brow lifting as their gazes turned to him. “Epic sex, indeed.” He teased.

Tara quickly turned back to the soup and began ladling into bowls, pointedly not looking in their direction. But it was clear at how fast she turned her head, she’d seen the show, too.

Jax looked better she thought. He’d calmed down, cleaned up while she and Chibs had their makeout session apparently.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs swore darkly. “I’m going to kill Tig.”

Heaving a sigh, resting her forehead to Chibs shoulder. His hand running up her arm soothingly. His eyes captured hers again. Giving her a smile that things were just on pause. Soon as they were alone…

She stretched and kissed at his jaw, forcing him to back up as she hopped off the edge of the counter. Chibs automatically keeping a steadying hand at her side, still unwilling to let her go.

Glancing up hesitantly at Jax again. Unsure of his reaction to seeing her after the hell she put him through. The person that stripped him of his sense of self and unmanned him emotionally in front of Tara and Chibs...she braced herself, instinctually. She’d been beaten by people for saying much less and to people not as prone to violence as Jax is.

Jax scratched at the back of his neck, his blue eyes flicking to her, too.

“Sorry.” She said in the growing tension between them.

Jax frowned at her apology.

“Don’t be sorry, m ‘anam. You told the truth straight up. Don’t ever be sorry for that.” Chibs
corrected her. Shooting Jax a hard look, as he finished cutting up the tomato and washed and dried
the knife with efficient dexterity.

She looked at Chibs and back to Jax. Tara even stopped what she was doing to watch. Jax gave a
final deep breath and looked at her straight on.

“He’s right. I needed to hear what you had to say. Just be careful of when you do that again. Don’t
do it around the club.” Jax warned.

Her back stiffened under the warning.

“Jax…” Chibs growled. “...it’s not just you. If shit is going on with the club...any of the other guys
that puts things in worse places...she has to be able to speak up without the threats of being beaten
for only trying to help. Jesus Christ, she’s a goddamn member.”

He waved the knife between Jax and her, indicating about whom he was speaking. “You wanted
her to speak at the table. You can’t pick and choose what she can say or not. You could’ve told her
to shut the hell up but ye’ didn’t.”

Jax shifted on his feet and glared at Chibs. “Club business, I agree. But personal shit like what is
going on between me and Tara, me and Gemma...that’s off limits.”

Chibs slammed the knife drawer shut at Jax’s order. Tara’s eyes went wide at the brewing fight.

“Did you not hear her?” Chibs demanded of Jax. “Your personal life affects what happens in the
fucking club! What happens in the club affects your personal life! And trapped in the middle of
your life...is the rest of us! Dh airson eanchainn.”

Jax ran a frustrated hand over his hair.

“Look,” She jumped in to try and quell the brewing fight between Jax and Chibs. “...I told you
Jax...what is said here, stays here. I meant that. That is a rule in this house. Not just for you and
Tara. But also for the other guys if they ever come for advice or readings. At the table...that is club
business. But given how Clay is...I doubt he’ll let me speak at the table anyway.”

“Fucking Clay.” Chibs swore.

“Agreed.” Jax said. The tension between Chibs and Jax settled down that they recognized a
common enemy.

She ignored the guys and started setting the table. “Come on. Let’s eat. Jax you need to keep
something down.”

“Any more deep, dark secrets you’re going to drag out of my twisted psyche?” Jax mocked.

“Jax.” Tara hissed.

“Humor...ha. And no. I’m done raking you through the coals for now. Relax. We have enough on
our plate as it is.” She mocked back to Jax as she set a couple of bowls of soup down at the table.

Jax shot her a grin, relief in his eyes that she wasn’t going to twist him up anymore. Shaking her
head that Jax thought this was the end of all the psychological shit he had to deal with in his life.
She didn’t even get into his abandonment issues.

Chibs set down four beers and bodily moved her into a chair, he sitting himself next to her. Tara
setting down her and Jax’s soup. Jax and Tara taking their seats. Right, lunchtime, she pulled her thoughts off of Jax and his psychological makeup.

The darkening sky broke open, the rain hitting the skylights with hard smacks as the intensity of the storm increased.

Chibs wrapped an arm around her shoulders. Looking to him, he nodded to her soup. “Eat.”

She rubbed at her eyes but picked up her spoon and took a careful sip of the soup. Tara and Jax already diving in themselves. Glancing to Chibs, his dark eyes checking on her. She leaned into him and gave him a quick kiss to the corner of his lips. His arm around her tightening as she pressed close to him. “I’m okay.” She reassured him softly.

“I know. Now, eat your soup.” He directed.

“You, too.” She redirected back to him.

His lips curling into a grin as he picked up his spoon. His hand moving to her nape, thumb sweeping over her spine comfortably. The four of them slurping at the soup. Everyone else finishing first and heading into the kitchen for sandwiches. Jax and Chibs grabbing a second beer for themselves.

She let the three of them drive the conversation. Her mind going to mush as she relaxed under Chibs soothing touch and the sound of the storm outside. She didn’t know what it was with storms, they always relaxed her. Which, she thought, was strange. Given her mother died and she nearly killed in a storm like this. Frowning at herself, she pulled her mind out of her past.

She pushed her bowl away with still some soup left. She managed half the bowl at least.

Tara informing that she was going to check on the status with the daycare. Saying the sooner the boys were accepted into daycare the better. Jax sighing but didn’t argue with her over it. He and Chibs pondering what to do about the club. Chibs reiterating the need to call Belfast. Jax wondering if they could get Piney to stop his threats to Clay. Just put a stop to everything.

“It’s too late. If he stops his threats, Clay will demand the letters.” Chibs said. Putting the kibosh on Jax’s hopeful tone. But by the darkening of his eyes, he didn’t like it either.

“It’s worth a try at least. Isn’t it?” Tara suggested.

“Aye. After we get the copies made, Nancy and I will go up to the cabin and check on the old man.” Chibs nodded to Tara. “See where he’s at. Maybe it’s salvageable.”

“We need to get to Otto. If there’s Rico being built…” Jax said.

“The Rico doesn’t matter.” She said, interrupting their conversation.

“But if we can kill it now…” Jax pressed.

“Jax, there is a lesson being taught with this Rico. Subverting something like that…It could become more complicated or worse than what it is now.” She advised.

“Lesson?” Tara questioned.

“For Otto, for Bobby, for the club, for the cops, even for Romeo and Luis. There is a bigger purpose to what is happening. You can’t just pick apart one thing and expect everything else to fall
into line. That’s not how this works. And let’s not kid ourselves that we don’t deserve that threat of Rico. I mean come on, we’re running illegal guns and muling coke across state lines for a Mexican drug cartel and the Real IRA. If that doesn’t qualify as a Rico case, then I don’t know what is.”

Jax and Chibs frowned at her. They’d both rather not have a Rico on their ass, but it was too late now.

“But like I said,” she shrugged, “the Rico won’t hurt us. Romeo will put that on ice for us. Let him jump through that hoop.”

“Christ. M ‘anam...this is dangerous...to just ignore or leave it alone to play out...” Chibs shifted in his chair.

“I’m not saying leave it alone completely. But there must be a way to use it to our advantage. All of it. The Rico, the Irish, the cartel, Clay, Gemma, all of that...we need to...” She broke off absently, thinking. Staring up at the skylights, watching the rain sluice down the glass.

“To?” Jax prompted.

“We need to confound expectations.” She looked back at the three of them.

Jax and Chibs sat back at her idea. Tara swinging her eyes to Jax to see if he was following what she was saying.

“What?” Jax questioned.

“Confound expectations. With Clay, with Gemma, with the club...with everyone and everything.”

“How...exactly?” Tara asked, her brow furrowed in thought.

“Little things to start. You two going on ‘dates’ for your discussions. Putting the boys into daycare...confounding Gemma. She’s expecting a certain behavior, if you don’t fall into that pattern she won’t know what to do. Keeps her off-balance.” She nodded at them.

“Questioning Clay,” tilting her head to Jax, “over how he’s handling the business of the club.” Jax’s eyes sharpened at that.

“As VP, you need to know what he is doing, who he’s meeting with and why. What if something happens to him?” She mockingly raised her brows at the idea of such a horror happening. “The club can’t be left in a vacuum should something happen to him, especially in light of how intricate this deal really is. Somebody has to be able to step up and keep everything running.”

“I tried that before...challenging Clay on every call he made...nearly broke the club.” Jax reminded her.

“Aye, you and Clay keeping secrets from all of us of what was going on.” Chibs said pointedly towards Jax.

Jax crossed his arms and sighed in frustration. “Chibs...at the time, I was only doing what I thought was right for the club. For Ope. I hated it. Every second of it.”

“I get that. I do. But we’re in deep shite here. You can’t try and lie to me or us here. Not anymore. We all have to be in the know of what you’re thinkin’.” Chibs pointed out.

“I know.” Jax said finally.
“You let your anger with Clay and Tig over what they did to Opie and Donna rule over you...it’s similar to what Gemma did to me at that dinner. She was begging for a fight when she was questioning me. Trying to find angles to drive a wedge between me and Chibs. She wanted me to be angry, angry enough to fight her.”

“She did. Gemma, that is.” Tara backed her up as Jax and Chibs looked to Tara. Tara shrugging under their looks.

“When you were getting in Clay’s way, challenging his every move, you were ruled by your anger. Bristling and poking at Clay to get him to fight with you. Eventually, you got your fight with him. Didn’t go very well, did it?”

Jax breathed deeply and closed his eyes briefly. “Bobby told me to make peace with Clay. I tried. But Clay fucking attacked me. And yeah, I was fucking angry. I wanted that fight. I was pissed at Clay making me lie to Opie, my best friend. I was angry that Clay and Tig went behind the club’s back to put a hit on a member, killing the wife of. And I had to perpetuate the lie to protect Ope. To protect the reputation of the charter.” Jax was breathing hard as he recited his reasoning.

“I was fucking right to beat the shit out of Clay. Pissed at Bobby for trying to fix shit when he didn’t know what the hell was going on! And I had to swallow that. I had to make the first move. Even though I was right.” Jax was breathing hard and glaring angrily at her.

“Calm down, Jackie.” Chibs said lowly. “We know...hell if I’d known, I’d’ve beat the shite out of Clay and Tig myself. You take on too much, boyo. Ye’ gotta let us help ye’.”

“God. I know...I hear you...but everything inside me is telling me that I have to be the one to fix everything. Reading the letters, knowing what Clay did to my father...I’m fucking angry. He doesn’t deserve to be breathing right now.” Jax jerked a thumb off in the general direction of where Clay lives relative to where they were all sitting.

“You can’t let on about the letters.” She pointed out calmly. “You can’t let on about me reading you...telling you of the future that lies ahead. We’ve discussed this before. It’s too soon. And you need time to work things out with Tara and your boys first and foremost.”

Jax gave an annoyed glare and huff.

“And who says you have to convey how angry you are with Clay? With Gemma?” Jax shot her a confused look.

“Sometimes, being on-hand and helpful to your target allows for opportunities to lead them to admit the truth.” Jax settled back in his chair as he listened, what she was saying intriguing him.

“You’re already in Clay’s good graces just for helping to pass the muling. Gemma’s suspicious, but you acting oblivious towards the letters helps keep her from questioning you too hard over them. You don’t have to let anyone know anything you don’t want them to know. It’s a position of power. You can use it like a bludgeon or like a surgical knife.” She backed up her reasoning.

Everyone took a moment to think about what she was saying.

Chibs shrugged, “There is something to the ‘you can catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar.’”

“I don’t know if I can do that.” Jax concluded. “I don’t know how I’m going to handle seeing Clay much less talk with him. Even Gemma. How can I just play dumb to what is going on?”
“Their world is built of and on secrets. One way to survive is to become a secret yourself.”

“So how do I do that? How can I...we become a secret?” Jax argued, his tone frustrated with her cryptic advice.

“That doesn’t sound very healthy…” Tara added.

“It isn’t. But that is why you two are dating.” She looked to Tara, answering her worry first. “To become a secret….you need to learn how to disassociate yourself from your feelings of anger, fear, rage. Whatever you feel when confronted by Clay or Gemma.”

“Disassociate?” Tara questioned.

“You feel the emotions, but you don’t let them affect you. Acknowledge them, but you control them. They don’t control you to the point that you can’t think or function.” Tara and Jax shared a look, thinking over what she was suggesting.

She looked to Chibs. “The Army...they taught you the flame trick?”

Chibs flinched and shot her a hard, questioning look at her question. “Aye, they did. How do you know about that?” His body stiff as he waited for her answer. The worry in his eyes at what she might have seen of his past.

“Don’t worry, I didn’t visit you when you learned or needed it. I read about it...teach them. It’ll help them.”

She got up, Chibs halting her by a quick grab of her wrist. “That is not something you find in the library to read about on a Saturday afternoon.” He said.

Looking into his worried eyes. She cupped his cheek in her free hand. “I know. But it helped me. You’ve only seen the past few months of my life. You don’t know all of it.”

He frowned at her but he held back on questioning her further, Jax and Tara were watching.

“You’ll tell me it though.”

She pressed a gentle kiss to his lips, her eyes sad. “Teach them.” She pushed a lock of his hair behind his ear and went into the kitchen, putting away the leftover food and cleaning the dishes.

Thunder rumbled as the storm outside kept on. Ignoring her headache she kept an ear to the sound of Chibs voice talking to Jax and Tara.

He watched Nancy drift off to the kitchen, worried after her, the sound of the faucet and the gentle scrape of her cleaning the dishes.

“Flame trick?” Jax questioned. Tara and Jax flashing him concerned yet curious looks.

He turned back to Jax and Tara unsettled still. “Aye. During the Troubles and after...the British Army ran internment camps. You could get picked up and be held without trial or cause months at a time. Some years. Most people picked up...weren’t even part of the Cause. They were just in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

“Oh my God.” Tara gasped.
“It was learned that the British implemented what’s known as the Five Techniques.”

He paused and lit a cigarette. Memories of his past, tempting him to dwell on them.

“The Five Techniques?” Jax questioned, drawing his attention back to his history lesson. “I don’t remember hearing about this in school.”

He shook his head. “I doubt you did. You Americans love to whitewash your history. History in Ireland...its fucking centuries old, and it wasn’t just the British we were fighting, but ourselves. The British originally were only supposed to be a neutral force to keep ourselves from killing each other. But the Protestants worked with the British and the British forces grew in size and confidence as the conflict wore on. So, I’m not surprised that you don’t know nothin’ about all this.”

He took a pull on his cigarette. “Anyway, there were at least fourteen men put under the Five Techniques. They’re known as ‘The Hooded Men.’”

“Hooded men?” Tara asked.

He took a breath and drew on his cigarette. “The Five Techniques involved extended periods of wall standing, hooding, subjection to noise, deprivation of sleep, food, and drink. Techniques of torture.”

“Wall standing?” Tara asked. “I’ve never heard that term.”

“Stress positions, right?” Jax answered Tara’s question yet checking with him if he was right in his answer.

“Guards put you in a position and ye’ had to hold it. If ye’ moved, ye’ were beaten. Forced back into position with being hooded all the while, ye’ lost your sense of time and space. The beatings sometimes helped just to keep your circulation going.” He informed her flatly. Tara’s eyes going wide.

“Sounds like what’s going on at Gitmo.” Jax added.

“Aye, caught that did ye’.” He nodded. “When the global community found out about the Five Techniques….it was ruled to be torture by the European Commission of Human Rights. The British did everything they could to bury any evidence that they had approved or had a hand in the torture. The men that survived, even now, they’re still fighting for the recognition by the British that they were tortured.”

“Were you...uhh...were you subjected to the…” Tara stumbled over the thought that he’d suffered the terror of torture.

He gave Tara a closed look, refusing to answer her question. His silence was answer enough for her as she looked to Jax nervously.

“Have you administered the Five Techniques?” Jax asked.

“No. I can. But that wasn’t my job for the Army.” He admitted reluctantly.

Jax sent Tara a look to drop the thought of following up on that comment. And he didn’t give them time to question his past any further.

“The Five Techniques weren’t meant to be done all at once. Or for an extended period of time. The
Hooded Men, they underwent all five for upwards of nearly a year. One tried to kill himself by bashing his head against a heating pipe. Only to wake from unconsciousness, to find that he failed in killing himself.”

“Jesus.” Jax breathed, flicking a look to Tara and back to him.

He took another draw on his cigarette. “The Kings ordered training on how to withstand interrogation such as that. The flame trick is one method.”

He got up and went to the wall of records and books, searching the items on the crowded shelves...skipping over the books and small-framed photos to find a candle. Sitting again at the table, setting the candle down on the table in front of him. Jax and Tara glanced at each other only to turn back to what he was doing.

“To start…” He lit the candle. “…you watch the flame. Empty your mind, calm your breathing and heart rate, visualize the flame.” He pushed the candle closer to Jax and Tara. Their eyes automatically fixed to the flame.

“You have to imagine, you’ve been scooped up and have been beat bloody. Stashed in a dark cell for hours...days even. Your sense of time is screwed six-ways to Sunday cause you’re hooded or in some cell that has no light. You imagine a flame in front of ye’. You hear the questions, you feel the pain, feel the despair that you’re utterly on your own until they decide you can go. And you can’t go until you name names. And know once you do get sprung, your friends will question you on why you were let go. What or who you gave up, no longer able to trust you. Most like get two in the back of the head for question of your loyalty.”

“Jesus.” Jax muttered, breaking his concentration on the flame in front of him.

“Focus.” He directed sharply at Jax. “While you’re in the enemies hands, you’re at war with them and yourself. While they want information from you, you’re working to get information from them. It’s a game to outlast the interrogation. You have to fight to stay aware...to keep your focus so that you can gather information from them without giving any away.”

“Keep your eyes on the flame. Whatever bullshit is being said or done to ye’...ye’ push whatever rage, anger, fear, doubt, even pain into that flame. Let that burn it up. Keeping your mind clear and focused to the task at hand.”

“So we just stare at the flame?” Jax questioned.

“It’s a focus point. And if you were in the internment...you wouldn’t have the luxury of a fucking candle.” He glared angrily at Jax. “The flame is up here.” He pressed his finger to Jax’s temple.

“It’s kind of like using a focus object for labor?” Tara questioned, hesitatingly.

“Aye, it’s like that.” He softened his tone to answer Tara. “You can’t allow yourself the luxury of feeling the pain, you have to turn the interrogation back on the enemy while all you want to do is end the pain. Your body isn’t yours no more. All you have is your wits and concentration. You imagine the flame in front of you. Any color or size, just so long as you keep your focus on it. Whatever shite is being said or whatever pain your suffering, toss it all into that flame. Staying sharp. You could go days, weeks, months even by using this trick.”

Silence fell over the room as Jax and Tara both stared down into the candle flame. The storm overhead easing off slightly, the sound of the rain hitting the skylight and windows adding to the intense atmosphere as Jax and Tara meditated on the flame.
“Got the image of that flame? Fix it in your mind’s eye.” Chibs said as he snuffed out the actual candle flame. “Don’t lose that image.” He reminded them as the two of them blinked. “Right now, keep that flame in front of you. Listen and observe everything going on around you. Be a witness and remember it all. Force yourself to remain calm. Let your body relax, relax your face, keep your tone of voice as neutral as possible. Don’t grit your jaw or forget to blink. Keep the flame going. It’ll get to the point that it’ll be second nature.”

“Step back in your mind. See the bigger picture.” Nancy said setting down some bottled water. Turning to wander into the family room, she put on some music. Turning the volume down low so as to not distract them in their exercises.

“Fuck, that’s intense.” Jax rubbed at his eyes and face. Tara rubbing at Jax’s back.

She sat down next to Chibs again, sliding a couple of bottles of water towards Jax and Tara. He took her hand, their headaches backing off.

“It can be.” Chibs agreed. “Drink some water. Give you a minute to settle and we’ll practice again.”

“Well, hopefully, you won’t have to use this all the time. I only thought that this would help when Clay and Gemma come at you. Questioning you. By the time the two of you putting your affairs in order with Lowen, dealing with everything will be easier. The flame trick is something to use when you’re feeling stressed.” She clarified. “Soon as we can tell everyone about the letters, Clay and Gemma will be marginalized to the point that they won’t be an issue.”

Jax snorted. “Marginalized....”

“Clay and Gemma only have power because everyone around them gives them that power.” She returned.

“We want both Clay and Gemma to be complacent and yet off balance. I agree, soon as you two get your shit in order, you’ll see how they’ll react. Use their confusion to your advantage. Only way you can do that is to have a clear head. Practice the flame trick. The better you are at it, the more in control you’ll be.” Chibs advised.

“If this can help get us through this, I’m willing to give it a go. Could be useful in case we get caught up with the cops.” Jax suggested, as he thought about it.

Tara shrugged in response. “It’s like going through labor. I had a focus point and believe me...I needed it. Especially when Gemma barged in. God, I wanted to kill her.”

Jax took Tara’s hand. “Sorry, babe. I had no idea that was all going on.”

“There really wasn’t anything you could have done at the time. You were stuck in Stockton. I just...worked around it. I wanted to tell you about the letters as soon as I found them. But I thought they’d create more pain for you.” She sighed.

Jax took a moment to kiss Tara. As they had their moment, she got up and grabbed Jax’s phone, turning it on as she went.

She nearly dropped the phone as it starting alerting every couple of seconds. Everyone looked at it, too.
Chibs took the phone from her and looked at all the records. “Jesus. It’s Gemma. Fucking filled your voicemail by the looks of it.”

“God.” Jax groaned.

She shook her head at the situation. Gemma was going to be a pain in the ass unless they managed to get her to back off. “Like I said, she’s obsessed.”

Tara’s eyes widened and set a hand to Jax’s shoulder, rubbing at it soothingly.

“I never realized how bad it was. I really didn’t.”

“Do I have to say it again? You do know. Why you came up with your ridiculous ‘get out of dodge town’ plan.”

“’M ‘anam. He knows.” Chibs derailed the potential argument, pulling her back down next to him.

“First, call Alita and check on your kids.” She said, as Chibs pushed the phone towards Jax and Tara across the table.

Tara automatically checked her watch. “Geez, it’s nearly three already.”

“Check on the kids.” She prompted.

Tara scooped up the phone and dialed. She and Chibs huddled against each other, their hands holding each others. Fingers twined. Giving the illusion of privacy as Abel’s voice came over the tiny speaker.

Jax and Tara murmuring words of encouragement to Abel’s recitation of what he and Thomas did so far in the day. Tara and Jax smiling as they listened to Thomas’s babbling, Abel translating what he was saying. Alita reporting that everything was fine, hanging up after confirming they’d be home in a couple more hours.

Jax giving Tara a kiss. Tara relaxing and smiling under Jax’s kisses and hugs. She couldn’t help her smile as she watched the two of them. A complete reversal of awkward silences and tense body language. Glad to see the two of them now relaxed and working more as a unit.

Chibs shot her an amused look as he saw what she was seeing. She gently bumped her shoulder at his side. He grinned and kissed her. Groaning as he pulled away. He winked at her. His self-assured look set her heart racing. God. She forced herself to get a grip. Jax and Tara were pulling back from each other. Right, more work yet. Play later. Work now.

“Okay, now the hard part. You need to call Gemma back.” She said to Jax.

Jax’s entire body stiffened at her order. “I really don’t want to talk to her.” He bit out.

Even as he glared hard at the phone, unwilling to call his mother. As if Gemma heard him, the phone rang making them all jerk at the sudden noise.

“God damn it.” Jax swore as he recognized the number.

“Breathe, you don’t have to answer it.” Chibs said. “Visualize the flame in front of ye’, then answer the call if ye’ want.”

"It's better to start with her here. Over the phone. She's not right in front of you. It's safe here, Jax." She added to Chibs direction.
But Jax’s nostril’s flared as he stared at the ringing phone. His hands quickly flipping it open and accepting the call.

They all looked to each other before looking back to Jax to see how he’d handle his mother. After all the revelations and secrets drawn out, now was the time for him to decide what to do.

“Hi Ma.” Jax said slightly upbeat and unconcerned tone. Chibs slid her a look at the tack Jax was taking.

“I’m at Chibs and Nancy’s. No...I just turned my phone on. Why? Something wrong?”

They watched as Jax’s face closed off as he listened to Gemma. At one point he rolled his eyes and looked at her. It was clear Gemma was talking to him about her.

“She’s voted in, Ma. It’s done.”

Jax got up and walked into the family room, the open layout, they all had a clear eyesight as they tracked Jax pacing in front of Chibs stereo and library set up. Idly, thumbing through the records.

“She’s a member. She’s at the table.”

“It doesn’t matter, it was safer for us to accept her in. And you don’t have a say in this, at all. Holy shit!” Jax pulled out a record to take a closer look at it. “What? No. I’m fine. Chibs has a copy of the Sex Pistols record that’s pretty fucking rare.”

Chibs growled and got up. Tara and she shared a questioning look as Chibs grabbed the record out of Jax’s hands and carefully slid it back into its proper place.

Jax annoyed between Gemma on the phone and Chibs waving Jax off of his record collection. “They’re all in order, ye’ fucker.” Chibs said.

Jax grinned and went back to thumbing through the records. “What order would that be?” Jax snarked as he pulled out another record with a colorful jacket.

“Jesus Christ. Ye’re a heathen. Hands off my Bowie.” Chibs grabbed the record.

Jax rolled his eyes but his fight with Chibs forgotten as he tuned back into whatever Gemma was saying.

“Jesus, Ma! I’m fine. I’m hanging out with Chibs and helping him get Nancy up to speed on the history of the club. Yeah, I know you called. Nancy told me this morning.”

He dropped onto the sofa with a huff.

“Well, I wasn’t in the mood to call you back at the crack of dawn. Why the hell are you so fucking worried?”

She and Tara got up and went to their men. Tara settled next to Jax on the sofa, his arm automatically wrapping around her.

Chibs was carefully wiping away any fingerprint smudges off his Bowie record and put it back into place. “No fucking respect for the classics.” He complained to her.

She grinned up at him and slung her arms around his shoulders. His hands falling to her hips.

“Yeah, I know you love me.” Jax said getting annoyed.
“Jesus, there’s a tone because you’re interrogating me and disparaging a member of the club.”

Jax tossed her another considering look. “I don’t care, Ma. I told you to leave Nancy alone.”

“Ma...stop it. Just fucking stop talking. If anyone is running their mouth and potentially putting the club at risk, it’s you. Let it go. If Chibs hears what you just said, he’ll beat the crap out of you. And if you call her that again, I’ll beat the crap out of you. Fuck the entire club would do it.”

Chibs sighed and sat in one of the oversized chairs, pulling her into his lap. She knew that Gemma wasn’t going to let go of her being voted in and wasn’t surprised Gemma was giving Jax the third degree.

“Why? I shouldn’t have to tell you why. She’s a member of the club! You disrespect her again, and the guys will cut you out, Ma. Because you aren’t a member. You’re just an old lady, that’s why. And I don’t care about what was done in the past, times change. And if you maybe fucking backed off on her, you might actually like her. She’s smart and got some wicked insight into shit.”

She looked at the chess set on the side table and idly started moving pieces around. Chibs pulled his attention back from Jax and watched what she was doing. Adding in his own moves with the black pieces. She taking up the white position.

“Like life for one.” Jax huffed.

She’d never actually played before. She’d read books on how to play.

“She’s smarter than she looks. And for the last time, stop calling her that. You don’t even know her. Was this all you were going to talk to me about?”

There was a pause as Jax listened. His eyes on their chess game.

“So you were worried about me, wanted to tell me to get Nancy out of the club, and that you love me. Message received. One, I knew you were worried by all the fucking messages you left in my voice mail. Two, Nancy’s in. She’s not going anywhere so get the fuck over it. And three, I know, you keep reminding me every five goddamn minutes.”

Gemma must have spoken up again as Jax’s face closed off again. “The kids are fine. I just got off the phone with Alita and the boys. I’ll be home for dinner. What? No. Fuck no. I don’t need you to come over. God.”

She won the game with Chibs. The two of them moved the pieces back into place.

“Uh huh...okay...later. Bye.” Jax finished and shut the phone off. Tossing the phone to the opposite end of the sofa. “Jesus Christ.” He ran his hand over his face.

“You did good, Jackie.” Chibs nodded.

“Fuck. She’s not letting go of you being voted in.” Jax warned.

She shrugged. “It’s fine.”

“It’s not fine.” Jax argued.

She looked up from the chess board to Jax. “This is part of me helping fix things, Jax.” She shrugged. “Let Gemma waste her time and energy trying to thwart me. It’s less time she’s spending obsessing over you and your kids. Less time she’s trying to manipulate the club. Less time she’s
getting in Tara’s way with the boys. The fly in the ointment, remember?”

“I’m sorry. I just don’t want you have to deal with her. You shouldn’t have to. No one should.”

“That includes you, too, Jax.” She said absently as she made another move. Chibs groaning as she took his rook.

“Damn, how long have you played?” He asked, his eyes taking in his options. To finally move his bishop.

“I haven’t played.” She said as she moved her knight. “Check.”

Chibs went still, his head whipping from the board to her. “What do you mean you haven’t played.” He moved his king over.

“I read a lot. I read about chess...how to play. But, it seemed kind of ridiculous to try and play by myself. I’d be fighting for each side to win and end up with a stalemate. That and I didn’t have a proper board anyway.” She shrugged, as she moved her bishop again. “Check.”

He moved his king once more and slapped a hand to his face as he caught his mistake. “Damn it.”

She moved her queen, taking out his king. Raising her arms in victory, grinning at him. He grinned at her self-congratulations and buzzed a kiss at her cheek.

“How are you feeling?” She asked towards Jax as she pulled back from the kiss.

“Better. I was dreading that call.” He waved a hand. “The flame trick helped.”

“Just keep practicing.” Chibs said. “Both of ye’.” He included Tara. Tara nodding that she heard him.

“God, I’m so exhausted.” Jax leaned back in the sofa.

Tara immediately leaned closer to Jax, her hand taking his free one. He giving her a half smile.

“You’ve definitely been through the wringer. But...you know what might help, too…” She said thoughtfully.

“What?”

“Your shoes.”

She grinned as everyone turned their attention to Jax. Well, Chibs started snickering and Tara was a little bewildered. Jax looked annoyed.

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Switch out your shoes. Start wearing motorcycle boots.”

“I like my sneaks. They’re comfortable and expensive. Don’t diss the shoes.” Jax defended.

“Yeessss, I know how much you love your sneakers.” She rolled her eyes.

“Christ...what’s your point?” Jax growled at her.

“Do you not notice how Gemma talks to you?”
“What do you mean?”

“She practically baby talks you. Calls you sweetheart, baby, my boy…”

“So? She does that to everyone.”

“To an extent, but more so to you. Subconsciously, her talking to you like that and you wearing those sneakers keeps up the whole ‘I have to take care of you because you’re not grown up enough to do it yourself’ thing.”

Tara swung a look from her to Jax and back again.

“My wearing sneakers has Gemma try and run my life? I’m not seeing the connection there.” Jax argued.

“It’s not the only thing in your dynamic, by far. But the sneakers don’t help. You want to have control of your life and your decisions for your family...start by putting on a pair of grown-up boots. Watch how people react and treat you with just that small change.”

Jax pressed a hand to his forehead before looking towards Tara and Chibs to get their take.

“I’d prefer you in boots. Medically, they’re safer for your feet on the bike.” Tara said as explanation for her opinion.

Chibs sighed as Jax looked to him for his opinion. “Christ. I really don’t fuckin’ care what ye’ wear. But you do look like a kid in them. You want people to respect ye’ without fighting over it...put on the damn boots.”

“I can’t believe this.” Jax whined.

She shrugged. “When I put on my boots for the first time...I felt stronger. More confident. Think about it.” She grinned. “Think about how Gemma will react to you wearing boots. She’s the one that keeps supplying you with them. Jesus. Quit having your mommy buying your clothes.”

“She does not buy my clothes.” Jax glared at her.

“Sometimes she does. Calls it ‘finding things on sale’. Will toss old clothes out without checking with you first. Limit the amount of time or opportunity for her to do things for you. It feeds into her needing to take care of you. As if you’ve never grown up.”

“She does that for the boys, too.” Tara said. “It’s not all the time, but she’ll almost always have something new for them every couple of weeks.”

“I’d rather focus on getting her to stop mothering Jax. Gemma doting on the boys...that’s Grandma indulging her grandkids. You’ll have to talk it over on how much you want her spoiling the boys.”

Jax and Tara shared another look, another topic to discuss.

She scrutinized Jax once more. “Well, at least your hair is nice now.”

“Jesus Christ. First you don’t like my sneakers...now my hair?” Jax’s brows popped up.

“What do you mean about his hair? You know what hairstyle he’s going to have? Just from reading him?” Tara questioned curiously.

“Not just from him. Saw it from Tig, then Gemma, and then him. And yeah. He’s going to grow it
out, not as long as when you two hooked up before. But long enough that you’ll have to put this gel
stuff in it so it won’t fly all over the place.”

Chibs started snickering again next to her as she kept eyeing Jax’s hair, she grimacing at the
thought of his future hairstyle. At his chuckle, she looked to him. “He’s going to look ridiculous.”

“Oh my God.” Jax groaned.

“Why?” Tara asked, delight dancing in her eyes as Nancy kept teasing Jax.

“Just that whenever there’s a stiff enough wind or turns his head a certain way, chunks of his hair is
going to stick up. Worse when it’s wet. I feel sorry for you, I love running my hands through Chibs
hair, I don’t know how you could do that with his with all that goop in his hair. Ick.” She mock
shuddered at the thought.

Tara giving Jax a hard look, considering what she was saying.

“Are you going to tease the shit out of me from now on? Is this what I have to expect?” Jax
whined.

Tara broke then, laughing with Chibs.

“Christ.” Jax swore before grinning under the humorous tone the conversation had taken.

Shrugging under Jax’s irritated look. “Just wait til I get busy on everyone else.”

Jax’s irritation turned to sly pondering of what upcoming hilarity that will ensue. Chibs groaning.

“Just give me a heads up, m’anam. I don’t want to accidentally shoot someone because you
thought it’d be a good time to tease the shite out of them.”

She grinned and nodded. “Not to worry.” She patted at his hand.

The rest of the afternoon they chatted as the storm lightened up. Jax and Chibs got into a debate
over the brilliance of the Rolling Stones compared to the artistry of Bob Dylan. Jax defending
Bruce Springsteen. Chibs snorting, ”You just like call him ‘Boss.’”

She noted that Tara seemed to relax, pitching in her own opinions on musical taste. It was probably
the first time in a long time that she could just hang out and not have to worry about saying the
wrong thing.

She smiled as she considered the last twenty-four hours. The long night of disclosing Jax’s reading,
to this morning forcing him to face the truth about his mother. Everything could have gone wrong
so fast. Exhausted but content to curl up in Chib’s lap, his hand running down her spine as he
debated Jax over music. She knew that this moment wouldn’t last, the next few weeks and months
were going to be busy and potentially dangerous. But right here and now...everything was fine
within the confines of her house. And that was enough for her.

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He enjoyed talking with Jax. It’d been a long time since he’d had a decent conversation with
anyone. Conversation that didn’t revolve around the club business, he amended. Nancy curled in
his lap, he glanced down at her face smushed into his chest. Her breathing even and eyes closed,
she’d fallen asleep on them. For a moment, he worried about her falling asleep on him in the
middle of the afternoon. But then she’d been wrung through the wringer orchestrating this last day, the whole thing must have worn her out.

Jax and Tara peered curiously at her as they caught on that she’d fallen asleep.

“Is she okay?” Tara asked.

“Aye, just tired, I expect. Been a long day.”

Jax checked his watch. “We should head out. Alita’s expecting us.”

Tara followed suit in checking her watch as well. “Yes. I’ve got to get dinner going.”

“Let me put her down, I’ll get your weapons and keys for ye’.” He said as he carefully shifted Nancy so he could stand up without waking her. But she was out. He didn’t think she’d wake if a crew of bagpipers came marching through the house.

Jax and Tara stood as well, Tara taking up her purse. She and Jax murmuring to each other as he walked down the hall to the master bedroom. Setting Nancy down on the bed. He wanted to crawl in with her but he needed to get Jax and Tara on their way.

Quickly taking out Jax’s weapons and grabbing his keys, he went back to the main room.

“Here.” He passed over the items. Jax taking his gun, knife and keys. Tara already at the door waiting for Jax as he tucked his weapons away.

“Thanks, brother.” Jax pulled him in a bear hug.

“No problem. You sure you’re okay?” He asked one more time.

“Yeah. I’m good.”

“Okay. Practice that flame trick. Call me if you need anything. You, too, Tara.” He said as he and Jax moved to the front door to where Tara was waiting. He gave her a hug, as well.

“Thanks, Chibs. Tell Nancy, thanks for what she’s done for us. I had no idea what was going to happen when I came here this morning. I’m glad I did.”

“Aye, she worried about misleading you last night. But you know that you needed to be here.”

Tara nodded.

“Okay, drive safe. Looks the storm is nearly done.” He commented as he peered out the door. Jax shrugged into his kutte and pulled his damn sneakers on. Grinning at Nancy’s idea of Jax putting the sneakers back into the closet and putting on boots. He wondered if Jax would try it at least.

Jax straightened up and caught his amused look. Rolling eyes at him. “I’m thinking about it. I’ve got a lot to think about.”

“Aye, ye’ do. I’ll go check on the old man in the morning. Bring you the originals of the letters to you probably in the afternoon.” He looked to Tara. She nodding.

“Okay.”

“It feels so strange, leaving.” Jax said, staring out the door.
“Go home, Jax. Hold your boys. Think about what was discussed. Call me if you need to. Both of ye’. I’m taking Nancy out of town for her birthday. Sort of a surprise. So, we won’t be in town for a couple of days.”

“Where you heading?” Jax asked.

“Berkeley. There’s a band I’ve been wanting to see. Thought it’d be a chance for Nancy to get some shopping done, too.”

“Okay. I’ll cover for you. I don’t think we’ve got the routes nailed down yet. Clay’s been working on that.”

He gave Jax a knowing look. “Perhaps a chance for you to step up and help him with that...don’t ye’ think?”

Jax snorted. “Talk to you later. Thanks again.” Jax set a heavy hand to his shoulder.

“All right, get on with ye’.” He prompted.

Jax and Tara grinned and jogged out into the drizzling rain to their respective cars. He watched as they pulled out, raising a hand of goodbye before shutting the door and locking it.

Cleaning up a little, his headache sent him to join Nancy in bed. She sliding into his side, his arms helping her into his hold. He, too, dropped into sleep, the events of the past day hitting him, as well.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
shit for brains = dh airson eanchainn
Chapter 60

Chapter Summary

Some alone time, finally.

Chapter Notes

In light of the 'heat dome' that is covering the majority of the US right now and the next few days...here's some (hopefully) hot and steamy sex. Tried to jump ahead into the day's activities that Chibs and Nancy have to get cracking on. But...the two of them were whining and complaining at me wanting their alone time.

It's still a little rough, forgive any mistakes, I'm half-asleep posting this up. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yawning as she stirred awake, confused as she tried to remember how she got to bed. Chibs dozing next to her. Glancing at the clock it was just after eight pm.

She got up and weaved to the bathroom, feeling like a newborn colt trying to figure out how to walk. Blinking under the strong light as she washed her hands after relieving her insistent bladder. She was still wearing her jeans and t-shirt that she borrowed from Chibs closet. She really needed to get some new clothes. She couldn’t keep swiping Chibs clothes, even though they were comfy and smelled like him.

Staring absently in the mirror, memory of talking with Jax and Tara came back to her. Playing chess with Chibs. Teasing Jax some more over his sneakers and hair. Chibs talking with Jax and Tara over music and then...nothing.

Groaning in embarrassment as she realized she freaking fell asleep while Jax and Tara were still here.

Wait...were they still here? She stilled abruptly, listening and sensing out to the small creaks and air flows through the house. All was quiet. Too quiet.

Stepping back into the darkened bedroom, Chibs hand reaching out to where she normally rested in the bed. Realising she wasn’t in bed with him, he woke. Eyes searching her out, he blinked at her.

“Hey. You okay?” His voice low and thick still with his slumber.

“Yeah. Did I...fall asleep while Jax and Tara were still here?” Still not sure what the hell happened. Hoping that her assumption of what happened didn’t happen.

He grinned and fell back on the bed. Turning his head towards her as she slid back on the bed. His hand out for her to take. “Aye. Ye’ did.”

She collapsed on the bed again. “Good. That’s embarrassing.”
Chibs twisted to his side and drew her close. Grinning at her as he propped his head up on his hand. “Nah...it was cute.”

“Pfft. It’s like a rule...you do not fall asleep while entertaining guests in your own home.”

“Really? I didn’t know Ms. Manners.” Chibs chuckled at her.

She shot him a mild glare, “You’re teasing me.”

“Just a tiny bit.” He grinned, adding a wink.

“So what happened when I dropped off. Geez, even saying it...like I’m a kid that needs an afternoon nap.” She complained.

“Stop. Ye’ were doing all the hard work since Jackie showed up last night. We didn’t talk much else beyond Jax’s appalling taste in music. Fucking Springsteen.”

She didn’t know what his problem was with this Springsteen he was talking about, huffing at his indignation over it though...she doubted she’d get it if he told her repeatedly in small, bite-sized vocabulary words. But it was entertaining to tease him about it. “You are such a music snob.”

He rolled his eyes. “Whatever. They had to leave anyway.” He rolled his wrist to catch the time on his watch. “We should eat.”

She grimaced at the thought.

His eyes sharpened on her reaction. “Hey, last you had something was soup at lunch. Come on.”

Groaning, she let Chibs drag her out to the kitchen, sitting her at the table as he rummaged the refrigerator.

“Nothing heavy, please. It’s getting late and I’m surprisingly still tired.” She requested as she laid her head and arms down on the table. Closing her eyes, the drag of her exhaustion trying to knock her out again. Her headache crawling up the back of her head.

Chibs came back and handed her a can of whipping cream. “Shake that.” He ordered with a quick kiss.

She perked up as she shook the cold can, grinning at the simple activity. Chibs glancing back at her with an amused grin as he worked in the kitchen.

He came back with a plate with a thick slice of pound cake, a generous scoop of vanilla ice cream, and a separate bowl of strawberries. Sitting down next to her, he took the can from her. Shaking the can harder and more vigorously than she managed to do.

Popping the top off, he held the can upside down. “Say when.” He prompted as he squirted cream over top of the whole concoction over the dessert.

“When.” But he didn’t stop, giving her a playful grin. Circling the can so the cream became a thick tower that threatened to topple over. “When!” She exclaimed. Her hands out to push the can away from the plate. But he quit just as she was about to wrestle the can from him.

“God, you’re evil.” She complained mulishly. Taking up a whole strawberry and scooping a huge dollop of cream with it, popping it into her mouth.

Chibs laughed at her reaction, setting the can down on the table and gave her cheek a quick kiss.
She picked up another strawberry, scooping as much cream the berry could hold, she held it out towards his lips. His eyes locking on hers as he leaned over and took a bite of the strawberry and cream. Her fingertips tingling with the playful sweep of his teeth and tongue.

She watched him chew and swallow. Leaning into him, he met her with a kiss. Tasting the juice of the berry and sweetness of the cream.

They pulled apart for air, Chibs grabbed up a fork and created a bite of cake, ice cream, and cream, holding it out for her. She leaned in and closed her lips over the layered concoction. A soft moan escaped her lips as she chewed and swallowed.

“Good?” He asked.

Nodding, she took up a fork herself and copied what he did for her. Grinning as some cream coated his goatee. She leaned in and kissed away the errant cream.

They didn’t need to speak, the two of them feeding each other the dessert. Chibs held another tantalizing strawberry for her to take, but she shook her head. “I’m full.”

She watched as he eyed her. Questioning if she was truly full or could maybe stand another bite. Her own eyes hardening. He twisted the fruit and ate it himself.

She eased from her chair and into his lap, he still eating and shifting to make room for her. Her hands sliding around his neck. He looked into her eyes and she gave him a soft smile and looked in his. Content to just not speak.

Soon as he finished he leaned back, letting go of his fork. His eyes darkening as they relaxed in each others arms. She leaned closer to him, he met her part way as they kissed again.

They swayed and breathed, kissing all the while. Memory of their interrupted moment of intimacy when Jax and Tara were here, roared back to life within her. Her nerves jolting with the rush. Chibs groaned as he felt her respond. His hands sliding under her shirt. The firm heat of his hand turned her spine to jelly as she tried to crawl deeper into his strength.

“Ah, Christ in Heaven.” He rasped heavily.

It was her turn to gasp when he swiftly scooped her up and stood up, walking purposefully back to the bedroom. She trailed a finger whisper light along the perfect curve of his ear, pulling at his lobe as her fingers carded through his hair.

“Fuck.” He swore darkly, his body swayed dangerously.

Her eyes went wide in surprise then narrowed in curiosity as she tried it again. A hair’s breadth of a touch down the shell of his ear to his lobe and he swayed again.

“Dear God. Stop that.” He purred and threatened all at the same time. His eyes slanting to hers.

“Why? Is it hurting you?” She stiffened in his arms, the idea that she might have inadvertently hurt him...

“Fuck no. But, I’m about to fucking cum in my jeans if ye’ keep doing that.” He shifted her upwards with a deep chuckle.

Her eyes tilting down to look into his, testing his answer to her question. Relaxing, seeing the passion darken his eyes. Her legs tightened around his hips as she helped him balance her as he
walked them into the bedroom.

They were a couple steps from the bed when she nestled her lips at his neck and sweeping up to his ear. “Really? Sounds messy.” She whispered, her breath wafting over his sensitive ear.

His arms and hands tightened on her as he shivered at the sensation. Twisting his head around to capture her eyes. “Aye, it is.” He said, his brow popping up, lips curling in amusement. “Rather be messy with you.”

She couldn’t help her snorting laugh with his twist of words. Secretly enjoying their play and discovery of each other. He seemed to know exactly where and how to touch her at a moment’s notice. While she hung on for the wild ride he always led her on. Now to find a soft spot that got him as twisted up as he did to her. She enjoyed finding that secret knowledge of her lover.

He collapsed with her onto the bed. His hands shedding her of her t-shirt. Her hands copying his, stripping him of his shirt, tossing it to the floor as he did to hers. They giggled as they twisted and snuck heated kisses at each other as they rushed to shed their jeans off.

It was a race, practically all day they’d been ramping up to this. Their need drove them, no longer impeded by guests and their drama or phone calls interrupting them.

She scooted further upwards onto the bed as Chibs leaned over to grab a condom, tearing it open with his teeth impatiently. His eyes locked on her.

“Yessss.” She hissed through her clenched jaw, as Chibs rushed inside her so quickly. Her brain having a hard time to keep up. But the sudden rush of their joining slowed. Each push, pull, touch, kiss, slowed into microseconds. She felt everything. Dragging out each new sensation. Time thickened and nearly froze as she worked to adjust to his heat and size. And he groaning as she bore down on him.

Her jaw clenched tight as fire flared down her entire nervous system. All she could focus on was Chibs inside her. His heavy weight pinning her and how right it was. She couldn’t make sense of where he was or where she was anymore. He had her on the precipice of an orgasm in record time. By the dark slant of his eyes, she knew that he knew how close she was. The satisfaction in his eyes flipped her stomach.

She managed to curl up into him, her hands gripping down over his shoulders for leverage. His skin molten hot as he rocked over her. Her lips found his neck and latched on. She felt him stiffen for a moment, but then he moved again.

Breaking for air, she reached up and caught his lobe in her teeth. Careful not to bite down too hard, she pulled at that tender bit of flesh and she felt Chibs freeze over her. His cock pressing more deeply inside her. She wasn’t sure, but it felt as though the tip of him was caressing something so deep inside her that had her gasping to the sensation. Wriggling her hips so she could feel it again. “Fuck.” He strangled out.

The sound of his unraveling sent a deep thrill through her. That she could make him lose all sense of himself. Just as he does to her. The thought of that shot through her from her toes, fingertips through the top of her head. “Yesss…” She mewled with another spine-bending arch of her back to open herself ever more to him. Willing him to possess her.

She heard Chibs dark rumble just as his hips moved purposefully. Pistoning back and forth. Adding a swivel that had her crying out again.
Her skin felt like it was splitting open and all that she was was laid bare to him. God, every time...there was a new closeness...every time…

Sweat made their bodies more easily slide as they drove to their completion. Drops of his sweat dripped and smeared onto her as he moved. Her hands kept losing their grip and she kept digging into his muscles. Their sweat sliding down her sides, down into the sheet under her. She felt so impossibly wet and feverishly hot in every cell of her body. Centering at where they were joined.

Her tight grip had him grunting deeper. She had an insane urge to laugh, thinking that the sweat they were generating would turn to steam at how hot they felt.

Chibs shifted slightly and his hips struck at her clit that had any thought in her head to smithereens. Every drive deeper, she felt the reverberations echoing through her entire body.

His lips crashing over hers as she gave over to the climax that would not be denied. Unable to take it anymore, her body clung down on him. Hands searching for purchase.

“Fuck...yes!” He arched above her as he found his release. The two of them locked together in what felt like an endless cycle of pleasure that rolled through them repeatedly.

Chibs fell over her. His face pressed into her neck. His harsh breathing rushed over her sensitive skin that made her shiver. Her arms lax as they wrapped around him, holding him over her. She loved feeling his weight over her. It made her feel safe.

“I’m too heavy.” He whispered in her ear, as he made to roll off her.

Her arms tightened, trying to halt him. “No...you’re not.” She argued, fighting to keep them just like this for as long as possible. This moment to be savored and cherished. Not willing to let the outside world and it’s problems to interrupt such a peaceful state they were in.

Chibs froze, letting her hold him a moment longer. “I gotta ditch the rubber, m ‘anam.” He pressed a gentle kiss to her shoulder in apology. The tenderness a stark contrast to their lovemaking.

Reluctantly letting her arms slide off him, he shifted off her and the bed. His hand swiftly removing the full condom as he wobbled towards the bath. His wobbly walk reminded her of her own stumbling walk when she woke. And as she thought about it, she doubted she could walk at the moment. She might be able to crawl...maybe. It was just so comfortable here in bed...why move at all, she questioned herself.

He came back, washcloth in hand. Running the cool washcloth over her skin. Sighing in relief, she took the cloth from him, twisting it and ran it down his skin as well. He lay back as she leaned over him to set the cloth down on the nightstand. His hands curling around her waist and hips.

“I love you.” She whispered softly, their hands intertwined.

“Love you, too, darlin’.” He said reassuringly. “Go to sleep.”

He shifted and pulled her close against his side. His heat enveloped her and her muscles relaxed. Chibs deep breaths lulled her deeper so that she felt cocooned by him. Her body and mind exhausted, she joined him in the heavy, ocean drift of sleep.

He squirmed trying to deny the light hitting his eyes, forcing him to wake for the day. His first
sight was the luscious, plump breast and nipple right in his eyesight. Hmm, interesting way to wake. Rolling his eyes to see if Nancy was close to waking, seeing that she was still deep in her dreams. He didn’t want to wake her just yet, but they had a lot to get done today.

Never one to pass up such an interesting opportunity, he couldn’t help the temptation to capture that nipple into a kiss. The nipple pebbling under his gentle ministrations he heard a soft gasp. A hand carding through his hair at the back of his head, holding and pulling him closer.

His eyes swept up and found Nancy’s head tossed back as she responded. God, she was gloriously responsive to his touch. His hand slid from around her waist, up to her other breast, massaging it.

“Ah...insatiable man.” He heard Nancy breath.

He chuckled satisfactorily, as she had no idea just how insatiable he was for her. Sliding down and pausing at her navel. Giving it a good tongue bath. Nancy squirming under him. His hands sliding down her sides. Her legs making room for him, his hands helping prop them up over his shoulders as he slid down further and gently tongued her folds.

She gasped and arched as he latched onto her engorged clit. Her pussy glistening with her natural moisture. He groaned as the taste of her exploded across his tongue.

His cock hard and he ground himself down into the sheets for friction. Working them into her climax as he edged himself over as well. His seed spilling down into the sheets. Looking back up at Nancy, he found her hiding her face in her hands as she came. Her breasts heaving as she fought for air. Fucking glorious, he thought with satisfaction.

Crawling up, kissing her navel and breasts as he purred over her. Pulling her hands from her face, their fingers weaving as they stared into each others eyes. Hers flicking down over his lips as he licked the taste of her yet. Her eyes darkening to a deep purple, the sun picked out the gold and blue as she blinked at him. Her eyes tracking back up to his. Her shy smile had him grinning back at her, the giddy butterflies took off inside him at that look. “Graim thu, m ‘anam.”

She stretched up and he slanted is lips over hers. Their tongues sliding and tasting each other as the morning grew. Breaking for air, he shifted and propped himself up on an elbow, watching the morning light play with the red in her hair and the mesmerizing shift of color in her eyes.

“What?” She asked, her cheeks flooding with a rush. Her body squirmed as he continued to gaze down at her.

Shaking his head, giving her a confidant look. “You’re beautiful.”

Her eyes shot up to his at how serious he was. The idea of complimenting her over her looks still new to her. He couldn’t wait for the day when she knew it to be true for herself.

“I love you.” She said, the corner of her mouth curling shyly. Fuck, he couldn’t help it, fucking had him wrapped around her little finger with that shy smile. He leaned back down and kissed her again.

“Christ, what ye’ do to me.” He broke for air. Nancy panting, her hands at his arms.

“Sorry?” She apologized, but looking at her again he saw she was joking with him. Enjoying getting to him.

Quirking a brow up he heaved himself up out of bed. “Come on.” He easily picked her up and slung her over his shoulder. “Time for a shower, breakfast, and work. Busy day today…” He
toayed, holding her firm as she whooped laughing at his abrupt action. Grinning as he felt her hands squeezing his ass.

“Crazy man…” She laughed as he set her back onto her feet inside the shower.

Capturing her hands and walking her back into the spray, grinning darkly at her, “Crazy for ye’.”

“Hmm…good.” She agreed as she helped wash him off, her soapy hands sliding down his body. He grabbed the shampoo and started lathering her hair. Each swaying and sharing the washing duties between them easily.

He set their dirty dishes and silverware into the dishwasher as the washer churned away, cleaning the sheets. His back and forearm were slathered in cream to calm down the itching. At first look, the tattoos didn’t seem all that different, but taking a closer look, they seemed to have become more detailed. The two of them shrugging at each other that they didn’t have a clue why or how the tattoos were appearing.

Walking back to the bedroom, Nancy was trying to put fresh sheets onto the bed. He pulled her into a deep kiss as she struggled with the fitted sheet that was fighting her. She growled in frustration and went liquid in his hold, letting him take his fill with his kiss. Her tongue and lips dancing with his.

“Argh! You keep that up and I’ll have another set of sheets that needs washing.” She threatened.

He let her go with a laugh, taking over putting the cantankerous sheet into place. “We’ll just buy new sheets.” He joked as she glared at the sheet that behaved for him and not her.

She rolled her eyes at his ludicrous idea. Turning into the bath and set to brushing her teeth and combing out her hair.

Shaking the duvet out and laying it somewhat flat over the new sheets, he quickly opened the safe and pulling out the letters, closing the safe as he glanced into the folder. His light-hearted mood deflated a bit at the sight of the letters. Fuck.

Nancy finished in the bath, sliding up next to him. His arm automatically wrapping around her. Her own eyes sighting the letters. Her hand ran soothingly up and down his back, sensing his worried mood.

“Do you think this will work?” He asked her.

Looking up into his eyes, “I hope so. I very much hope so.”

Taking a deep breath. “Okay, let’s get going.”

They collected keys, wallets, her laptop, and just before walking out the door, he helped her into her jacket and kutte. The kutte new and still slightly stiff along the seams. The leather unbroken by her use of wear. The weight of what they were about to start pulled at him. He knew it was folly to try and put a stop to what has already been put into motion. But for a moment, he didn’t want to have this life for her. For them.

He jerked as her hand moved to his cheek, her thumb sweeping over his cheekbone. His eyes searching hers. “It’s okay.” She said.
He breathed, rocking back a little that she seemed to know what he was thinking. “I don’t want this for you. It’s going to become very messy. Messy gets bloody very fast.”

She gave him a sad, mysterious smile that had his heart flip over on itself. “I know. But we have to try and set things right.”

“For JT.” He curled the folder to fit into his jacket.

“For everyone.” She corrected.

He nodded to himself at her correction. “Aye.”

She opened the door and stepped outside, her hand still holding his, pulling him along. Aye. Time to fix shite, he resolved. Locking the door behind him.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
I love you = Graim thu
Chapter 61

Chapter Summary

A cabin in the woods.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this took longer to update. Needed to flesh out the chapter. Tried to actually make it into a mega-chapter, but it was getting ridiculous.

Enjoy;

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chibs turned off the main road leading on the outskirts of Charming that split off up into a heavily wooded area. The road turning from asphalt to a tar-and-gravel mix, switchbacking higher up into the hills. Trees thick and the bright sun overhead threw dark patches of shadows across the road as they navigated to the cabin. The driveway in front of the cabin just dirt and gravel that was packed down. The saddlebag now holding the originals and the remaining copies of the letters.

Lowen secured a notarized set in her office safe. At first, joking that Kinko’s was cheaper than her office copying services. But when she started scanning one of the letters, her humor dying, questions filled her eyes.

Chibs set a hand over the letters she was reading, forcing her to look at him. “Don’t. For your safety, just make the copies.”

Alison glanced at the letters and back to them. “How did you come by these?”

“You don’t need to know. Just help us keep them safe. Until, at least, the club can decide what to do about them.” She told her.

Alison nodded and went off to the supply room where the copier was located. Once the first set was copied, she came back and started notarizing them against the originals. The copier running off the additional sets.

She and Chibs initialled each letter of the official set that now sported a number that was then logged into a notary book where they initialed there as well. It was tedious but necessary. When each letter was done, Alison slid them into a manila envelope, sealing it and signing it over the gummed edge. Twisting it around for the two of them to sign as well, ensuring that the sealed envelope was intact.

She cut the lawyer a sizable check. Alison frowned at the amount. “This is too much. Way too much.” Contesting the amount on the check.

“Consider it a retainer for your past and upcoming services. You work for me. The trust...the
letters...anything that comes up after...it is between me, Chibs, and you alone. Clay, Jax, Gemma, no one from the club is to know what you are doing for us.”

Alison tilted her head confused. “Of course, we have attorney-client privilege...but I see you wearing a kutte...I thought women weren’t part of the inner circle. And these letters...what I read...it’s John Teller’s writing. I would think that would be part of the club’s business.” She glanced to Chibs.

“The club voted her in the other day. But...this…” He waved a hand over the letters. “…what you’re doing for us...isn’t fodder to the rest of ‘em. Not now. Things are too dangerous for them to know. You understand?” Chibs pressed on the lawyer. Alison hesitated a moment longer but finally nodded to his instructions. “Good. It would also be a good idea if you shifted the club business over to Rosen.” He added.

Alison’s brows furrowed at that instruction. “Okay...Jason primarily handles the court cases. I do the club’s bond hearings and get the paperwork going on various motions for the club. I don’t know what….what do I tell him?”

“Just tell him that you’re going to be busy with a new client.”

Alison looked down at the check again. Nodded to herself. “Okay. Give me a few days to clear things up here and get Jason up to speed and I’m all yours.”

“Oh!” Jerking as she suddenly remembered about Jax and Tara. “I also told Jax and Tara to come see you to set them up with wills and paperwork of guardianship for the boys. That’s personal to them, again, not the club’s business.”

“Okay. You weren’t kidding about keeping me busy.” Alison joked. “Let me check on the copier and we’ll get you going here.” Alison nodded and walked out of the office. She and Chibs gave a sigh of relief that the lawyer was smart enough not to push for more answers. Not yet at least.

He glanced at his watch and pulled out his phone.

“Who are you calling?” She asked curiously.

“My contacts in Belfast.” He said as he dialed quickly.

“Isn’t it like...two in the morning over there?” She asked, mentally trying to figure out the time difference, but she was still running on Central time so it was mixing her up.

“Aye. Perfect time for the Rí Clàirìomh to call.” He said with a dark grin.

“God.” She groaned. “We’re looking for intel, so try not to scare the living crap out of whoever it is you’re calling.”

Chibs snorted at her, giving her hand a squeeze. Whoever he was calling picked up and his attention swiftly shifted to the phone. He speaking in gaelic as Alison had come back into the office with the rest of the copies in hand.

The lawyer giving Chibs a curious look to the unfamiliar language, but settled back at her desk to slide the sets into their own individual envelopes.

She helped by straightening out the originals and putting them back in the envelope that they came with.
Chibs hung up then redialed another number. His voice rolling and thickening with his brogue. But tensing when he mentioned Clay and Galen by name. Chibs getting up from his chair to pace the office as he listened and responded back to whomever he was speaking to. Even Jimmy’s name was mentioned, Chibs freezing in place as the conversation dragged on. His head tossing up in frustration at one point. Then to let loose rapid-fire gaelic.

Abruptly snapping the phone off a minute later, he flopped down next to her. She holding out her hand to him. He took it, holding onto her tight as he rested his head to her shoulder.

“Fucking Irish.” He said simply and she knew the news wasn’t good that he learned. “There’s suspicion already surrounding Galen. Money for sales that is missing. It’s fucking Jimmy O’ all over again.” He said lowly. “Sounds like the Kings don’t know yet, though.”

She squeezed his hand in sympathy. “Gotta wonder what Galen and Clay are doing with all that cash.” She whispered back to him.

“Christ. Maybe you should read the rat bastard.” He said darkly.

“I already offered twice to Clay to read him. He refused.” Chibs snorted at that. “And after what I know already...I really don’t want to.”

Chibs picked his head up from her shoulder. Looking curiously at her.

“I mean there’s only so much I want to know about Clay and Gemma’s sex life.” Giving him a cross between amused and horrified look.

Chibs chuckled in surprise at her offbeat humor to help him out of his grumpiness. Then, as the thought of Clay and Gemma boinking really took hold in his head, he cringed. “Don’t put that thought in my head. Fuck.”

She shrugged. “At least. I know what it’ll be like when I hit menopause.”

“Oh God. Stop.” He laughed despite himself. “That’s not somethin’ you need to worry about for a long time. God help me.” He huffed.

She grinned up at him, stretching to press a kiss to his jawline, idly watching Alison studiously ignore their antics as she methodically worked on stuffing envelopes with the sets of copies for them.

Soon as all the copies were done, Chibs shook hands with Alison and they started crisscrossing across Charming. Hitting nearly every bank, except for Charming National whom had refused them service before. Growling that he still needed to talk to Jax and Clay about getting the garage accounts closed there. But he hated the idea of talking to Clay about anything anymore. The trust broken with the truth of what Clay did. Yet, Clay was still the fucking president.

They were at the Citibank on the outskirts of town, waiting for their customer service person come back with their keys to their next safety deposit box.

“Should we let Piney read the letters?” Chibs asked her.

They already had opened five safety deposit boxes so far, and even so, there were extras yet that they had plans for squirrelling away closer to home. They weren’t taking any chances for these letters to disappear.

She looked to him at his question. “If he’s threatening Clay over them...it’d be right for him to at
least read them to know what it is exactly he’s doing. Don’t you think?” He defended his position.

“Right now, Piney only knows what he was able to guess at. If he reads these…” She brushed her fingers over the manila envelope in her hands, his eyes tracking her indicating movement.

“Fuck. He’ll force a vote. He’s too…he won’t let this history be swept under the rug. I just hate the idea that he’s flying blind in all this…that it’ll lead to…to…” He struggled, battling his own sense of ethics.

“I know. We need time though. We aren’t ready.” She cut off abruptly as their sales person came back and took over handing them the keys and warning them not to lose them or there’ll be a fee to cut the lock out. Then led them to the basement of the bank where they could lock another copy of the letters into their new box.

Walking out of the bank to their bike. “I know.” He referred back to their earlier conversation. “Fuck. Let’s go check on the old man. See where his head is at.”

Pulling out of the bank, heading back into Charming and the cabin on the other side of town. Hopefully, they could talk some sense into Piney. It was Piney’s decision ultimately, but they had to try.

“It’s nice up here.” She commented as they took off their helmets.

“Aye, it’s a good spot to get away.” He glanced around with her briefly, stopping to look towards the solid, front door of the cabin. “Uh…let me take lead on Piney. He could be still passed out from the drink.” He warned her, as they went up the steps to the porch around the front door.

He gently pushing her behind him as he stood along the side of the door and not directly in front of it.

“Piney!” Chibs yelled loud enough to penetrate through the door, giving it a solid knock. They didn’t hear anything at first. Chibs called out to him again. Banging harder on the door.

They jerked back slightly when the door opened abruptly, Piney, bleary-eyed and his hair uncombed filled the open doorway.

A light breeze wafted by and she reeled back at how even from her further back position, Piney was reeking of booze and was still dressed in clothes that she’d seen him in last, now dirty. His large hands held a sawed off shotgun that swayed dangerously as Piney tried to focus enough to point the gun at whoever dared to rouse him from his lair of booze and solitude.

“What!” Piney managed to say clearly as he swayed in the doorway.

“Piney! Christ man, you’re rank. What’d you do, get piss drunk and then roll around in the dirt? When was the last time you showered, old man?” Chibs railed as he grabbed the shotgun out of Piney’s hands and pushed his way into the cabin. She heard the quick clack of the shotgun as Chibs unloaded it before tossing it onto a side table.

Piney turned following him inside, frowning and befuddled at how Chibs managed to get by him.

She trailed inside after them, closing the door behind her, as Piney started arguing to Chibs about showing up unannounced and taking the gun off him. Chibs glared at the old man, telling him he was too drunk to even aim the fucking gun in the first place. Piney blustered at the insult. But before Piney could get into it any further, Chibs shook his head and pointed towards the back of
the cabin.

“Get in the shower, we need to talk. M’anam, put on some coffee. Maybe some cereal, aye?”

“On it.” She nodded.

“What the hell is going on? Talk about what?” Piney complained.

“Just get cleaned up and we’ll get into it. Get moving.” Chibs ordered. Piney grumbled but trundled off to the bathroom and they heard the shower turning on.

Her heart broke at the state of the kitchen, a mess of dirty dishes filled the dual sink and empty liquor bottles littered across the countertops amidst overflowing ashtrays. And by Chibs swearing, it was simply a continuation of the debris in the living room.

Chibs stalking into the kitchen with a scowl, grabbing a box of black garbage plastic bags, he sighed and gave her a quick hug and kiss before going back into the living room to clean up as best he could in the limited amount of time before Piney came out of the bathroom and potentially kicked them out.

She set the coffee maker on once she found coffee grounds and filters. Finding a box of tall kitchen garbage bags, she started cleaning up the kitchen. Washing the dishes and setting them to dry in the plastic rack next to the sink.

Venturing a look in the fridge for something Piney would eat. It was filled with beer and some leftover casseroles that had started to mold over. God. How was it that nobody kept after Piney? Leaving him to wallow in a mess like this. It was inexcusable, she thought angrily.

She tossed the milk after giving it a whiff, along with the rest of the rotten food. There were some eggs and bread that was still within the sell by date according to the packaging. Firing up the range she made up some scrambled eggs and toast.

Chibs went in and out of the cabin dumping bags of trash he’d collected. Grabbing her trash bag on one of his trips.

Hugging her from behind as she worked the skillet. The two of them swayed as their headaches backed off. After a minute she was able to speak. “He doesn’t have much food...and an alarming amount of liquor though.”

“Aye, we’ll have someone deliver groceries to him.”

“Someone needs to come up here and clean, at least once a week. It’s shameful that he’s been left up here like this.” Shaking her head.

Chibs kissed the curve of her neck. “He’d never let anyone in here like that. And he can get his arse down to the clubhouse whenever he wants.” His hand sneaking out and shut off the burner for her. “He does this to himself, m’anam.”

She poked at the scrambled eggs with the spatula, contemplating what Chibs was telling her.

“Well, then, have someone come up here when he’s not here and clean. Mess like this isn’t good for his health. Physically or psychologically.” She argued back.

“I know. We’ll get it worked out.” He appeased.
The bathroom door opened and Piney reappeared showered, dressed, and had combed his wet hair. His blue eyes swept the room and kitchen, his lips pressed together as he took in the cleaned up areas that they managed to get done in the short amount of time. The shower seemed to help clear his head, as he wasn’t shifting as much on his feet.

Chibs pulled back from her and stood facing Piney, waiting for Piney to decide if he was going to fight him some more over them showing up out of the blue and then cleaning up the cabin so it was somewhat livable. Piney wisely backed off under Chibs dark glare.

Piney grabbed up his oxygen tank and took it over to the small dining table, his hands untwisting the plastic tubing. Chibs moving to help but Piney glared up at him. “I fucking got it. I’m not some invalid here.” Piney rasped angrily.

Chibs stopped and threw his hands up in the air. “I’m just tryin’ to help.”

“Well, I don’t need your help.” Piney setting the tubing under his nostrils and gave the knob on the tank a slight twist. Folding his arms across his chest, shooting a ‘so there’ look shot in their direction.

Even she could feel the eye roll Chibs sent Piney. “Aye, by the state of the place, ye’ fucking do. Jesus Christ.” Chibs fired back as he grabbed the coffee cup she had just poured setting it down in front of Piney.

“Is this what you came up here for? Berate me about my housekeeping skills?” He questioned Chibs as he took up the cup.

Chibs growled but didn’t answer Piney’s mocking questions. Sitting down across from Piney, running a hand through his hair, eyes squinting tight slightly. Signs that his headache was affecting him. Her corresponding headache ramping up.

She set the plate of eggs and toast in front of Piney. “Your milk was sour. Tossed it. We’ll have groceries brought up for you. You really need to cut down on the alcohol.” Piney slid his blue eyes from Chibs to her.

“Many have tried, darling. I’m a lost cause.” He joked.

That pissed her off. “No! You are not a lost cause. Don’t talk like that.” She snapped. He shot her a surprised look at her reaction. “Eat.” She ordered shortly.

Chibs hooked an arm around her hips, settling her into his lap. Her arm looping around his neck. Fingers massaging his tight knot of muscles in his nape. Chibs relaxed under her touch. Their free hands finding themselves, fingers dovetailing as the tension of the headaches backed off.

Piney watched the two of them, curiosity playing across his features, but finally started eating.

“So, what’s this little visit about?” Piney asked after a couple of minutes. Chibs slid her a questioning look, giving her a chance to take lead.

Running a hand through her hair she frowned at Piney. Her eyes taking in the mess of the cabin, it was better than when they first arrived, but still. Dropping her arm down onto the table, her fingers drumming the wood. This was the man who was gunning for Clay. Threatening the club’s president...and he can’t even keep fresh food up here while he drank himself into liver failure. Jesus Christ.

“Are you sure, Piney? What you’re doing with Clay?” She asked.
“What is it you think I’m doing with Clay?” Piney asked coyly.

She fought hard to keep from yelling at Piney. She knew he was on a mission. He didn’t deserve to be sidelined or belittled because of his age and prior lack of ability to be more active with the decisions of the club. But still, he was diving into things he had no idea the ramifications are. And most likely, will get him killed.

“Piney...I read Gemma. I know you spun up Gemma to go after Clay before the mule vote. Saw you watching it go down between her and Clay. Your vote at the table. I know what you’re doing.”

Piney looked at her in surprise then swiftly shutting his reaction down, but it was too late, she and Chibs both saw it. Chibs sighed heavily in her ear. “So I ask you, are you sure you want to go down this road?” She waved her hand around the cabin indicating the dismal state of affairs.

Piney pointed his fork at her, his bright blue eyes glaring her. “I voted for the good of the club. I’m doing what I have to do. Clay...he once could be trusted. What he’s doing now, getting the club involved with a cartel. There is no good end-game with them. Clay’s killing this club. I’ll be damned if I let that happen. There’s nothing you could ever say to me to stop what I have to.”

“Fuck, Piney.” Chibs groaned.

She tensed up at Chibs frustration and seeing Piney’s hackles rise up at Chibs tone.

Piney glared harder at Chibs. “Well, no one else is taking him on! It’s all that’s left for me to do. Besides, according to the docs, I don’t have much time left anyway.”

He paused as the thoughts and regrets raced across his face. “I had hopes that Jax and Opie would step up. But they...I don’t know what those boys are thinking. If this is the last thing I do on this Earth...then so be it.”

Piney’s eyes steadfast with his conviction that he’ll go to his grave fighting for what he thinks is right. She can’t fault him for trying, even though it’ll get him killed. Chibs went still under her.

Saddened she nodded. “Okay. I’m sorry, Piney. I wish I had gotten here sooner. We might’ve...I don’t know...Damn it!” She got up swiftly and escaped out of the cabin. Her emotions getting the best of her. Feeling guilty for not finding Chibs on her own. Maybe if she’d done that months ago, she might have been able to help or put a stop to all this.

He and Piney looked towards the door Nancy had fled through. He had to force himself to stay seated and let her have some space.

“You two think I won’t be able to do it.” He looked to Piney at his statement.

“Aye. I’m sorry, old man. I should’ve known there was more going on with this deal that what Clay told us.” He sighed regretfully.

“You voted it down. There’s nothing to be sorry for. You’re a good man, Chibs. Besides, I just might be able to get Clay to back down on this cartel deal. Stranger things have happened.” Piney said with conviction, eyes blazing. “I won’t stop what I’ve started.” Piney declared.

“Okay. What exactly are you threatening Clay with?”

Piney’s countenance turned suspicious again. “Proof that JT wanted the club out of guns, letters he wrote detailing the plans. Plans that Clay didn’t want. How did you know I was leveraging Clay?”
He squirmed in the chair under Piney’s direct question. “Nancy. She’s started telling me about what she’s been seeing.”

Piney stared at him for a heavy moment. “Your girl saw what I was doing with Clay, from reading Gemma?”

Frowning at Piney. “Like I told ye’, she’s a seer.”

Piney’s eyes widened in hope. “She knows about the letters, doesn’t she? Tara gave them to you, didn’t she?” Piney leaned forward in a rush. “You’ve gotta give them to me, Chibs.” Piney pleaded.

He got up and paced, Piney’s hopeful, demanding stare pressing at him. “I can’t.” He spit out.

“Why not? Chibs...I fucking need those letters. They’re proof...”

“I know what they are! You think I like finding out Clay had JT killed over the fucking Irish guns that I helped set up! Fuck you! I know what they are!” He yelled back at Piney, waving his hands around.

Piney got up, his bright eyes still filled with hope and demand. “All the more reason...the sooner we get....”

“What? Toss that truth on the table? What the fuck do you think will happen then? Force Mayhem on Clay?”

Piney stood up, getting into his face. “It’s the way of the club!”

“I know. I fucking know. But we can’t let you do that.”

“Why? God damn it Chibs! Why! You know he fucking deserves it! After having Donna killed, trying to kill my boy! Now this!”

“There’s more going on with this cartel deal, Piney! Fuck. You have no idea the shitstorm that is going on.”

“What are you talking about?” Piney backed off, confused.

“Jesus Christ. The less you know, the better. You and Clay are butting heads as it is. Even Clay doesn’t know what the hell he’s doing.”

“All the more reason to give me the letters. Bring Clay to the table. Deal with this once and for all.” Piney tried to reason with him again.

“Fucking Christ. No!”

“Chibs…I’ve already put a clock on Clay...I need those letters.” Piney explained.

“Mary, mother of Christ.” He swore at how deep Piney was in this. His head wanted to explode from the mess Piney’s gotten himself into with Clay, from fighting with Piney over the fucking letters, and also from being apart from Nancy too long. Fuck.

“Chibs, I had to. Clay threatened to slit my throat over those letters. Told him I had contingencies in place if he’s actually got the balls to try and kill me.”

He breathed hard as shit just got even more pear-shaped.
Giving Piney a sorrowful stare. It was too fucking late. Nancy’s advice to Jax and him coming back to him. Letting Piney do this. But fuck, he hated it. No matter how he picked at the situation, there was no way Piney was going to survive this. “No. It’s better if you didn’t have them on you.”

“God damn it, Chibs…”

“No! I told ye’. Fuck, you’re barely sober and you expect to fight Clay off like this? Why the fuck didn’t ye’ tell me about all this with JT and Clay?”

Piney collapsed back down in the chair, looking lost. “I don’t know. I wasn’t sure what Tara was going on about. Asking questions about the past. About JT.” Piney shook his head, eyes closing painfully at whatever memory roused in his mind. “I only had speculations. I still do. Then when everyone got out...Clay and Jax both pushing this muling deal…”

“And Tara’s innocent questions, your speculations...led you to challenging Clay.” He finished for the old man.

“Yeah.”

He sat back down himself, just fucking floored by everything.

“You said Nancy’s been talking. Talking about what she’s seeing. What did she see, Chibs?”

He shifted in the chair, trying to come up with an answer that’ll get Piney to back off or protect him, but coming up short. His hesitation must’ve shown, Piney’s eyes narrowed at him to answer his question. “War. When all is said and done...half the table will be dead.”

Piney got up and grabbed up a half-empty bottle of tequila from the side table across the room. “Will the club be out from the drugs? The guns?”

“Aye, but to get there…” Sending Piney the bad news in the silence.

Piney nodded after a moment, then taking a swig of the tequila. “It’ll be worth it then.”

He ran a frustrated hand over his goatee, the pain of what lay ahead.

“Well, at least, I know I really do have contingencies. Make sure you finish what I started if I fall. Mayhem or not.” Piney requested.

He took another breath, looking sadly at Piney. Mentally saying goodbye to an old friend. And trying to find it in him to agree to what Piney was asking of him. It didn’t track to what they needed to do...but he knew soon as shit was fixed enough, Clay was a dead man. Either by his hand or by the clubs.

He nodded to Piney and the old man nodded back. The deal struck.

Piney sat down in a worn leather chair, giving him a sly grin that had him groaning in exasperation. “Glad I can go down fighting for something good for once in my life.”

Rolling his eyes at Piney’s lame joke. “Jax told me he was going to come up and see you. Try and talk you out of this. Just a heads up.” He shrugged at the annoyed look Piney shot him.

Piney gave him a considering look after a moment. “You’re a good man, Chibs. Take care of her. I’d never seen you look more happy than when you’re with her. Don’t ever let that go.”

He snorted at Piney’s sage advice. “I’m no fool.”
Piney laughed. “Don’t you know by now? We’re all made fools for the women we love.”

“You finished, old man?” He raised his brows at Piney. “I’ll send a prospect up with some groceries for you. Try and give your liver a break, will you?” He tweaked at Piney as he stood up.

Piney sending him an annoyed glare. “Go on. You two have better things to do that hang around here with an old bastard like me.”

Walking towards the door, he clapped a hand to Piney’s shoulder, a brief bid of goodbye. Stopping in the doorway, glancing back at Piney one more time, trying to think of what else to say to Piney that might make a difference. But, at the end of it all, there was nothing left. Twisting his head back out the door, his hand swiping away at the tears that threatened to fall.

“Mo ghaol! Time to go.” He yelled in the direction Nancy had taken. Seeing her walking amongst the thick trees, heading back towards the cabin at his call.

One last look to Piney who simply raised up the tequila at him, he shut the door behind him and met Nancy down on the yard. Pulling her into a deep hug that had him swaying as the pain dropped off in his head. But his heart weighed heavy with sorrow that Piney was lost to them.

“I’m sorry.” Nancy said with a deep sigh.

He shook his head. “Not your fault, m ‘anam. Not your fault. I was foolish to think we could get him out of this bullshit.”

She looked up at him, a small smile gracing her lips as her glittering eyes captured his. “It’s not foolish. You wouldn’t be who you are if you didn’t try to save him.”

Her words had his heart and stomach all fluttery with a rush. Fuck, at this rate, he’d be a fucking sodding puddle on the ground. He gave her a quick kiss and straightened up. “Come on...we still have shite to do.” He said gruffly, leading her to the bike.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 62

Chapter Summary

Another hiding place.

Chapter Notes

Short update. Working on the next parts.

She was confused when they parked in front of Floyd’s. They’d just come from St. Thomas where they gave back the original letters to Tara for her to hide again.

Chibs pulling out another manila envelope. “Here?”

“Aye. Plus, I need a bit of a trim.” He explained as they walked into the barbershop, a bell over the door ringing, announcing their entry.

She grinned looking around, it was exactly the way she’d seen it in Jax’s memories. Giving the big, plate-glass window a look, recalling Jax throwing Kohn through it. His moment of awe that he’d actually tossed someone through a glass window like in the movies. Well, then, his anger taking over again as he climbed through the newly opened window after Kohn splayed out on the concrete sidewalk.

“Hey Floyd...how long for a trim?” Chibs asked.

Noting that Floyd was currently working on someone and another was already waiting.

“Chibs. Fifteen minutes?”

“Aye. Okay. Going to use your loo, if ye’ don’t mind.”

“Sure thing.” Floyd waved a comb of acceptance. She doubted Floyd would have a problem whatever Chibs wanted to do in his shop. Floyd seemed to be the type of man who recognized how the wind blew.

“Take a seat here, m ‘anam. I’ll be right back.” He winked at her as he helped her a chair.

Rolling her eyes at his sugary tone as she sat down. “Go.” She shooed him away, grabbing a Sports Illustrated magazine from the rack next to her.

She was already looking at the contents of the magazine when Chibs abruptly pressed into her and kissed her. The magazine crumpling between them.

Just as she was getting into the kiss, he pushed away from her with a wicked grin and cocky walk towards the back of the shop. Eyes from Floyd and the customers slid over towards her.
Huffing, she smoothed out the magazine and the eyes fled from her direction. Her brain grabbing control of her senses started trying to find opportunities to attack Chibs when he least expected it. But, she decided, he’d just end up enjoying it. And she, too, she admitted.

The man in Floyd’s chair finished, passed some cash to Floyd and walked out the door. The customer waiting took the swivel chair after Floyd had wiped it down. Floyd and the customer chatted quietly as she leafed through the magazine.

She tried to keep herself from going off to track down Chibs. Her headache pounding as the heat of the sun warmed the back of her head. She was trying to decide if it helped her fight the pain or not. Her decision aborted when Chibs came back.

Settling in the chair next to her, burying his face into her neck and shoulder, arm slung across the back of her chair. He groaned first as the pain receded for the both of them.

“I thought Scottish people were more reserved.” She teased, flipping a page of the magazine.

She felt the burst of air as he chuckled into the sensitive curve of her neck. Sending goosebumps up and down her neck and arm. “I’m a Scottish outlaw.” He clarified with a grin.

Shaking her head that it was useless to argue with him. Not wanting to ruin his playful mood, especially after dealing with Piney. “So, how much are you going to have cut off?”

“Hmm.” He sat up and ran a hand through his hair. “Not much, just a trim. Quick shave, straighten up my whiskers. Floyd does a good job around my scars, keeping everything straight.” He explained.

She nodding along while finished reading about the expose on the Williams sisters phenomena of the tennis world.

Chibs shifted and his wallet chain jangled against the metal of the chair. His thumb trailed up and down along her neck, making it hard to concentrate on the article she was reading. But she managed, barely.

Sliding a look to Chibs, catching him grinning back at her with a sly, heated look. Knowing exactly what he was doing to her. Grinning back at him, shaking her head, she returned to her magazine. She wasn’t used to flirting with a man. Especially out in public like this. But Chibs didn’t seem to care who watched them or where.

Another five minutes and Floyd was ready for Chibs. The last customer leaving quickly as Chibs got up. Floyd settling a big cape around Chibs neck, combing out his hair. Chibs telling Floyd what he wanted, the barber nodding and set to work. Scissors making quick work.

“How’ve you been, Chibs? Been awhile.” Floyd asked.

“Aye, good. Been on the road last couple of weeks. Why I’m all scruffy.”

“Well, we’ll get you fixed up here. Who’s your girl?”

“M ‘anam, come here.” Chibs called to her.

Rolling her eyes, she set her magazine down as she went to Chibs.

“Please.” She reminded him of his manners. But took his outstretched hand anyway. Their headaches pulling back again, she couldn’t help her relieved sigh. She stood with her back to the
mirror, facing Chibs and Floyd, trying to stand out of Floyd’s way.

“This is Nancy. Nancy, Floyd.”

“Hi.” She smiled to the older man who glanced over at her with a nod of greeting.

“Glad to see Chibs here has settled down finally.” Floyd said dryly. His eyes taking in her outfit, lingering a bit longer on her leather kutte. “They made you a member?”

Shrugging, “It was for the best, someone has to keep these boys in line.” She teased.

“Oy!” Chibs grumbled at the slight.

Floyd cracked the tiniest bit of a smile. “Somehow, I believe you. Very difficult task you have on your hands.”

Chibs glaring at the two of them as they teased Chibs and the club. She winked to Chibs and he rolled his eyes but let his ire go.

“You have nooo idea.” She good-naturedly, chuckled at Floyd’s statement. “Like herding cats.” She shared conspiratorially to Floyd. Floyd snickered amusedly.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs muttered.

She tried to go back to her seat but, Chibs held onto her hand. Drawing her closer as he pressed a heated kiss to the back of her hand, dark eyes capturing hers. His thumb softly circling the sensitive inside bend of her wrist. His eyes flashing at her dirty thoughts of what he was going to do to her later. Her insides turned hot and gooey under that look. Goosebumps shivered up her arm and up the back of her neck, shooting down her spine. Gah!

“I can’t trim your beard with her hand in the way, Chibs.” Floyd interrupted dryly.

With the reminder that they weren’t alone, he let her hand go as he sent Floyd another annoyed glare.

She breathing hard as she worked to walk back to her seat and sit down before she fell down, dragging Chibs with her to the floor and let him have his wicked way with her. But she feared that they might, just might, kill poor Floyd if she and Chibs did start getting busy in the middle of his shop. And especially the new customer who just walked in.

Running a shaky hand through her hair, trying to calm down and not scare the children she heard Chibs.

“Thank Christ for this fucking cape.”

Floyd gave a ghost of a smirk before wrapping a warm towel over Chibs face, effectively shutting up Chibs, except for the deep sigh as the heat worked to open up the pores and soften up the follicles.

Floyd turned, straightening his tools, his eyes briefly meeting hers in the mirror and she couldn’t help but smile back at him. Floyd breaking the look to sharpen his blade. She grabbed up another magazine to distract herself and ignore the look the new customer was sending her.

Her headache increased as she tried to read. But her attention kept drifting to Chibs as Floyd worked on his goatee.
The barber reminding Chibs to quit moving if he didn’t want to come out looking uneven. Chibs hands tightened on the arms of the chair. Floyd gave another couple of small swipes and he was done.

Giving Chibs a final wipe down and patted in some greenish gel over the freshly shaved skin. Then rubbing in some cream into the beard and goatee.

“Fuck. What the fuck is that? I smell like a salad.” Chibs snarled.

“It’s cucumber and aloe. Good for your skin and hair.” Floyd argued back as he kept rubbing in the mysterious cream. “Besides, you have a girlfriend now. Have to keep you in tip-top shape so she’ll stick around.”

Floyd grinned, finally unwrapping Chibs from the cape, sweeping it like a matador and Chibs the bull as he was released from the confines of the chair and cape.

Chibs rolled his eyes but pulled out his wallet, handing over the cash for Floyd’s work.

She stood up, dropping the magazine back on the side table as Chibs walked over to her. Their hands meeting. The two of them swaying slightly as the pain dropped off and took a moment to enjoy the feel of each other’s hands.

Tilting her head, looking over his trimmed up look. “Well?” He asked, his voice deepened with his brogue peeking out that sent her heart racing and bones at risk of melting. Jesus, just one word and she was enthralled.

“Hmmm...soft.” She said as she ran the back of her finger down his cheek and along his jaw. His head dropping into the curve of her hand as she caressed the his trimmed beard and goatee.

Stepping closer into his body she smelled the fresh cucumber and aloe scent.

“Tasty, too. Thanks Floyd!” She called out as Chibs scowled and dragged her out of the barber shop. Floyd throwing a hand up at her thanks, already settling a fresh cape over the next customer.

Chibs heaved a sigh as she enjoyed her amusement. Handing her her helmet, she automatically snapped the chin strap into place. He swinging on and fired the bike up with a deep roar. Feeling her settle behind him, arms around his waist securely, he glanced in the mirror. Catching her carefree smile and smiled back as he turned the bike towards the garage.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 63

Chapter Summary

Updating Jax

Chapter Notes

Another chap-lette. Fighting to get these chapters out so we can have fun back in canon-land. Work is killing me.

Sort of messing with the timeline in this section. Fitting in Jax's reading, the new elements of what Chibs and Nancy are doing with the letters and visiting Piney is difficult to weave into the canon. Doing the best I can.

As a side note, I saw the newest Mayans MC trailer commercial...and nope...(head shaking)...nope... just soooo not ready for a world without Jax. Thought I could handle watching that 30sec trailer...but nope. If anyone saw it, you know what I speak of. I wish I could un-see that.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Pulling her laptop from the saddlebag, she saw the garage was buzzing. Jax in his bay with Opie working on a car. Gemma was in also, sequestered in her office.

She took Chibs hand, their fingers lacing as they crossed the concrete lot.

“Full house today.” Chibs said, his eyes taking in the activity.

“Clay’s not here.”

“Aye. Bobby, too.”

Jax wiped his hands on a dirty rag as he joined them in Chibs bay. Jax’s blue eyes bright as he nodded hello. Chibs set his kutte on the back of her chair and put on his TM work shirt for his afternoon-to-close shift.

“How are things going?” Jax asked as she pulled her laptop out and fired it up. Listening to Jax and Chibs talk behind her.

“We checked on Piney. I’m going to have Phil make a run up to the cabin with some groceries. He’s been on a bender.” Chibs told Jax.

“Someone needs to go up to the cabin and clean the place up. At least once a week.” She reminded Chibs. “Piney can’t keep up with it by himself.”

“Aye.” Chibs nodded. “We straightened shit up as best we could, but someone permanent would be good.”
Jax sighed, nodding. “I was going to go up see him after my shift. Is it true? What he’s doing?”

“We talked. He’s not backing down.” Chibs said shortly. “I also put some calls in to Belfast. There’s rumors running through the ranks about Galen.”

“What kind of rumors?” Jax asked.

“Ye’ don’t get the name ‘Búistéir’ for nothin’.” Chibs said seriously.

Jax shifted on his feet and raised his brows questioningly at the unknown word. “What?”

“Jesus Christ, you need to learn gaelic.” Chibs shook his head at Jax’s lack of knowledge of the Irish language.

Jax rolled his eyes at Chibs admonishment.

“It means butcher.” Chibs explained. Pausing to let Jax ponder how Galen earned that nickname.

“After the fuckup with Jimmy O…” Chibs continued once he saw Jax put it together. “…and those pieces of shites, Cameron and Eddie. The Kings brought up someone who would whip things into shape. And it sounds that they don’t care how it’s done, just so long as it’s done.” He clarified to Jax. “One contact said that there’s an unusual amount of money and product moving, outside of the usual schedules. Nothing that can be proved, but the concern is there.”

Jax pacing in their tight little space. She did her best to keep from turning around to glare at Jax for not believing her. But she could feel his and Chibs eyes at her back before turning back to their conversation. She stared intently at her trading screen and made a few notes, absently watching Jax and Chibs from the reflection on her monitor of her laptop.

“Do you know this Galen?” Jax’s voice stressed but hopeful that Chibs would have a better idea of what to do.

“No. He was probably some kid that Kellen dragged out of the gutter. Kellen’s done that for a long time with a lot of kids. Get them into the Cause.”

“Jesus Christ.” Jax swore.

“The Kings know about Galen and Clay?”

“Doesn’t sound like it. The Kings like to be as hands off as possible. Order the rest of us do all the dirty work. But if things get too out of hand, they’re more than ready to get their hands dirty if need be.”

“They didn’t with Abel and Jimmy. Had us take care of Jimmy that whole time.”

Chibs shifted, “Make no mistake...us being there...was a tool for the Kings to use. With Jimmy gone, they needed someone to take over the guns here in California. Two birds, one stone. We kill Jimmy and they keep the sales of their guns flowing by using us to do it. If we weren’t there and Abel weren’t used like a fucking pawn...the Kings would have killed Jimmy all on their own.”

“I really fucking hate how we end up being in the middle of shit all the time.”

“Aye, well, tables are turning. We aren’t walking blind into shite no more.”

She felt the weight of Chibs and Jax’s eyes again. Turning her chair with a slight squeak, she narrowed her eyes at the two of them.
“Are you two done? I’m trying to work here and I can’t concentrate with the two of you gabbing on like this. Plus, it’s not safe to talk about this here.” She pointed towards the office window that overlooked from the office into the bays where Gemma lurked.

Chibs and Jax quickly looked towards the office window, both relaxing that all seemed calm and their conversation wasn’t overheard by anyone.

Chibs sidled next to her. His hand played with her hair as she turned back to the laptop. His hip hitching on the edge of her desk. She sighed a little as his hand massaged her scalp.

“Where’s Clay?” Chibs asked Jax.

“He went to see the squaw, took Bobby with him. You got a copy of the letters for me?” Jax asked, hand rising to take the letters from Chibs.

Unbelievable, she thought to herself. Annoyed that Jax would even entertain the notion that he’d get a copy of those letters.

Chibs froze next to her. She swiveled abruptly back around. Glaring at Jax for his stupid assumption. Her eyebrows popping up, “What letters?” She asked of him.

She turned to Chibs, blinking innocently at him. “Do you know anything about these letters he’s talking about?”

“No. Must be confused or something.” Chibs said easily, picking up her direction.

Turning to Jax, considering Chibs thinking. Jax glaring at the two of them in frustration. “Those are my letters. I want to read them again.” He explained further. His hand waving out of frustration.

“You want letters to read? Read Les Liaisons Dangereuses.” She turned to Chibs, “It’s pretty interesting...written entirely as letters between characters.” She lit up at the teaching opportunity about literature.

“It’s been made into a movie, too.” Chibs added. Grinning at how she turned the conversation against Jax.

“Really?” She frowned, debating if the work translated into the different medium.

Jax continued to glare at the two of them for ignoring him.

“Is it on the list?” She asked.

Chibs nodded after a moment of thought. “I’ll put it on the list.”

“Oh my God.” Jax groaned. “You two are insane.”

She huffed, crossing her arms. “No, you are. Why the hell aren’t you shadowing Clay?”

Jax glared at her again. “Clay already tapped Bobby for the day. If I insisted it would have raised questions. And as you said, we aren’t ready yet.”

“Ready for what?” Gemma asked, slinging her massive, black-fringed purse over her shoulder. Jax jerking at Gemma’s sudden appearance.

“Ready to let me have business cards.” She answered easily, as Jax and Chibs sent each other
panicked looks of how to answer Gemma without tipping her off.

Chibs covering his mouth, doing his best to keep from laughing. Jax rolling his head back.

Gemma shifted her dark eyes to her, accusation thrown her way for whatever it was that had Jax so annoyed. She watched Gemma take in her kutte and sitting easily at the desk. Gemma’s jaw tightened, lips thinning, and her hand coming to rest on her hip. Fisting her car keys.

“Is she working here now?” Gemma’s heated voice demanded of Jax. Daring him to tell her that she was now working for the garage.

She shrugged, letting the angry heat of Gemma’s attitude roll around her. Smiling slightly at how put out Gemma seemed to be with her. Gemma’s eyes turning dangerous at her non-reaction to the threatening tone.

Chibs stood up and stepped slightly in front of her, physically putting his body between her and Gemma.

“No. She’s not an employee. She’s a member of the club.” Jax informed Gemma before turning to her with an annoyed glare for bringing up the business cards. “You don’t need cards.”

She pouted back at Jax. “But they’d be sooo classy.”

“M ‘anam.” Chibs warned at her.

“Fine. I’m still trying to figure out a logo anyway.” She turned back to her laptop with a wave of her hand.

“Where are you going?” Jax asked his mother.

Gemma’s eyes peeled off of her to go to her son. Her face softening and body relaxing. Her lips curling into a soft smile even.

The change in Gemma’s body language set her internal skeeze level on high. She and Chibs shared a look.

“Just need to run some errands. You okay, sweetheart?” Gemma walking up to Jax, pulling him into a hug. Her hands holding onto Jax’s face.

Jax gave a firm shake and pulled out of Gemma’s grip. “I’m fine.” His hand pulling out his vibrating phone from his pocket. Gemma frowning that Jax managed to pull away from her.

Gemma watching Jax intently as he listened and spoke cryptically into the phone. His body going tense to whatever and whoever was calling him.

Quickly shut the phone, “Ope, Tig...with me.” Jax called to the two men.

“What’s going on?” Gemma asked, noting the serious note in Jax’s voice.

Jax frowned at his mother. “Club business, you had errands…”

Gemma shifted her look, taking in Opie and Tig landing back on Jax. “Yeah, I do. See you later, baby.” Swiftly giving Jax a kiss before he could get out of her reach. He froze, but Gemma didn’t seem to notice his lack of enthusiasm. Smiling as she pulled back from the kiss, she strode off to her SUV, very nearly skipping in her estimation. What a piece of work, she thought.
“Tell Wayne I said hi!” She yelled at Gemma’s back, helpfully waving goodbye with her arm.

Gemma nearly tripped over her own feet. Sending her a furious glare, Gemma climbed into her SUV and sped off the lot.

Jax and Chibs shot her a look that she’d completely lost her mind.

“What? You didn’t think she’s actually going off to do errands for the garage?” Giving Jax a hard look.

“Jesus.” Jax groaned.

“What’s up?” Opie asked as he and Tig finished tidying up from whatever work they’d been doing.

“We gotta go to Hap’s.” Jax said quickly, switching back to business.

“You need me?” Chibs concernedly asked.

“No, we got it.” Jax started off to his bike. Opie and Tig confused shrugged as they followed Jax.

“Jax! Occam’s razor.” She said to Jax. Jax, Opie and Tig twisting around with a confused look at her cryptic words. “Luther Vandross. You’ll know.” She waved them off.

Opie and Tig glancing between themselves and Jax, but Jax was already getting on his bike, shaking his head at their questioning looks. They rushing to their own bikes.

“Everything okay?” He asked her as she went back to her desk.

“Yeah. It’ll be fine. A lot of running around chasing after a couple of kids who don’t know what they got themselves into.”

“Fuck, Luther Vandross.” Chibs muttered as he remembered what she’d told him during Jax’s reading. “Seriously?”

“Yeep.” She drawled, popping the ‘p’ sound as she got back into her trading.

Chibs sighed, watching Jax and the guys turn out of the lot. Shaking his head, he buzzed her a kiss before turning to the car on his lift.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 64

Chapter Summary

The day continues...

Chapter Notes

I totally suck at summaries. Sorry.

And a note about the trading, I'm in the Central time zone. The equity markets open at 8:30 am and close at 3pm for me. I should be calculating the Western time zone for this story, but I'm mentally stuck in central time. So to make it easier for me to write this, I stuck with the central time zone. Futures trading is roughly 23 hours out of the day, but I won't hassle you with that, yet at least. We'll see.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After a few minutes, she was engrossed in the markets. Flicking through charts and option chains she started putting some trades on. Making notes of her positions and her target amounts to make on each one. Annoyed whenever her headache forced her away from her laptop. Usually she’d muscle through the headaches but it wasn’t just her that was hurting.

Going to Chibs as he leaned into an engine, swearing at some hose, nut, or clamp that refused to do his bidding. His forehead dripping sweat, she grabbed up his bandana out of his back pocket and wiped away the sweat for him.

“Thanks. You doing okay there?” He asked.

“Yeah. It’ll take me a few days to get into the swing of trading again.” She sighed as her headache backed off.

“Well, whatever makes you happy, mo leanabh.”

She grinned that he was being so cool with her finding her own thing to do. Now that her account was up and running, and the amount she had to deploy....things were going to be fun.

Chibs glanced at her when she didn’t respond to his sentiment. His eyes narrowed as he focused on her. Trying to read her thoughts. “I don’t know if I want to know what you’re thinking there.” He said suspiciously.

She chuckled. “Probably for the best.” Giving him a pat and went back to her laptop.

There was only about ten minutes left to the trading session and she decided to try some scalps. Pushing closing trades on the scalps running them right into the closing bell. Even after the equity markets closed, the futures still have another fifteen minutes. Her orders filling at a rapid pace. Her laptop chiming with each order filled.
She watched intensely as her net balance rose and fell as the trades closed out. It was different with real money than a paper account where it was just pretend money. Her attention shifted as Jax, Opie, Tig, and Happy pulled in.

Bobby had arrived an hour earlier, looking annoyed as he joined them at her desk. Chibs was taking a smoke break next to her. His free hand playing with her hair again, she sighed and leaned into his magical fingers.

“Hey. How’d it go with the Wahewa?” Chibs asked.

“Fine.” He said shortly.

“Really? What does fine entail?” She asked, seeing how Bobby was unable to meet her or Chibs eyes. Whatever happened with Clay was really troubling him.

Bobby sighed, hitching his hip on the corner of her desk. She leaned closer to Chibs so there wasn’t any accidental touching.

“Charlie was questioning Clay over the increased orders. He’s heard rumors about the cartel deal. Wanted to make sure that they were being compensated properly.”

“And are they?” She dived further, not liking how Bobby was hem-hawing over what happened. She glanced up at Chibs as he weighed what Bobby was saying, too.

“My opinion, no. I argued Clay over it when Charlie left us alone for a bit. Clay told him he was selling the ammo at the same prices as we do everyone else.”

“Greedy bastard. The amount of money we’re going to be earning...it’d be chump change.” Chibs said through a plume of smoke.

“Yeah, well, I’m not the Pres. So, I have no say in what Clay decides.” Bobby stood up with a helpless shrug. Hands stuffed in his jean pockets.

She ran her hand over her face. “Where’s Clay now?” She asked.

“He went to go talk to Unser about the truck for the run coming up.”

She shifted in her chair and grimaced. Knowing that Gemma was heading up there and she’d see Clay there. The two of them running to Wayne to help them find the letters. Lying to each other and to the club about what they are really doing.

“Everything here okay?” Bobby inquired, nodding to the busy garage. She and Chibs, both, let Bobby change the subject.

“Aye. We’re on top of things.”

Bobby nodded to himself, glancing at her. “Okay. I’m going to run to Lincoln Village. Go see Carl.” Bobby gave Chibs a meaningful look.

Chibs gave a small grin and nodded in understanding of who this mysterious Carl is about.

“Carl?” She asked of them.

Chibs and Bobby looked at her again, not saying anything. But they had this weird, funny look on their faces. Like they understood some joke that was completely lost on her.
“Ye’ better get going if ye’ want to get back in time.” Chibs prompted.

Bobby checked his watch. “Yeah. I’ll see you two later.” He waved back at them, walking to his bike.

As Bobby pulled out of the lot she looked to Chibs again. “Back in time for what?”

“You’ll see.” He grinned and gave her a kiss before jaunting back to the car he was working on.

She stared after him, wondering if she kept pestering him, he’d give her an answer. But he quickly got involved with what he was working on and her laptop gave another chime drawing her attention away from the mysterious Carl in Lincoln Village. It sounded like a senior living community, she decided to herself.

Another hour passed and Clay pulled into the lot. Heading right into the clubhouse.

She and Chibs sharing their coming and going to each other based on availability. Mostly it was her going to him. One time, giggling as she rolled her chair back and sneaking a hand up his shirt instead of getting up and walking over to him. Chibs huffed amusedly at her as he wrangled a hose into place. He straightening and her hand sliding to his front and she reached up as far as she could, scratching lightly at his skin.

He wiped his hands on the rag over his shoulder, his eyes slanted down to hers. A sensuous smile growing. “Ye’ heading the wrong direction there, m ‘anam.”

She snorted. “Well, I always did have horrible sense of direction.” Sliding her hand downwards and off to the side of his waist. He pouting at her. “Mind out of the gutter, please. We’re at work.”

He laughed. “That’s not exactly a deterrent.”

Shaking her head, now free of the headache, she let him go and slid back to her desk. Chibs humming behind her.

Jax, Tig, and Opie rolled back into the lot. Jax slid her a knowing look as he went into his bay and went back to work. Tig and Opie went to Chibs.

“What?” He asked them as they stared at him.

“Did you know? About the guns?” Tig asked him.

“What are you asking me for? Nancy’s the one that read you, Tiggy. Ask her.” Chibs shrugged them off.

She raised a brow at the two of them. Waiting to see if they’d actually ask her. Tig and Opie shifting on their feet, the silence growing. She grinned at the two of them, amused by their indecision and slight freaked-out state.

“You two going to stand there staring at me all day or what?” She pushed them.

“Fuck.” Tig swore and headed back to his bay.

Opie continued to stare at her. “Did you know?”

“Yes.”

Opie frowned. “You could have told us.” He accused.
Narrowing her eyes at him. “I did.”

Opie pulled at his beard in thought. “You could have warned us about the guns being at risk at Happy’s, long before this afternoon.” Opie pointed out.

She took a breath and tilted her head. “I could have. But it was Clay who told you guys to stash the guns over there. Clay’s not exactly thrilled with me yet. So my telling you of what might happen would have been dismissed out of hand.”

Opie didn’t seem convinced so she kept going. “Besides, it was a learning experience for all of you. No one got hurt and the guns are safe now. All of you are more aware to keep a better eye on what you are doing.” She shrugged at him.

“Pay attention, Opie. Things are not what they seem and…” She cut off, biting at her lip with indecision.

“And?”

She sat back, glancing at Chibs who’d twisted his head around to check on her. Following the conversation between her and Opie as he worked. “Go see your father.”

Opie paced a bit, his eyes sharp on her. “What about my old man?”

She sighed, “Time is fleeting, is all. Things are going to be very busy around here. Take the time and talk with him.”

She ignored Opie’s continued stare and went back to her laptop.

Opie wandered off, once he saw that she wasn’t going to tell him anything more. Breathing a bit easier now that Opie wasn’t staring her down.

Chibs settled in next to her. His eyes worried and pained as they grasped their hands. She breathed hard and rested her forehead to the back of Chib’s hand that she was holding. His other hand playing with her hair as she fought to keep her tears at bay.

“It’ll be okay, m’anam. Graim thu.” He murmured.

Lifting her head to look up into his eyes, giving him a watery smile. “I love you, too.” She sighed.

Chibs smiled down at her and bent over to kiss her. Her free hand going to his cheek as they kissed.

She and Chibs pulled back for air and she heard another bike pull in, looking over at the noise, she saw it was Bobby back from his jaunt to Lincoln Village. The sun was starting to set over the horizon and the guys left in the garage were packing up for the day. Rat sweeping the floor. Jax and Opie wandered off to the clubhouse. Tig and Happy following after them.

“Are we hanging out here or going home?” She asked.

“Hang out here for a bit.”

“Okay, let me pack this up and lock it in the saddlebag.”

Chibs nodded and gave her hand a squeeze as he left her to finish putting his tools away as she powered down her laptop.

They left Rat behind to wind down the garage and shut the bay doors. Chibs handing her the lit
joint as they walked to his bike.

The clubhouse was filled with members and croweaters alike. They headed towards the kitchen to find something to eat, but Bobby stopped them.

“We got pizza on delivery. Should be here in ten or so.”

“Aye.” Chibs slapped Bobby’s shoulder and turned them around. Finding a spot on the couch. She sat next to him looking over everyone in the clubhouse.

“Is it always this packed on a weeknight?” She asked, as a croweater handed them a round of cold beers. Well, handed them to Chibs. And he handed her one of the sweating bottles.

Chibs chuckled. “Most of us don’t have school in the morning.” Answering her question.

Rolling her eyes at him. He grinned at her. Then took the paper plate handed to him that held a couple of large, steaming pizza slices. Taking one carefully and moaning at the cheesy goodness.

When she was full, she tossed the last of her slice back onto the plate. Only the crust was left, she was getting better at eating. Wiping her hands with a paper towel off the roll that sat on the table before the couch.

Settling down again, she noted the conversation that Tig and Juice were debating. Checking with Chibs if he was hearing it too and she wasn’t making it up in her hazy, potted-up state. They were debating the merits of shaving their balls. And she didn’t think they were talking about shaving any sports balls. Chibs sighed heavily and buried his face in the curve of her neck.

Tig bringing up the question of shaving such a delicate area of what to do if you end up with ingrown hairs or knicks. That it wasn’t worth it. Juice defending, rather intensely, the aesthetic and cleanliness of shaving.

Tig glancing over at them with a sly look. “What's your take on it, Chibs?” Dragging Chibs into the debate, knowing it’d piss him off.

“Fuck! I don’t give a shite what ye’ two do with ye’r balls. So long as I don’t have to look or touch ‘em. Jesus Christ.”

Tig and Juice cracked up at Chibs reaction. Grinning up at Chibs as he rolled his eyes.

A croweater came by and handed out fresh beers for everyone.

She took a swallow and noticed that the guys had gathered around them at the sofa. Each had a suspicious happy look about them. Bobby was grinning like a loon, his eyes right on her. She stiffened, bracing herself for whatever idiotic thing that had them all amped up.

Jax winking at her as he prodded Bobby with a shoulder bump.

“What?” She asked suspiciously.

“Your kutte is missing something.” Jax toyed.

Looking down at her black leather and back up at Jax, not understanding what he was referring to. Bobby held out a heavily stitched bit of cloth towards her.

“Here, just had this made up for you...Seer.”
She took the patch from Bobby gingerly. Looking down at it. Seer stitched in black thread over white.

“Oh?!” Her eyes widened at the gift of the patch. “I thought you said it’d take a couple of days.” She questioned.

“Went out to Lincoln Village personally and had it made up this afternoon.” Bobby said happily.

“The mysterious Carl, I assume?” Chibs snorting next to her as Bobby nodded.

She looked around and everyone in the club was watching her. Their happy expectation weighed over her. Looking to Chibs, he winked at her as he helped her out of her kutte, laying it across her lap.

Jax pulled out a small sewing kit from his jacket pocket, handing it to her.

“It’s tradition that you sew your own patches on, m ‘anam.” Chibs explained, taking the sewing kit and quickly feeding a thick black thread through the eye of the needle. Handing the needle to her.

She didn’t know what to say, she didn’t expect this to happen. Or that it would be in front of nearly everyone in the club. Giving a shaky breath, she took the needle.

“You know how to sew, right?” Tig asked, as he leaned in towards her along with the others. Even Clay, she saw out of the corner of her eye, was watching from the doorway of chapel.

“I do. Had to mend my own clothes.” She carefully lined up the patch, sewing carefully along the edges. Taking her time to make sure each stitch was tight and tucked under the edge of the patch and sinking into the tougher leather of the kutte.

Secretly, glad that she didn’t have to sew the club patch and rockers on the back of the kutte, they’d be here all night given their size and by how buzzed she was feeling.

Chibs grabbed the tiny scissors in the sewing kit and snipped the thread once she’d finished going around the entire patch. He was smiling at her, as she put her kutte back on. Her eyes automatically looking down at the new patch on her kutte.

Holy cow. She was really officially a member of the club. It hadn’t really sunk in, and it was still a bit surreal to her. Even as everyone cheered and raised their various drinks up in honor of their newest member.

“Sons! Seer!” They called out in toasting fashion.

She felt her cheeks go red at the attention. Chibs hugging her close, sensing her shyness.

“Thanks guys.” She managed to say. Catching Bobby’s eyes. “Thanks Bobby.”

“You’re one of us now.” He said seriously with a satisfied nod. His eyes a bit at peace compared to how conflicted they were earlier in the day.

The guys satisfied with her kutte now sporting her new patch, wandered off back to whatever it was they were doing before the patch sewing. She looked to Chibs, he was smiling softly at her.

“You ready to go home?”

She simply nodded. He stood and helped her up, leading her out to the bike. She shivered a little from the drop in temperature from inside the clubhouse to the night air. The moon full and bright
overhead as they rode home.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

I love you = Graím thu
My soul = m ‘anam
My baby = mo leanabh
Chapter 65

Chapter Summary

Work. err...I have no idea how to summarize this. I don't want to give anything away.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for delay, had to clean this part up and big section wasn't even written yet. It was going to be a bigger chapter, but the last part wasn't gelling yet. So that'll be its own chapter. And got busy with work and my annual round of checkup's with a slew of doctors. Lesson learned...always wear sunscreen.

Anyway, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning they were getting ready for another day at the garage. Combing through her freshly washed hair, she could hear Chibs was getting dressed and grabbing his weapons from the safe in the other room. Recalling their trip to Floyds, glancing at the ends of her hair she saw they were looking a bit frayed.

In the back corner of the drawer, she found a small pair of scissors along with a hair band. Quickly putting the band around her hair in a ponytail, she pushed it down the length of her hair. Twisting around as she tried to come up with a good view in the mirror. Adjusting the band down to about where she needed to cut.

Picking up the scissors, giving them an experimental snip so she’d have an idea what she was working with. Back home, she used a pair of toenail clippers, it was the only sharp enough tool she had to cut anything. The tiny scissors that came with her travel sewing kit was broken, the screw that held the two halves together was lost. So these scissors were quite a step up.

She twisted around again, trying to line up the small waste can where the ends would fall into while trying to find a level angle with the scissors. She wasn’t used to having the mirror. Usually, she just did this by feel. Closing her eyes, adjusting her hands...there...she thought.

“What the fuck are ye’ doing?!?”

"Jesus!” Her whole body jumped out of her skin at Chibs booming question, making her lose her grip and angle on the scissors. Eyes popped open and she saw Chibs glaring at her in the doorway of the bathroom.

“I’m trimming my hair.” She said. Confused why he was asking her when he could clearly see what she was doing. “Your visit to Floyd reminded me I needed to trim my ends. They’re starting to fray.” She explained as she twisted back to reset her hands and the scissors again.

Her only warning was Chibs growl and the two large steps he took to reach her. His hands grabbing
at hers, roughly taking the scissors from her. “Hey!” She huffed at him. His grabbing the scissors from her had dislodged the hair band. Damn it. She was going to have to start all over again.

“Jesus Christ. Where’d you find these?” He waved the scissors at her. His abrupt movement had her stepping back knocking over the trash can.

Chibs eyes noting her set up for her impromptu hair cut and found it wanting.

“In the drawer.” She waved to the drawer in question while setting the can upright again. “They’re fine, it won’t take but a second. Just hand ‘em back.” She huffed. Getting annoyed that he was preventing her from cutting her hair, reaching for the scissors.

“Unbelievable.” He breathed, taking her hand. “No. Come on.”

“Chibs…” She flustered as he half-dragged her through the house and into the kitchen. Muttering along the way. “Babe, come on. It’s no big deal...it’s just a little bit of hair.” She tried to reason with him.

In the kitchen, he pulled one of the barstools out. “Sit.” He commanded.

She glared at him, debating if she should do as he bid or not. But he had gone to the junk drawer in the kitchen, tossing in the scissors she’d meant to use. He wasn’t listening to her. God, he was stubborn. And to top it off, her head was killing her. She sat down on the chair and watched what he was doing.

He’d pulled out a much larger set of scissors, then went back to the bathroom and came back with her comb. Only to go the recyclable bin and pulled out the newspaper that they’d finished reading over breakfast. He came back to her and spread the paper on the floor behind her.

“Face forward. Can’t trim this up with you looking all over the place.” He finally was behind her, pulling out her positioned hair band and started combing out her hair. “I can’t believe you were going to cut your hair like that.” He muttered fiercely. “Why didn’t ye’ tell me ye’ wanted a trim?”

“Because, I can do it on my own. Been doing it for the last ten years.”

Chibs scoffed at her as he combed a section and took hold of it with his free hand. Setting the comb on the counter and taking up his approved scissors. “I love your long hair. God knows what you used to cut your hair back at that shithole.”

Her foot jiggled as she tried to hold onto her anger and not let the dark times and the desperate situation she’d been in overtake her. She didn’t want that. She didn’t want to hurt him.

“And don’t tell me. It’ll only piss me off.” He said darkly, misunderstanding her soft gasp. Shame chased away her anger. The sudden change of her feelings had her flailing inside. A task so simple became this battle of wills. And she belatedly realized he was right...but still it hurt how angry he was at her.

She gasped softly, realizing that he hadn’t seen her when she cut her own hair from the dreams. Her foot jiggled as she tried to hold onto her anger and not let the dark times and the desperate situation she’d been in overtake her. She didn’t want that. She didn’t want to hurt him.

“The newspaper crinkling under his feet as he moved. The silence between them heated and angry. Chibs was absolutely silent as he worked, wasn’t helping her nerves any.

Her throat thick as she buried her urge to cry. If this was how he reacted over trimming her hair, he was going to go ballistic when he found out some of the other things she’s had to do to survive.
He took his time, combing and taking careful snips. Eventually, he set the scissors aside and gave her hair a final comb-through. He was in front of her, but his eyes weren’t looking at her. Focused still on her hair, checking it was level or something. Not that she cared about that. Wishing she hadn’t even tried to cut her hair. Or that she had hair.

Another long moment and she fought to stay seated in the chair, wanting to flee. Biting at her lip she kept her eyes forward, studying the plaid pattern to Chib’s shirt. His hands fluffing out her hair one final time.

His body froze, hands still buried in her hair. His fingers along the sides of her head. “What’s wrong?”

“He took his time, combing and taking careful snips. Eventually, he set the scissors aside and gave her hair a final comb-through. He was in front of her, but his eyes weren’t looking at her. Focused still on her hair, checking it was level or something. Not that she cared about that. Wishing she hadn’t even tried to cut her hair. Or that she had hair.

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“Are you done?” She croaked out.

Her eyes briefly floated to his, seeing his confused look had her starting to panic even more.

“Hey, talk to me. If you don’t like the trim, we could go to a salon…” His hands gently making her look up at him.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make you angry.” The tears she fought so hard to keep from falling, slid down her cheeks in a hot rush. His eyes widened as she started hiccupsing as she roughly swiped at her tears. Angry at herself for allowing the tears to fall.

He suddenly pulled her into his arms. “What? No…” He crooned. “I’m not angry with ye’.”

She tried to get hold of herself, but the repressed feelings wouldn’t listen to her brain. “I managed. Okay? I managed. I did what I could with what I had. If you’re angry about how I cut my hair…I did what I had to. I didn’t think…I just found the scissors and…and…” She sobbed against him.

“Of course, ye’ did. I’m not angry.” He pulled back to look her right in the eyes. “I’m not angry, okay?”

She gulped looking at him. “You aren’t?”

“No. God no. I was surprised is all. Walk in to see ye’ all twisting around like a pretzel trying to cut your hair with scissors that barely have an edge on them. You surprised me, is all.” He explained as he pulled her back into a hug. “I’m sorry I yelled at ye’.” He rocked her in his arms. “Forgive me, mo ghaol.” He crooned.

She nodded that she heard him. The tension loosening inside her. His thumbs reaching to swipe away her tears. “I know things were desperate for you. Okay? I know. You don’t have to hide it from me.”

“But, I don’t want my past…to...to...affect what we have. I want a fresh start. I don’t want my past touching you...or us...whatever it is we’re becoming...” She fought to express her thoughts and feelings.

His face softened. “I know, mo leanabh.” He gave her forehead a kiss and pulled back to look into her eyes. “But trying to cut out your past...as if it never happened… You’re the one talking about lessons and history repeating. We’re all affected by our past, good and bad. It’s how you handle it going forward. And you’re not the only one here with a shitty past. Ye’ think I wanted to be excommunicated the way I was?” He gave her rueful grin. “I’m constantly amazed at your strength. Graim thu, m ‘anam.”

She took a deep breath, listening to him. Having to hear her own words echoed to her. Giving him a
sheepish smile. “God, I’m sorry. Freaking out on you like this...over a...a stupid haircut.”

“Well, I am good with knives, but it usually isn’t hair I’m cutting up.” He joked darkly, his brow rising egging her on.

Giving a small snort at his poor joke. “I’m sure whatever you did is fine.”

“We could try going to a salon if you want. They could put layers in, maybe highlight it.” He considered.

“No. I’m not looking to get all glammed up. It’s too much work to maintain some fancy style, especially when we’re on runs.” She reasoned. But Chibs was still eyeing her hair. “Unless you want me to have my hair styled?”

He shook his head. “No, I like it long like this. And you’re right about the runs.” He went behind her again, the firm pressure of his hand on her shoulder kept her in the chair.

He grabbed up the comb again. His fingers going to work as he plaited her hair into a braid. With her hair still damp, she knew that when her hair was unbound later it’d be full of waves. He braided her hair sometimes on their ride to California. They’d get to their stop for the night and he’d run his hands and fingers through her extra wavy hair as they watched tv before getting some sleep. She sighed at the memory of that. Just floating as they lay in bed, not talking just being together.

She was snapped back when Chibs moved in front of her again. His eyes checking her. Still feeling rough from her upset, she took another deep breath. Giving him a reassuring smile that she was okay. He helped her up from the chair. Her arms going around his neck automatically as they swayed into a deep hug.

“Better?” He asked into her ear.

“Yeah. Thanks.” She breathed. “Sorry, I was being foolish…”

He held her tighter and pressed a kiss to her neck. She sighed and reveled in his touch. He pulled back, tucking a few wisps of her hair that escaped the braid behind her ear. Giving her a goofy smile. “There’s nothing you need to apologize for. Now, we need to get going. I’ve got work.”

She nodded. “Yeah. Okay. Let me grab my laptop and I’m ready.”

“I’ll straighten this up.” He indicated her shorn locks and the newspaper still on the floor.

They both let go of each other reluctantly, but they really needed to get moving. Stepping carefully so not to kick the hair off the papers, she rushed back to the bedroom for her laptop. Listening Chibs clear away the newspapers. Coming back, she caught him putting a lock of hair into an envelope with the date.

“Why?” She asked him.

He shrugged. “Don’t know. Just felt right.”

She raised her hand to his cheek, smiling at his sentimentality.

“Come on. Let’s go.” He took her hand, leading her to the entry where they slipped on their kuttes, stepping outside Chibs locked the door behind them.

She clung to him a little bit harder as they rode through town to the garage. His hand dropping to
her knee whenever they had to stop for a light.

Pulling into the lot, she noticed things were busy. Juice and Rat were leaving in the tow as they pulled in.

Climbing off the bike, Chibs swooped her into another deep hug and kiss. Her unsteady feet became even more unsteady as the kiss deepened. Pulling back reluctantly, they held hands walking to their bay where they settled in to their individual tasks.

She watched the guys how they handled customers. Chibs annoyed when he was pulled off a repair to deal with checking a customer out. “Oy, where the hell is Gemma?” He yelled at Opie.

“Who knows. Your guess is as good as mine.” Opie replied over the blasting hard rock music.

The markets were slow and with the lack of office support, she started picking up the phone. Taking messages and answering questions about their hours. Anything more technical she asked Chibs and he’d either take the call or tell her the info to pass along.

The others seeing her pitch in to help, had them coming over to ask her to call in orders for parts.

“Hey, she’s not an employee here.” Chibs reminded the guys at one of their headache breaks. Since her meltdown this morning, she was feeling still a little shaken. Chibs seemed to sense it and was more protective of her as he shot the guys an annoyed look to back off.

“It’s okay. I have time.”

He frowned at her, debating if he should insist or not. “All right, just don’t get sucked into this. It’s not your job.”

“I know. Love you.” Giving him a peck on the cheek, pushing him back to his brake job.

Bobby had shown up around lunchtime and saw her helping out. He started teaching her how to process jobs. Even showing her the accounting program and how to take payments.

“It’s cool you helping out like this.” Bobby said.

“It’s no problem. I wasn’t busy with anything at the moment and you are all so busy. And with Gemma not here...”

Bobby gave her a rueful look over his reading glasses. “Well, I’d quit helping if and when Gemma shows up. She doesn’t seem to like you here.”

She snorted. “That’s putting it mildly.”

“Ah, she’ll come round. She didn’t like Lyla or Tara either at first, but they’re all cool now.”

She just shook her head. Telling herself that he knows not what he speaks. Her headache was sitting behind her eyes at the moment and she wanted to gouge them out. “I’ll be right back.”

Bobby shot her a worried look which she turned back to the garage. “Hey, I got this. Go back to whatever it is you’re doing.” He told her with a wave.

“Okay. Thanks.” She said as she went through the door and back into the garage to find Chibs.

“Thank Christ.” Chibs groaned as she went to him. “Was about to deck Bobby for tying you up in there.” Her hands sliding up under his shirt, her fingers twining around his beaded necklace. Her
touch bringing relief to their headaches once more.

“Awww, don’t do that. He went and got my patch made personally.” She defended.

He just grumbled but held her tighter. His whiskey eyes captured hers. His lips curling into a mysterious grin. “What’s that smile about?” She asked.

“Just looking forward to the weekend is all.” He shrugged.

“You still haven’t told me what the plans are…” She wheedled.

He chuckled and shook his head. “Nope, it’s a surprise.”

Pouting back at him. He just gave her a deep kiss and went back to work. Leaving her breathless and annoyed. How did he keep doing that to her? Her laptop chimed and she went back to that and the markets.

The Fed minutes had been released and the indices burped enough to fill more of her trades and then died down for the next couple of hours. She spent more time researching the tattoos and her psychic abilities, idling noticing people coming in and out of the clubhouse for the rest of the afternoon.

Gemma showed up and Chucky quickly hopped to and helped her unload her SUV. Phil, the prospect, grabbed bags as well. The three of them heading into the clubhouse. Miles was already firing up the massive grill.

Tara showed up with the kids, even. Jax going off with them to the playground area. She caught Jax and Tara looking at the chain link fence but went back to playing with the kids. Lyla showed up and Opie went to greet her and help her carry stuff into the clubhouse, only to come back to his bay to finish his repair job before him. Jax, too, came back to the garage, Tara and the kids going into the clubhouse.

The clubhouse was a veritable beehive of activity, people gathering for the usual Friday night party to kick off the weekend. Juice and Rat came back with another tow and were pulling it into an available spot. The beeping of the tow backing up echoing through the garage.

“Everything okay?” She asked Jax as he passed by her.

“Yeah. Fine.” He answered easily, but she continued to eye him. He sighed and leaned in towards her. “I’m fine.” He huffed.

She weighed his answer. “Okay.” Jax shook his head and went to clean up his tools. Tig wandered over after he finished washing his hands at the utility sink. His last repair done, he hitched his hip onto the edge of her desk as he lit a cigarette. She running through her trades one more time before closing down for the day, making sure that her deltas were flat for the weekend.

He tried to peer at her screen to see what she was doing and she tilted the screen down.

“So, what’re you doing on that laptop all day. I hear it binging all the time.”

“I’m surprised you can hear anything given how loudly you play the music in here.” She said.

“Whatever.” He flicked ashes to the cement floor. “You want to tell me anything more about my reading? Am I ready yet?” He cajoled, his foot swinging had his heel bang against the metal of her
desk drawers. “I’ve been really good…” He enticed with a sarcastic grin.

The rest of the guys were wandering closer as it got to be quitting time. Dog and Lowell, Jr. punching out and heading to their trucks for the night. The rest of the guys didn’t bother with their timecards, lighting up their choice of cigarettes or pot. Jax leaned against the bookcase, lighting his own cigarette. Opie and Juice blocked her sight towards the clubhouse.

She snorted at Tig’s attempt to get her talking. Like all he had to do was be good like a kid right before Christmas so that Santa would bring presents. “Quit banging your foot against my desk.”

“Your desk, is it?” Tig teased her with his shit-eating grin.

“Yes, my desk. I cleaned this out...it’s mine now.” She proclaimed.

The guys laughed at how possessive she was for her desk.

“Shit, you clean out the office, you can have that, too.” Jax suggested.

“Ha! Such a clever boy. Nooo, thank you.” She snarked back to Jax. The guys laughed again to her bantering.

Happy had joined their huddle now. Clay arriving on his bike and went right into the clubhouse.

Jax shot her an amused look. “What? Scared to go up against Gemma.”

“I don’t have a death wish.” She snorted.

“She can be... a bit intense.” Miles added drawing everyone’s attention.

“You’re scared of my mother?” Jax asked Miles with an amused grin.

The guys all looked to each other and shuffled a little, taking a hard interest in their smoke break. Jax looked to her and back at the guys.

“We all are.” Happy confirmed emphatically for the group of them.

“Oy, leave her alone, ye’ moppets.” Chibs growled behind her, handing her a joint. His hands coming to her shoulders and she sighed, leaning back into their firm weight. Taking a careful pull on the joint only to pass it back to Chibs.

“So, tell me about this venus flytrap you were talking about.” Tig redirected the conversation.

“No, you aren’t ready.”

“Ohh...come on. Gimme something…” Tig whined cheerfully. The guys chuckling at Tig’s begging.

Slapping a hand to her forehead at his insistence. “Fine.” She snapped. “I tell you this...you don’t hassle me anymore about your reading.”

Tig shrugged. “Hit me, Seer.”

“Oh, Jesus. This should be good.” Jax groaned out of the peanut gallery. The guys all leaning in towards her to make sure they heard what she would say. Tig shot Jax the finger.

She gave him another hard look. “When you fight, you have this tendency to bite. Bite off noses, ears, whatever…”
“Yeah…” He drawled out, questioning what she was getting at.

“Yeah. Stop doing that.” She said, shifting her attention back to shutting down her laptop.

“What? Why? It’s my fighting style.” Tig whined, as the guys all chuckled.

“Tig...seriously? It’s gross. You don’t know where they’ve been.” She screwed up her face. The guys started laughing harder, razzing Tig.

“You can’t kill Tig, he’s indestructible. Guard dogs even can’t kill him.” Jax joked.

“Hey! Fuck you. Had to get a shot for that bite.” Tig zinged back to Jax.

“Jesus.” She muttered. “You would have been dead if you hadn’t gotten that shot.”

“What?” The guys chorused as they all turned their attention back to her again. Their humor turned serious in a rush.

Tig glared at her. “It was fine.” He tried to wave off the seriousness of the situation.

She looked at Tig. “It was not fine. The doctor told you. You should have had it taken care of days ago when that bite happened. But noooo, you go on for days, letting that infection fester making you sicker.”

She shifted her angry glare to Juice. “And if you ever feed another animal drugs again, I’ll have Chibs knock some sense into that head of yours. I don’t care what orders you’re under.”

Everyone glanced at Juice who backed up at her sudden threat. Tig groaning. The others just now realizing how they could have lost Tig over an infection.

“Nobody told me what to give the dog.” Juice defended himself. “How was I to know?”

“Fucker. You gave crank to a guard dog. What did you think was going to happen?” Tig snapped at Juice.

“Jesus Christ. That’s it. You run anything drug related through me first” Chibs pointed at Juice. “Fucking idiots. The two of ye’”.

“Hey.” Tig said to Chib’s insult. Juice looked confused at how all this landed on him.

“You killed that dog.” She admonished Juice. “And it wasn’t an easy death, his heart pretty much exploded. Go volunteer some time at an animal shelter. Maybe you’ll learn something.”

“I don’t have time for that.” Juice complained.

“Make time.” She seared at him again. “I’m sure you can carve an hour or two out of your week to do something good.” She stood up shooing the men out of her way as she went to secure her laptop in Chibs bike.

The guys following her, giving Juice a hard time over her taking him to task. Juice complaining back to them that that was years ago.

Chibs stretching out his hand, she took it. He grinned to her and spun her around so she curled up against his body only to spin her back out. Dancing her into the clubhouse.

“Why are the lights off?” Her eyes adjusting to the dim light of the Christmas lights that dangled
over the bar.

Her jaw dropped as she saw the door to the kitchen open and Bobby stepped out with the largest cake she’d ever seen. His face lit by the candles. At the sight of the cake, everyone burst into song, singing Happy Birthday. Bobby carefully set the cake down. The song coming to its raucous conclusion as she stared at the decorated cake and the nineteen candles.

“Oh my God.” She uttered at the sight of the cake and everyone around her. Helping her celebrate her birthday. Nearly everyone smiling and clapping. Jax nodding to her with a smile, holding Abel up on his hip. Abel pointing at the cake. From the corner of her eye, she saw Clay and Gemma watching, stern-faced.

“Make a wish, m ‘anam.” Chibs said in her ear.

Looking to his dark eyes, fighting to keep from crying. “I...I’ve already gotten my wish.”

“Make another then.” He prompted with a smile, his eyes getting teary as hers.

She looked out over the motley crew of people, her new family. She closed her eyes and thought about the future that she hoped for. One that kept them as whole as possible. To save them from the pain and heartache if things don’t change. She wished and blew out the candles. Another round of cheers filled the clubhouse.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
My baby = mo leanabh

Trader lingo:
Delta = theoretical estimate of how much an option's premium may change given a $1 move in the underlying. Measures from 0.0-1.0. A 0.5 (50) delta is considered flat. Over 0.5 is a positive skew, meaning your positions expect the market to rise in price. Below 0.5 is a negative skew, meaning your positions expect the market to fall in price.
Chapter 66

Chapter Summary

continuation of the party

Chapter Notes

Just a short chapter. I really wanted to lay in this part. I had written it, not sure where I could fit it into the story, but it worked out here. It's a little rough, could've fine tuned it. But it's so short, I wanted to get this moving.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Music was cranked up as the party went into full swing. Everyone talking and cracking jokes as they took their fill on the food and drinks. A group of people watched Happy and Miles take up a game of pool. Gemma settled with Tara and the kids, helping the kids with their own food. Tara saw her looking over, shrugging helplessly over having Gemma take over with the kids. She figured Tara could handle things. There were witnesses, so she figured, Gemma wouldn’t get too out of hand.

The sound of music and voices filled her ears to the point that she couldn’t hear herself think much less hear Chibs or anyone else try and talk to her. She ended up just smiling and nodding at what she guessed were happy birthday wishes. She let Chibs handle any handshakes or hugs. The room hot from the press of people. Soon as they finished their meals, Chibs led her outside. The sun had set and the moon took over duty in the sky above. The night air cooled her heated skin.

But even outside, the place was crowded, and more people were arriving as the night wore on.

A crowd of the guys were gathering around the boxing ring. Juice already in the ring, Tig climbing in with a hard push from Clay. Tig hopping up and down on his toes, Juice rolling his shoulders as they warmed up for their fight. A lift of Chibs brow, and they went to watch the fight. Chibs adding his voice to the fighters. Bobby clanged the bell and the fight ensued.

Tig mouthing off at Juice for being a fuckup. Juice shaking his head as he twisted out from under Tig’s punch to his side. “I didn’t know, asshole.” Juice shot back. Sighing she realized that Tig was taking his due from Juice for nearly getting him killed. She winced whenever one of them landed a painful looking blow.

Chibs lit up a joint, passing it to her. His eyes on the fight. She caught sight of Lyla off at one of the picnic tables all by herself. The kids off in the chained off playground. Gemma and Tara watching over them. Curious why Lyla wasn’t over there with them.

“I'm going to go talk to Lyla.” She loud-whispered to Chibs.

His eyes looked to her and flicked over to Lyla. Nodding, “Aye. Okay. I’ll come find you.”
She gave him a quick kiss and walked across the concrete to the table.

“Hey. Okay if I join you?”

Lyla picked her head up at her greeting. “Yeah, sure.”

“Thanks.” She sighed as she sat down.

“Enjoying your party?” Lyla asked playfully.

Snorting. “Yeah. I had no idea this was in the works.”

“It was a bit of a rush. Tara called me this morning to help get the food and decorations.”

“Thank you.” She said sincerely. “You...the guys...you really didn’t have to do this.”

Lyla grinned. “Well, from what I’ve heard...sounds like you deserve a proper birthday party. I’m sorry we couldn’t get gifts organized. It was so rushed.”

“Hey, it’s okay. The party’s perfect.”

Lyla squirmed a little at her gratitude for her work. “It’s the least I could do. You helped us deal with Laurenn.”

“Laurenn?” She searched her brain who this person was. The pot making her hazy. Eyeing Lyla, she offered the joint to her.

Lyla waved off her offer. “Yeah, making her go in to be tested.” Lyla reminded her over the woman who’d had sex with Happy, him reusing condoms.

“Oh my god.” She face-palmed. “That was an accident.”

Lyla grinned. “Accident or not, it worked. The other girls have banned Happy til he gets his act together.”

“Oh great, Happy wasn’t too pleased with me before, now he’s been banned…”

“Don’t worry about it. Like I said, you helped us. The health department could have shut us down.”

She glanced back at the ring, the guys still involved with the fight in the ring. Her head was starting to hurt, but not so bad yet. She caught sight of Opie looking their way, he had a confused look on his face.

Turning back to Lyla, “Are you and Opie fighting?”

“What? Why do you think that?” Lyla straightened up, her face tensing up.

“He looks confused, that’s all.”

Lyla sighed, looking down at her hands. “We’re...sort of fighting. He wants to have a baby now that we’re married.”

She eyed Lyla and weighed what she was saying. “And you don’t.”

“It’s too soon. I’ve only got maybe another year with this body before I age out of my niche. He
keeps saying that as soon as I’m pregnant I’ll quit my job. I know he hates what I do…”

“Uh huh.”

“I just...I just don’t think Opie wants another kid. He’s just saying that so I would quit. And...and turn into Donna. Be the stay-at-home mom, raising the kids. And right now, it’s my money that's paying the bills.”

“Oh boy.”

Lyla grimaced to her reaction. “Sorry, I shouldn’t be talking about his. Not with you patched in.”

Frowning at Lyla as she tried to backtrack on filling her in on some of the problems she’s having. Glancing at her kutte, and back up to Lyla. “My being patched in doesn’t mean you can’t talk to me. Whatever you tell me in confidence would stay between us.”

Lyla glanced over at the playground, her eyes looking to Gemma and Tara. “It’s just Gemma keeps pressuring me also into having a kid. Says a man likes to own his pussy, not see it for sale on the internet.”

That pissed her off. She knew Gemma’s opinion was on the wives of the club. And it was completely ridiculous. “Let’s not bring Gemma and her advice into your relationship with Opie.” She stubbed out the joint, shaking her head at Gemma's gall in advising anyone. Stupid woman.

Lyla shot a surprised look. “How do you do that? Go up against Gemma like that? She scares the shit out of me.”

“I know Gemma better than she does herself.”

“Wow. Do you talk like this all the time? So blunt…”

“When I have to. Didn’t Opie tell you what I am?”

“Not much. Tig said you were psychic at that potluck. I wasn’t sure what to think. Ope came home the other night and said you’d been patched in. That you were named seer for the club. I don’t know what that means.”

“Okay. I am psychic. Chibs came up with the title of Seer. It’s another word for psychic. I like seer. It’s better than psychic. Too close to sounding like psychotic. Whatever. The point is, the club voted me in because I knew about the club and its business before Chibs found me back in Illinois. It freaked them out.” She tugged at her kutte. “This...its just a tool to reassure all of them.” Waving to the guys at the ring.

Lyla pursed her lips in thought. “You really psychic?”

“Yes. Ever since I was eight years old. Anyone I touch, I read them. I drown in them. The only person I don't read is Chibs. I’ve read Tig for the guys as proof of my abilities. And I’ve read Gemma. So I do know her. And I’m telling you to not take advice from Gemma about your relationship with Opie. Unless you want a threesome in your relationship?” She popped her brows up at her absurd question.

Lyla reared back at the thought of Gemma joining in her relationship with Opie. “What? Good God, no!”

“Okay, then. Now, back to the topic at hand...have you talked to Opie about how you’re feeling?”
Lyla slumped as she turned the conversation back to Lyla’s initial issues. “No. I mean, I tried a couple of times. But I...we just got married. And he’s pressuring me over getting knocked up. I just don’t know what to do.”

“That’s not true. You know exactly what you have to do.” She chided gently.

Lyla sighed heavily. There was more going on in her head than what she was letting on.

“You’ve got a secret. Something you haven’t told Opie?” She guessed. “Otherwise you’d be forcing Opie to talk about your career and lack of wanting a baby right away.”

“Oh god.” Lyla groaned.

“Look, you don’t have to tell me. But I’m here to listen, help however I can.”

Lyla looked back at the party still swinging hard. “I shouldn’t, it’s your party. You should be there, enjoying it. Not here listening to me complain.”

“You are more important than a party, Lyla. If you need help…”

“I had an abortion.” She blurted, her eyes pained with regret. Shooting her a worried look and decided to continue her story when she didn’t say anything. “Back when the guys went to look for Abel. Tara helped me find a clinic and went with me. I never told Ope.”

“When the guys were in Belfast?”

“Yeah. I’m scared to tell him.” Her voice rising a little in panic. “Now he wants to have a kid. He’ll leave me if he finds out. I love him, but this...he'll be furious.”

“Calm down. Take a breath.” She watched Lyla fight her order but eventually did as she asked. “Now, I take it that at the time, you and Opie weren’t officially together, am I right?”

“Yeah. I mean we were pretty serious. But we hadn’t made anything official. When the guys got back, he proposed.” Lyla couldn’t help but smile at that memory.

She rubbed at her forehead, her headache ramping up. “Do you want my advice? Or just have a chance to vent?”

“I could use some advice.”

“Okay, hang on a sec. Let me deal with him and we can talk some more.” She felt Chibs sidle up behind her. His hand coming to the back of her neck. She shuddered as her headache fell back. Chibs groaning as he leaned down and pressed a kiss to her cheek.

“Okay?” He asked, catching his eyes sliding to a tense Lyla.

“Yeah. Could you bring us a couple of slices of cake? Pretty please?” She smiled up at him, but her eyes telling him to go away. Helping Lyla was more important than their headaches at the moment.

“Sure.” He checked with Lyla.

“Thanks, babe.” She pulled him down for a kiss. Holding onto the respite from the headache a moment longer.

“Wow.” Lyla said after Chibs walked back towards the clubhouse. “You have him wrapped around your finger there.”
“Quit that. We’re talking about you.” She said sharply. She and Chibs were in pain and Lyla was trying to delay the talk.

“Damn...do we have to?” Lyla whined a little.

“You asked for my advice. I’m not going to sugar coat this for you. You know what you have to do Lyla. You have to tell Opie the truth about the abortion. You have to talk to him about your job and what it means to you. What it means to your family finances.”

“He’ll leave me.” Lyla worried.

“You don’t know that." She corrected as Lyla shook her head. "Look. You and he weren’t in a committed relationship at the time of the abortion. I’m not passing judgement on your decision. You did what you had to do to take care of yourself. There is no shame in that. If you and Opie had made more concrete plans about your future at the time, you might have chosen differently. Am I wrong?”

Lyla twisted her lips. “No.”

“Okay, then. But this passive aggressive power play that Opie is playing with you isn’t right. But he’s doing it because he doesn’t know what you’re thinking. And yeah, he’s a guy, you’re his wife. I’d hate to see Chibs stripping or doing porn on camera. I wouldn’t like it, but if he talked to me about what it means for him, I’d understand.” She gave Lyla a penetrating look.

“I guess.” Lyla murmured.

“Now about your job, you say you have an end date for your niche. Are you going to quit porn when you can't pass in your niche? Or are you planning on getting into another niche?”

“I haven’t decided. I don’t know what I’d do without a job.”

“Okay, that’s homework for you. Figure out what you want to do after porn. You know you can’t do it forever. And stop talking about yourself like all you’re worth is what you can do on camera. Especially around the kids.”

“What?”

“You are more than just your body, Lyla. You have value beyond that. Don’t trap yourself into thinking you don’t.”

“I’ve never was very good at school. My body is my only asset.”

“Do you want your kids thinking that way about themselves? That all they are worth is what their bodies are worth?”

“No.”

“God damn right no.” She said emphatically. But she and Lyla abruptly stopped talking as they saw Gemma and Tara herd the kids back to the clubhouse. Tara shooting her a confused questioning look. Gemma’s dark look had her on edge. Waiting to see if Gemma was going to come over and investigate what they were talking about. But Abel whined, drawing Gemma back to her grandchild and their herding.

Turning back to Lyla with a stern look. “Stop putting yourself down like that. Find something that you enjoy that could turn into a new career. What did you like doing when you were a kid?”
“Uh...I liked taking pictures.” Lyla said, perking up a little.

“There you go. Grab up a camera and start taking photographs. See if you like doing it still. Talk to the camera guys at the studio. Take a couple of classes. Put a darkroom in the house. Or whatever you need to get back into it. Maybe if you start showing an interest in something other than porn Opie won’t be harassing you to have a kid.”

Lyla’s brow furrowed. “Do you really think so?”

“Yeah. I do. If you put the work into it...there’s no telling what you could do. Give yourself the chance to find out.”

“I never thought of it like that.”

“Now, this isn’t to say that you are off the hook about talking with Opie. The finances, that’ll work itself out. The club is involved in a deal that will be very profitable. But still, you and Opie should talk about the finances. I mean, do you two have your wills set up? What will happen to your kids if something happens to the two of you?”

“Oh god.” Lyla groaned. “I don’t know. We never talked about stuff like that.”

She glanced back towards the clubhouse, Chibs was walking back already, Jax, Opie, and Tig with him. Each carrying plates of cake. Leaning in towards Lyla. “Look, I can help you and Opie figure shit out. Help the two of you get things settled. Call me when you’re ready. We’ll all sit down and hash things out over at my place.”

“Chibs?” Lyla worried.

“I told Jax already, my and Chibs place is Switzerland. It’s neutral ground. What is talked about there, stays there. I’m serious Lyla. I’ll help...no strings or ultimatums. The choice is yours. Yours and Opie’s. You two have to find a way to talk to each other.”

Lyla nodded as the men approached. She kept her eyes on Lyla, hoping that her silent look was enough to convey how serious she was in offering to help.

“Here ye’ go.” Chibs set a plate down in front of her. Sitting down next to her, handing her a plastic fork.

“Awww...thanks.” She pressed a kiss to his cheek.

Chibs grunted at her. “Eat.” His arm wrapping around her waist.

Opie sat next to Lyla handing her a slice of cake as well.

“What were you two talking about? Looked serious.” Opie asked.

“Lyla was just telling me about going back into photography.” She said easily, licking the frosting of her cake. Ignoring Lyla’s sharp glare for cornering her.

Opie shot her a surprised look, his eyes landing on Lyla. “Really?”

“Yeah. It was something I liked doing as a kid.” She shrugged.

Opie stared at his wife a moment longer. “Sounds good. Whatever makes you happy.”

Lyla smiled shyly and leaned up for a kiss with her husband.
Chibs leaned towards her ear, speaking softly. “What are you doing, m ‘anam?”

“I’m eating cake.” She said, eyeing him to quit questioning her while in front of their audience. It was good cake too. She’ll have to do something nice for Bobby. Earlier, she found out that Bobby made the cake for the party. Jax quickly questioning if he’d put pot in it. Tara shooting a worried look, given that she’d brought the kids. Lyla, too, eyed the cake in concern. Bobby assuring everyone that it was pot free…this time.

Jax and Tig each lit a cigarette, catching her attention back to the conversation going on between the guys. Talking about bikes and engine sizes or something.

Lyla finished her cake and got up. “I’m going to grab the kids and head home. See you later?” She looked to Opie.

“Oh, Okay. Yep,” Opie said, giving Lyla a kiss.

“Bye, Nancy. Happy Birthday.” Lyla said as she stepped back.

She nodded. “Thanks. Nice talking with you. Have a good night.” She said. Lyla waved and headed back to the clubhouse.

“How’d your fight go with Juice?” She asked Tig.

Tig grinned widely. “He’ll be hurting for a couple of days.”

The guys chuckled darkly as she rolled her eyes.

“Where’s Tara and the kids?” She directed to Jax.

“She’s packing their shit up to go home. You have fun, birthday girl?” He teased.

She huffed as she scooped a piece of cake. “It was the best birthday I’ve ever had.” She said as she popped the cake in her mouth.

The guys grinned back at her. She took another bite of cake and leaned into Chibs side as the men went back to talking bikes.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 67

Chapter Summary

Birthday weekend.

Chapter Notes

Gah, I tried to make this into a mega chapter again. I'm head deep in work at the moment but wanted to get something out to you.

She couldn’t stop grinning. Watching the landscape change around her as they rode west to Berkeley. Chibs had deemed that she could know where it was that he was taking her for the weekend. Not even her offer to skip the trip and just stay home deterred him. Telling her that he was looking forward to a weekend away from Charming and the club. That drama will be keeping them busy in the upcoming weeks and months. This weekend was for them. And there was a band he’d been wanting to see.

The ride wasn’t as rough as going across the country. Chibs took his time, only using the main highways in areas to bypass the slower lanes. Pretty soon she could smell the salty, ocean air as they came closer to the coast. She sighed as the stress and worry over the club moved to the back burner.

It was just after noon when they parked the bike and walked up to the hotel, located in the heart of downtown. A pair of topiary bushes stood sentinel at the front doors keeping the doorman company. At their approach the doorman opened the doors for them. It was a fancy hotel. The soft classical music and fresh floral scent wafted over them as they approached the marble front desk. She looked around wide-eyed as Chibs dealt with their reservations.

A couple of people eyed them. Confused, she looked down at herself, Chibs and back to the people eyeing them. And that’s when she realized that they stuck out like a sore thumb in this swank hotel. The both of them just in jeans and t-shirts, wearing their kuttes. While the other people milling around were dressed more classily.

An older woman with a blonde bob in a soft pink outfit, eyed her. Her eyes traveled her body like a heavy weight, ending to finally look her in the eye. She wasn’t ashamed of her appearance. Her clothes fit the type of travel they did on the bike. Wearing that pink concoction on the bike wouldn’t last five minutes. She caught the woman's companion's admiring gleam as his eyes went to Chibs kutte. A secret crush to play the outlaw perhaps? She imagined. The man probably spent more time in boardrooms and limos, rather than daring the excitement of the Harley and the outlaw lifestyle.

The blonde managed to pull her man off with her over to the elevators. The man sighed as they entered the elevator. The man giving Chibs and her a last look as the doors slid shut. The dream of another life shut with the doors.
Chibs was still talking with the uniformed girl at the desk, handing over his credit card. She wandered over to a mahogany table browsing the pamphlets of things to do in town.

Chibs came up behind her, pulling her into his arms. “We’re early for the check-in. Want to go check the area out? Stretch our legs?”

“Sure. Sounds good. Are we going here for the band?” She waved a pamphlet of the Greek Theatre.

“No. It’s a local bar and eatery. They bring in up and coming musicians, smaller venue than this. We’ll get to actually see the band compared to here.”

They walked out of the hotel again and turned at the corner. Window shopping and people watching. A few shops were having a sidewalk sale. They browsed and she stopped at a colorful display of hand-painted silk clothing that caught her eye. She couldn’t help but run her fingers through the slippery cool silks.

Pulling a hanger out, it held a top that was held together by just a string across the neck and a bow tie at the waist. “What do you think?” She asked.

“I like the color, that shade purple would bring out your eyes. Come on, let’s try it on.” He led her inside the shop where more options and outfits filled the shop. A girl with black hair and heavy black-lined eyes led her to a changing room.

Soon as the door shut, she slipped off her kutte and t-shirt, wrangling the slippery material so she could put it on. Tying the bow, she twisted in the mirror. The top allowed her tree tattoo to be on full display for the most part. Her hair was down and covered it. Grabbing her hair into a ponytail, she twisted it and wrapped it around itself, pushing the ends through the center of the twisted loop to hold the makeshift bun in place.

The top was pretty and felt good against her skin. But she wasn’t sure on the practicality of a top this delicate.

“M ‘anam? Doing okay in there?” Chibs called out to her.

Stepping out to show Chibs and get his opinion, he turned around at her entrance. He had a couple more items in his hands, his eyes widened and jaw went slack. “What do you think?”

“Fuck, yes.”

She blinked at him. “That’s it? I’m not sure with the style...it’s not very practical.” She turned around and showed him the back.

“Fucking hell. It’s perfect.” He came closer to her and ran his hand down her spine. “We’re buying this. Here try these on, too.” He pressed the clothing into her hands.

She thought to maybe argue about it, but seeing his reaction she decided to buy the top. “Okay.”

Turning back to the dressing room she eyed the clothes he’d picked out for her.

One was a deep jewel green robe that fell to her ankles. A crane painted on the back with a watercolor effect of bamboo leaves painted throughout the material. The other was a dress. It was white with the front coming up to her collarbone, the back dipping dangerously low, thin spaghetti straps held the dress over her shoulders. The skirt portion fell a couple of inches below her knees. The bottom of the skirt was a deep blue that faded into the white up the skirt with stylized blue birds. The skirt swayed as she moved, flaring out when she twirled around, making the birds look
like they were taking off in flight. It was pretty cool.

Each item she showed Chibs. To which he merely stared at her stunned, uttering yes each time. She smiled back at him shyly at how affected he was with the clothes. Changing back to her t-shirt and kutte, they browsed a bit more, picking out a royal-blue square scarf with tiny pink and white flowers scattered across the blue. Chibs expertly folded and wrapped it around her head, giving it a soft knot slightly off to one side. The excess material brushed her shoulder. Twisting her head back and forth, making the silk slip and slide, listening to the whisper.

“I feel like a pirate with this on.” She laughed.

Chibs watched her his eyes amused with her experiment with the silk. “I’d never seen anyone be so playful with their clothing.”

“It’s so sensual and I can’t seem to stop playing with it. I’d never had anything like this.” She grinned back up to him. His hands coming around her waist they swayed, she wrapped her arms around his shoulders. Meeting him as he leaned down to kiss her. She didn’t know how long they spent wrapped up in their bubble. She really didn’t care.

“Will you be taking the scarf?” The sales woman asked.

They broke apart with a guilty grin. The two of them forgetting where they were.

“Aye.” Chibs replied as he helped her take the scarf off so that it could be wrapped up with the other items.

Leaving the store, holding hands and swinging their bag from her free hand they wandered further down the street. Stopping at a cafe for refreshments before wandering out again.

They were heading back to the hotel when Chibs stopped and eyed a record store. Seeing his interest, she pulled him inside. Chibs immediately dived into the bins, flicking through the vintage records. She really didn’t know what to look for, ending up browsing the artistic covers. And listening to the croon of some singer over the speakers in the store.

Chibs found several albums he wanted for his collection.

“Did you want to maybe find something for Kerrianne? I noticed she was glued to her ipod. We should go back to that silk shop to get Fiona something.” She asked, setting the album she’d been looking at back in the bin.

Looking up to Chibs when he didn’t answer her to her suggestion, he was staring at her, eyes wide in surprise. “What?”

“Why did you think to bring them up?”

She shrugged. “Just seems like with Jimmy out of the picture, the danger to Fiona and Kerrianne are gone. Figure before things get busy with the club, it’d be good to have them over for a visit. I don’t know the scheduling for the schools there, but wouldn’t spring break coming up?”

Chibs stared down at her, his silence making her nervous. “Or, maybe we can go visit Belfast. I’d need to get a passport, though.” She bit at her lip. “I’d like to meet them. And I...I know you miss them.” She said softly, unsure of how he would react to her idea.

Her breath rushed out from the tight hug he pulled her into. Feeling him shake as he nestled his head alongside her face, dipping into the curve of her neck. His breathing harsh in her ear, his
beard teasing at her cheek. Gripping around his waist just as tightly to help steady him. “I want that. I want you to know them.” He said gruffly in her ear.

"Mo ghaol, graim thu." He said roughly, pressing a kiss to her temple and clutching at her hard.

She caught the curious looks from another shopper, knowing that Chibs wouldn’t appreciate being seen in this state. She stiffened her back and gripped his face between her hands. Making him look her in the eye. Giving him a very serious look. “Good. But, there’s just one question then...do you think Kerrianne likes Justin Bieber? Or this Mraz singer?”

His eyes widened at her question, quickly followed with a scowl. “There is no way on this God’s green earth, my daughter will ever, ever listen to those wankers. Not while I’m alive there isn’t.” He growled and immediately turned to the bins of vinyl with renewed purpose. Pulling out ones he determined to be fitting for his daughter's tender ears and musical edification.

Giggling to herself at his mutterings and decisive, decision-making of one record over another. He gave her a hard look when he caught her amused grin, planting a hard kiss on her cheek, dragging her to the counter to pay for the records he’d found. “A witch is what ye’ are.” He groused playfully.

“Hmmm, one you love.” She teased.

“Aye, I do.” Kissing her again.

Breaking for air, they hung onto each other. “Christ, what ye’ do to me.” He muttered.

“The feeling is mutual.” She sighed.

He gave her another squeeze and self-satisfied grin before letting her go. Checking his watch, he took the receipt for his purchases and led her back outside, purchases in hand. “Our room should be ready. We need to clean up before dinner and the concert.”

Their room was decorated in more of the art-deco theme. Soft white and black with silver accents were the color palette. The hotel overlooked the street below. A flat-screen TV was on the wall where a small desk and dresser were located. A chaise opposite with a glass coffee table. The bed was big, fluffy cloud that she forced herself to resist taking a running jump into. She suspected that once she got in that bed, she’d never get out of it.

Their bags had been brought up and were sitting on a small foldable luggage rack inside the closet.

“You should wear that new top.” Chibs suggested as they got ready for their night out, handing her the lit joint.

“How dressy is this place? I only brought jeans and my boots.” She took a pull on the joint, considering if the concert was going to be fancy enough for her new dress. But even so, she didn’t think it would go well with her boots. She needed more clothes. And shoes. Hell, just more of everything she groaned to herself.

“Jeans and boots are fine. It gets hot sometimes at these smaller venues.” He reassured. “We’ll hit more shops tomorrow.”

Nodding, handing off the joint to him she started changing. Chibs helped her with her hair into a loose braid, tucking it around itself into a low bun. Her hair tucked away, allowed view of her tree tattoo. She shivered as he ran his palm down her spine, checking each other out in the mirror.
“You look fantastic, mo gràidh.”

Giving him a shy smile, not used to the compliment to her looks. Leaning into his side, her hand sliding around his waist. “You’re looking quite debonair yourself.”

He grinned at her. “Of course I do. Was there any doubt?”

Rolling her eyes, “Come on. We’ll be late if we keep staring at ourselves in the mirror.”

Chibs snorted amusedly, checking his pockets for his wallet, keys, and smokes. She tucked her hotel key and wallet into her pocket.

Taking Chibs hand they walked out of their room. The doorman whistled for a cab for them. Chibs telling the driver where to take them. The cab jolted into the packed traffic, weaving and bobbing around slower or at legal speed drivers around them, as he traversed across the city. She clutched at Chibs as the cab dive-bombed around a corner making her lose her balance as the car bounced around. Cringing and gripping onto Chibs, her heart raced and a cold sweat threatened as she tried to put her trust in this cabbie, that they wouldn't end up on the hood of the car. Glancing at the seat, she didn't see any seat belts. Jesus.

Chibs slung an arm around her to help steady the two of them, sending the driver a dark glare. But the driver was speaking rapidly into his cell phone some language she was unfamiliar with. Sounded middle-eastern.

Thankfully, they arrived at their destination in one piece. Her knees wobbly and she managed to catch her breath. Chibs growling at the driver. “Get this fucking car in for service. Fucking suspension is shot to hell. Slow the fuck down and quit your jabbering on the fucking phone. Asshole.” Stuffing the cash into the plexiglass by-pass. The driver’s eyes wide in the rear view as Chibs reamed the guy out. Silent but taking the cash.

Soon as they stepped out onto the street and slammed the door shut on the cab, the cab careened out into traffic again, as if he hadn’t heard a word Chibs said.

“Fucker.” He muttered. "You okay?” He checked her over.

She squeezed his hand as she warily watched the pedestrians flow in front of them. “Yeah, I'm good.” She prompted. But he frowned at her, his dark eyes sweeping over her, checking for himself if she was okay or not. "I'm fine. Really.” She breathed.

His face relaxed. “Okay, come on. I’m starving.” Taking her into the restaurant.

The place was called Zinc, and it was accented with the dark, silvery color matching the name. The wood paneling was stained a dark grey, almost black. The space was basically split in two. The front half was the bar and restaurant. The second half was the stage and a small dance floor. She took off her jacket and kutte, the space too warm to wear it.

The girl behind a podium looked up as they entered. Chibs told her they had a reservation under Telford. The girl checked her tablet and smiled up at them. Grabbing a couple of menus, led them to a booth at the end of the row along a wall. Tables scattered out from the wall of booths. The bar located along the opposite wall was crowded with people already. Their booth was closest to the stage and small dance floor.

She sighed in relief as she slid into the booth. The view was perfect for the stage and watching people moving around. Chibs slide in next to her, his arm slung across her shoulders. The girl handed over the menus and said their waiter would be with them shortly after taking their drink.
orders.

Their waiter arrived with their drinks and gave his pitch of the specials. Scanning the menu, she decided to try the filet mignon with mushrooms. Chibs went with the tenderloin and grilled vegetables. Once the waiter scurried off, she looked around more.

There were a lot of young professionals still wearing their office attire, collars loose and shirtsleeves rolled up. The women looked to be in their daytime office outfits, too. But their makeup was heavier, hair plumped and teased out. In the mix were college-aged kids, too. They wore jeans with blue and gold Cal sweatshirts.

Shifting her eyes to the small stage, a couple of guys were setting up equipment. Chibs was watching them, too. Their food arrived and they dug into their dinner as more people filtered into the restaurant and bar. The noise level rose with excitement about the upcoming entertainment.

Turning to Chibs, “So what kind of music does this band play?” Taking a bite of her filet.

“They’re a couple of brothers, they write and play their own songs with a couple of their friends. Been hearing good stuff coming from them. Won’t be surprised if they hit it big. This is probably the last time they’ll be playing in a small space like this.” He waved his fork.

More and more people filtered over to the dance floor, closing in as close to the stage as possible. She caught sight of a gaggle of some sorority girls as they talked animatedly and drank fruity cocktails. Wondering if her life turned out different if she’d be like those girls, chatting and excited being with friends. Going out to the bar and hooking up. She looked at Chibs and saw him watching everything on the stage.

Their hands linked and massaging each others fingers. His arm around her shoulders as they leaned into each other. And she knew, she was meant to be here with this man. That he saw her valuable and clung to her. Cherished her like he cherished his memory of Fiona. learning from the experience with his wife. Becoming a man when Kerrianne was born. Going through the trials of being excommunicated. He suffered, and he survived. He survived so he found her. Saved her.

She would forever be grateful to this man. Most people would look at him and see an outlaw, a criminal, a man willing and able to kill. They never saw the depth of his devotion and love to his club, to his brothers, and to her. The thought was humbling.

Shaking herself out of her musings, she saw the band filter onto the stage. Stepping carefully over cables and around instruments, a small dance of intricacy of just getting onto the tiny stage. She’d never been to a concert before and found it all fascinating.

She settled in to listen to the indie songs the band was growing famous for. She liked how they used banjo’s, acoustic guitars, a cello, a piano along with the electronic guitars and synthesizers. Blending the instruments together along with their rich voices filled the room. The wood floor and wood paneling acting as sounding boards, bouncing the sound of their music to fill the bar with their harmonizing voices. It sent shivers down her spine.

Chibs nodded his head as he listened to the lyrics and the rhythms. She caught him looking to her, smiling when their eyes met. She gasped with a smile when a particular melody or chord sang out, shivering as the harmonized note snaked down her spine. The two brothers of the band were unabashed of their banter with each other. Deciding what song to play next. Admitting wryly to them that this is what happens when they don’t plan out the set list. Everyone laughing good-naturedly.
People moved closer and danced to the music. Yelling and clapping after each one.

She looked at Chibs in surprise when he pulled her out onto the dance floor, pressing her tight into his body as they swayed and shifted in their little corner of the dance floor. She smiled up at him, her joy flooding her eyes as he looked down at her and they moved in their own bubble. The band closed down their set with their final song.

“Thank you. This is the best birthday.” She said in the cradle of his arms.

Chibs simply pulled her tighter to him. “Happy Birthday, m ‘anam.” Even though the concert ended, they still swayed to the music of their heartbeats.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
I love you = Graim thu
My love = mo ghaol
My darling = mo gràidh
Chapter 68

Chapter Summary

back at the hotel...

Chapter Notes

Another short section of their weekend. Enjoy ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“My dancing queen.” Chibs laughed as he spun her around, dancing their way down the hallway of the hotel and into their room.

Giggling as she spun back into his arms. She leaned back into the wall behind her. He following her, unwilling to let her go. His eyes darkened, giving her the minute warning before capturing her lips with his.

Groaning under his onslaught. She tilted her head and chased his teasing tongue with her own. She felt her body go limp and pliable as his hands half-pushed her jacket off and half-bending her into the heavy, demanding line of his frame. Sweeping around her waist and up her back, the heat and press of his hands turned her knees to jelly. Her hands twisting in his kutte.

The two of them gasped for air, her hands slipped under his jacket and pressed it off his shoulders. Her whine escaped her when his arms weren’t cooperating. His hands pushing at her jacket, styming her ability to divest him out of his clothes.

They both huffed out of frustration, grinning at their predicament. He took hold of her hands, stilling them. “Hold still.” He ordered with a quirk of his brow. Her feet stamped at the order.

“Well, hurry up.” She breathed in his scent off the curve of his neck; rich, spicy leather with hint of pot.

He huffed at her, his hands quickly moving and had her jacket, kutte, and shirt off before she could blink. “Fast enough?” He joked.

“My turn.” She quickly stripped him of his jacket, kutte, and shirt. He’d worn a flannel shirt and was annoyed with all the buttons. Her fingers felt like they were all thumbs, especially when he curled over her and started kissing her breasts and nipples. His hands sneaking to her jeans, magically making the snap and zipper open like he was Houdini. Annoyed that she was still fighting the damn buttons on his shirt.

A quick glance at him and she saw his wicked grin. “Gah, quit that. I can’t concentrate when you look at me like that.”

“No? How about when I do this?” He slid his hand under her underwear. His fingers finding her
core. Gently stroking over her slick folds, making her jerk as he teased at her clit. Her jeans sliding down her hips to her knees.

“Fuuuck…” She gave up on the buttons, her head banging into the wall. She tried to widen her stance, but her jeans hobbled her. Instead she rocked against his hand. Her hands gripped at his shoulders to steady herself. She felt her body zinging and ready to break apart. He had her on the precipice of critical mass.

She tried to keep her wits about her. To hold off on letting go completely. It was ridiculous, he was pushing her over the edge with them just barely inside the freaking hotel room.

He must have sensed her fight, his lips crashed over hers again. Fingers slid inside her, thumb pressing and circling her throbbing clit. Her sensitive nipples brushed against his flannel shirt. It was just too much. She couldn’t escape. It felt that her entire being was pulled from some deep dark cave and she was thrust into the light.

Ripping her mouth from his, drawing air. She wanted to scream, but she couldn’t seem to get any air. The pad of his finger found a space inside her that lit her up. And that was it. She was jerking and gasping. Gripping tight to him. Her primal sense telling her to hold tight, or she’d be lost.

She heard his low rumble, the air of his breath harsh against her ear. Unable to pick out the words he said as she floated. She managed to watch him as he sucked her juices off his fingers with a curl of his lips. His whiskey eyes gleaming in satisfaction. “So fucking beautiful.” He said, capturing her lips once more. Tasting herself with a deep moan.

Her hands loosened from their fistful of his shirt as she managed to come back down to earth. Narrowing her eyes at him. “You still have your shirt on.” She complained with a pouty whine.

He laughed as he picked her up, slinging her over his shoulder. Taking the necessary steps toward the bed.

“Ohmph.” She gave his cute behind a light smack.

“You need more practice taking off my clothes.” He admonished jokingly as he dumped her onto the fluffy, cloudy bed. Grabbing at her feet and stripped her of her boots and jeans, tossing them over his shoulder.

“You distracted me.” She accused.

He laughed again and stripped off his clothes, dumping them carelessly.

She shifted deeper up into the bed. Curling and twisting over the cool sheets. The housekeeping service had come in and turned down the bed while they were at the concert.

Chibs crawled after her, his crucifix and wood-bead necklace dangling between them. “You are gorgeously distracting.” He teased.

“Mmmm.” She hummed as she ran her hands up over his chest. Her fingers trailing and tweaking his nipples. Feeling him shiver at the caress. Their eyes met and felt their connection flare.

Catching the corresponding knowledge in his eyes, had her heart doing cartwheels. They stared into each other’s eyes for a long moment. Feeling the weight of the responsibility to the care and feeding of their relationship. She never wanted to take what they have for granted. It was too precious to ruin. She pressed a hand to the curve of is jaw, her thumb brushing over his beard.
“Hi.” She said, her lips curling in a shy grin.

“Hi back.” He said deeply, his head ducking a little, looking back to her eyes, his eyes warmed as they remembered their first conversation to each other.

He captured her lips again. Her tongue chasing after his. Her hands swept down his chest and around his waist, reveling in the texture and heat of his skin. Hearing him purr as he shifted to her neck. She knew that she’d have hickeys decorating her neck.

He shifted down and teased at her nipples. Her legs wrapping around his. She felt his heavy cock against her inner thigh. Gently stroking her leg up and down had him freeze suddenly. Ripping his lips off her breast with a deep groan that had her bones melting at the sound.

She reached up to his cheek with one hand. At her touch, his eyes found hers again. She gently brushed at his sensitive lobe as her hand shifted to bury her fingers in his hair.

“God, heaven help me.” He gasped, his hand reaching to the nightstand, ripping open the drawer he pulled out a string of condoms. Grinning in triumph to his trophy.

Giving an amused huff, “We only need one at the moment.” She reminded him.

His fingers ripped the condom open as he glared at her. “Think you’re funny, do ye’?”

Shrugging, “I have my moments.”

He slapped a hand to his face. “Jesus Christ. What the hell am I going to do with ye’?” He admonished.

“Well, get that condom on and get in me. That’d be a start.” She joked.

He shook his head, but managed to do as she instructed. Raising her knee up over his hip as he slid inside her. “Oh, hell.” He muttered as he rocked inside her.

She gasped as he felt his entry. Her body stretching to accommodate him. She loved this feeling. She felt charged and full as he found his rhythm. Her hips swaying with his.

He gripped her tight and rolled, ending up on his back and she on top in a sudden rush. Gasping in surprise at their change in position. They’d never done it this way before. Looking down at him, she saw the small smirk grace his lips. His hands running down her torso.

Straightening up a bit more, she groaned as her weight and gravity had her take more of him. Her nerves sparking up and down her body and had her tightening around him.

“Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.” He chattered. “Ride me, m ‘anam.”

His hands fell to her hips, pressing at her to move. And she did, rocking back and forth a little, then trying out up and down. Getting a feel to the extent that she could go that felt good for her and by his gasps and groans, for him, too.

Once she had a rhythm going, his hands swept up to her breasts again. Tweaking her nipples so they went rock hard. Everytime he pinched them shot down to her clit. It was driving her insane. The barely there touch whenever she was on a downward stroke.

He sat up suddenly and shifted her legs around him so she was cross-legged. Her arms wrapped around his shoulders as the change of position had him bury ever deeper inside her. Feeling the end
of him pressing against her cervix. That touch deep inside her had her clenching tight around him. It was almost painful, but the shot of pain chased her pleasure to a new level.

Their eyes connected again as they rested against each other. Sharing breaths. She flexed her internal muscles now that she couldn’t move as freely as before. His eyelids fluttered at the sensations.

She groaned as she rocked a little and found just enough friction that had her sent over the edge. Her body acting on its own volition as she climaxed. Forcing him to come along the ride with her. Burying her face into his shoulder. His scent...his body...his love...invaded every pore and sense she had.

She grabbed onto him as he jerked against her as he found his release. The sound of his cry out had her holding him tighter.

She didn’t know how long they were locked tight with each other. She didn’t care. So long as they could stay like this for as long as they could. She knew forever was asking for too much. But she wanted that.

His hands ran up and down her spine as he recovered first. Pressing kisses as they relearned how to breathe. “Graim thu, mo ghaol.” He crooned.

Taking another breath, she managed to relax her legs and arms. But she was still pinioned over him. Her brain swiftly trying to figure out how to get out of this particular position without losing the full feeling she craved and loved. Her fingers combed through his hair gently. “Love you, too.” She sighed.

He managed to maneuver her somehow to lay back on the bed so he could take care of the condom. She whined when he left the bed, curling into the sheets. He was back shortly, pulling her into his arms, spooning her. The sound of his even breaths in her ear lulled her into a deep sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
The next morning, they enjoyed a lazy morning with breakfast in bed. Feeding each other fruit and eggs.

“Can we go look around the campus?” She asked as she finished rubbing in the anti-itch cream over her ivy tattoo. Taking the bite of melon, Chibs held towards her on his fork. She had already spread the cream to his forearm. Their tattoos were itching when they woke. The leaves and vines filling out while they slept.

“Sure, but first...we need to do some shopping.” He reminded her.

Sighing dramatically, flopping back into the bed. “Do we have to?” She whined.

“Aye, we do. As much as I like you wearing my t-shirts, you need your own clothes.”

“I know.” She gave in. “But no fancy stuff. Just the basics to tide me over until my weight stabilizes.”

His eyes swept over her. “You’re already better with your weight. Another twenty pounds and I won’t worry so much.”

“Twenty?? That seems like a lot.”

“Aye, at least. You’re tall.” He explained, pushing another bite of fruit at her.

She thought about it as she chewed. “Okay.”

He kissed her at her agreement.

“Good. Now, we need to get moving.”

They quickly showered and dressed, packing their bags for the ride home. Checkout was at ten, so they couldn’t keep their stuff in the room while they were shopping and checking out the university.

Swinging by the front desk, Chibs tossed their keys on the counter and signed off on the bill. Soon as they had their bags strapped onto the bike, they pulled out into traffic and ended up at a mall.
Walking into Nordstrom they wandered around a bit. Their shoe department was vast.

“Good Lord.” She held up a six inch stiletto that had thin straps to hold onto your foot. “How does anyone wear this? I’d freaking break my ankle in a nanosecond.”

Chibs chuckled. “I have no idea, it’s not really my style.”

“You could kill someone with this heel.”

He took the shoe and eyed the metal stiletto. Giving the shoe an experimental swing. “Not bad as a weapon.” He confirmed.

“Would you like to try a pair on?” A salesman came up behind them, making her jump at his sudden appearance.

“God. No.” She grabbed the shoe off Chibs. But she caught the price tag on the bottom of the shoe and gulped. “Fourteen hundred dollars for this? What the hell for? There’s barely any material.”

“That’s a Giuseppe Zanotti.” The salesman pointed out knowledgeably. As if that would explain the exorbitant price.

Chibs was hiding his laughter behind his hand as she blinked at the salesman.

“I have no idea who that is. I certainly don’t need to pay fourteen hundred bucks to break my ankles on this ridiculousness.” She set the shoe down on the display and grabbed Chibs hand, dragging him off deeper into the store.

“Quit laughing at me.” She muttered as she found the women’s clothing section.

He broke, “You should have seen your face. Oh my God. That was hilarious. Oh Jesus.” He wiped at his eyes.

Shaking her head she marched around the racks of clothes, eyeing the mannequins. Standing in the middle of the clothes she felt overwhelmed. She didn’t know where to start. “You wanted to come here. Help me with this.” She waved her hands around.

“Oh, okay. Calm down. Here.” He pulled out a few tops and led her towards the jeans, digging through the piles, soon she had an armful of clothes.

“Can I set up a dressing room for you?” A woman asked right behind her.

“Holy Christ, you people need bells or something.” She sputtered as she grabbed for her breath.

The woman just smiled and held out her hands towards the clothes she was holding. She froze and eyed the helpful hands. The woman’s face turned confused when she didn’t hand the clothes over.

Chibs scooped the pile from her and transferred it all to the woman. Her face relaxed now that she had a task at hand.

Walked determinedly through the racks of clothes and ended up in a dressing room. The woman hung everything up on the rods in the room.

“There you go. Oh? Sorry. Men aren’t allowed back here.” The woman said to Chibs.

Chibs snorted. “Don’t worry, I’ve seen it all. Intimately.” He sent the saleswoman a wicked grin
and wink.

She slapped a hand to her face, her cheeks flaring with a hot blush.

“And there’s no one else here. We’ll be done in a jiffy.” Chibs guided the woman out of their room.

“Well, okay. Just let me know if you need any help. My name’s Stephanie.” The woman said from the other side of the door.

“Will do. Thanks.” She said, hearing Stephanie walk away.

She breathed a sigh of relief as she took off her clothes. “You are unbelievable.”

“Aye, I am.” He confirmed with an unabashed grin. Handing her a pair of jeans to try on.

She quickly made a keep pile and a pass pile. Chibs kept tossing clothes from the pass pile into her keep pile.

“Argh...Quit that. We need to fit this on the bike, yet.” She complained, straightening out her keep pile again.

“We’ll stop at a UPS store and have it shipped. It’s not a problem. You need these.”

“Okay.” She sighed.

He pulled her into his arms. “Thank you, m ‘anam.”

“For what?”

“For letting me take care of you.”

She felt her cheeks blush at the tenderness in his voice. Stretching up she kissed him. His lips following hers as she tried to pull back.

Breaking for air, they swayed in each other’s arms.

“You doing okay in there?” Stephanie was back.

“Aye. We’re nearly done. Give us a minute.”

After hearing Stephanie walk away, she looked up in his whiskey eyes. “I love you. Sorry about being a pain about this.”

He shook his head with an easy grin. “Most fun I’d ever had shopping.”

They kissed once more before grabbing up the clothes and checked out with Stephanie. Her eyes wandered around the store as Chibs dealt with the bill. She caught sight of the underwear and bras over in the next section.

“Hang on. I’m going to go check out the underwear.”

Chibs glanced to where she was pointing. “Aye. Okay. Give me a sec, we’ll check it out.” His eyes gleamed at the lacey display they could see over the racks.

Giving him a smirk. “Oh...noooo...I can handle that on my own.” Patting at his hand.
Stephanie’s eyes widened at their exchange.

He shifted on his feet, fighting to let her go and find her own underwear without his input. He leaned towards her, “Surprise me, mo ghaol.” Giving her another kiss before she escaped.

She made a quick look see around the area, finding some things that she liked and picked out a variety of colors and trims. She wasn’t sure on the bras. She was filling out, but wasn’t sure what her size would be once she gained some more weight.

“Can I help you?” Another saleswoman asked. She didn’t jump this time, seeing the woman heading her way as she stared at the wall of bras.

“I’m not sure. I’m working on gaining some weight and not sure what size I’ll end up.” She pondered aloud, ignoring her headache.

“Well, I could measure you and help you find a fit and style that would work for your frame. But you’re right if you’re going to add some weight on. It’ll change the sizing.”

The woman frowned at the problem, her eyes going to the bras. “You know...the younger girls are wearing bralettes. There’s this brand here...”

The saleswoman talked her into trying out the bralette and changed it out for a smaller size. “I’ll take the bigger size, as well. Something to grow into.” Grabbing up several pairs to last her for a week before needing to do laundry. Adding a few more items that caught her eye and grinning when she pulled out a baby doll outfit. Something for Chibs, she grinned imagining Chibs reaction to seeing her in this. Surprise, indeed.

She saw Chibs heading her way as she finalized paying for her items.

“What’d you get?” He peered into the bag, his free hand sliding to her waist. Her headache pulled back at his touch.

“Ah. Ah. You’ll find out later.” She teased, crumpling the opening of the bag with her hand.

The saleswoman grinning at their antics.

He pouted, pulling her closer into the warm curve of his body. “Ohhh...come on….I can’t get a peek?”

“Nope.” She signed the receipt and tucked her credit card and copy of the receipt in her jacket. “Later.”

He sighed in disappointment, but his eyes wrinkled in amusement. “Witch.” He accused before giving her a quick kiss, making her almost give in and let him look at her new underwear.

Pulling him with her as they navigated back towards the exit. But seeing the shoe department...she sighed in defeat. “Damn it. I could use a pair of slippers and another pair of shoes besides the boots.”

He snickered next to her as they hung left and browsed the shoe selections. Finding a pair of Uggs for around the house and a pair of lighter-weight booties that she could wear on the bike still and the garage.

Done with shopping, they stopped at the UPS store. Boxing up their purchases except for her underwear. It was smushable enough to fit in their gear. Tracking receipt in hand, they sat down on
a bench outside taking a pot break, watching the people come and go. There were fountains and colorful flower beds throughout the mall. A couple of teenage boys approached, tried to score from him. Shaking his head at them, indicating it was their last. The boys moved on disappointed.

When the effect of the pot kicked in, he led her to a small bistro and ordered her a grilled panini filled with chicken, spinach, and tomatoes. He with his loaded burger.

Relaxing as she worked through her meal, she liked that she didn’t feel the pressure to fill the silence between them with chatter. Their feet tangled under the table, taking breaks from eating to hold each other’s hand.

She pushed her plate towards him when she couldn’t eat another bite. He silently looked at the food left on her plate, giving her a questioning look. She shrugged and he gave her a soft smile before finishing off her plate.

Chibs had lit a cigarette when they pulled into their parking spot. Idling smoking as they walked around the campus. The landscaping was always so neat. She noticed that even back home with the local college. The landscaping was trim and tidy no matter the weather.

Students were walking from building to building and some were lying out on the grass for some sun and reading. A group of jocks were tossing a frisbee.

They found the library, Chibs quickly stubbing out his cigarette before they walked in. A couple of coed’s walking out as they walked in. She came to a stunned halt just inside the door, her eyes widened, taking in the rows upon rows of books. “Oohh.”

He grinned at her reaction to seeing the extensive library. Leading her deeper into the building, until she pulled out of her amazed thrall. She leading him upstairs to get lost in the stacks of books

“You know, you could sign up for some college courses. Maybe you want a degree?” He broached. Realizing that if he hadn’t come along she might be in some college like this on her own, if she managed to get out of that house without getting killed by her bastard parents. Now she was with him and the club. The club business will take up their time, time that she wouldn’t have to continue her studies. Feeling regretful that she was limited because of the club.

“Maybe.” She shrugged. “I don’t know, I kind of like learning about things that interest me. Not having to take English 101 again just for credits as requirements for a degree.”

They wandered around the stacks of books, her hand touching the spines here and there.

“Besides, it’s kind of nice to have a break from school. And I’m invested in my trading. I’d like to see where that takes me.”

“Okay, I see your point there. I just don’t want you to limit yourself. I know things are going to be busy with the club...but you...we need to make sure we don’t forget the us in all that.”

She looked to him with a soft smile. His heart skipped a beat at that look. Pulling her into his arms, his eyes staring down at her. “I’d never forget that. This, between us, it’s sacred. You feel it, don’t you?”

“Absolutely. Felt it the minute I took you in my arms the very first time. Hell the first time I laid eyes on ye’.”

Seeing his utter conviction, she knew she had to tell him the thought that’s been worrying at her.
She dropped her eyes from his, worried about how he’ll react, her fingers playing with a button on his shirt. “I need to tell you something.”

“What?”

“It’s probably nothing.” She bit at her lip, debating if she should tell him. It’s been such a good weekend she didn’t want to ruin it. Glancing up at him, his eyes entreating her to spill what had her worried. “When I found that article about my father and Claire being arrested…”

“Aye?”

“I didn’t put it together what they were doing. I really didn’t. I can’t believe I didn’t see it. Or make the connection.”

“What are you talking about?”

“It’s just, I remember my father coming home and he’d look at me so…coldly, without a shred of love or even disappointment as most parents do with their own children. I saw how you looked at Kerrianne in Belfast and how beside yourself you were to see her. Finally, after so long. The love you feel for her and Fiona. My father, never displayed anything close to that, only that cold, silent assessing look. I thought at the time, he hated me or blamed me for living while my mother died, and that was why he was so cold. But he saw how thin I was, he had to. How could he not. When I think on it now, you could see the wheels turning in his head. How much longer. I didn’t notice it back then, Claire was there and my attention was on not doing anything to set her off.”

Chibs looked into her eyes, keeping silent as she spoke, waiting for her to finish telling him what she needed to say.

“I… I think he wanted me to die. He just had to wait long enough, keep the business limping along long enough. Because as soon as I died, he would have the trust. The money in the trust might have saved his business. And he could play the grieving father of a troubled teenage daughter who died of anorexia. But, it was him and Claire slowly killing me.” Chibs held her tighter.

“I… I forced myself to go to school every day. It took everything I had to get up and go to school some days. But I had to go. Had to get out of that house, because I knew…I knew that the day I didn’t…was the day I was going to die.”

“Oh, m ‘anam. They will ever lay a hand on you. Not ever again. You survived them.” He reassured.

Nodding her head, hearing him. “I know. Logically, I know. But I’m scared. If they are still obsessed over the trust…they might decide to come find me. Especially with the trouble that they are in. I’m scared they’ll come and kill me, kill me for the stupid money.”

“Never, it’ll never happen. You hear me? I won’t let them do that to ye’. The club won’t let that happen. You are part of us now. That bastard father of yours and his bitch wife of his, they can go fuck off. If they do manage to find ye’, they’ll find themselves in a dark cold basement of their own before I’d let them touch one hair on your head. And given the law on their asses, they won’t be going on any trips any time soon. Except to the clink for a very long time.”

“Yeah.” She breathed, relieved that she told him. “I know. Like I said, it’s not logical. It’s stupid to be worrying over it.”

“Hey, no. It’s not stupid. Given the hell you lived through, you have every right to be scared. But know that if either one of them manages to find us…they will have to get through me and every
single brother of the club. And I’d put the odds in our favor.”

She grimaced. “Seems selfish to hide behind you and the guys. It’s my shitty parents.”

He shook his head with a small grin. “Don’t you know? You’re my family. The club...they are your family now. Your father and step-mother...they’re dead to us.”

She nodded with a weepy smile. Wiping away at her eyes. “You know...I miss dreaming about you and the guys.”

“Oh?” He grinned, letting her change the topic.

“Yes. They were an escape for me. To come and see you. See what you were up to. I didn’t know what was going on a lot of the time. But I loved watching your reactions and how much you love being around the club, how you all laughed when you got away with some scheme.”

His smile widened. “Well, stick around enough, you’ll see it all first hand. Especially with what we are trying to do to fix the club.”

She snickered, but it turned into crying, crying out her fear over her parents. His arms held her tighter as she worked through the roller-coaster emotions. Telling herself to quit crying, she was safe in Chibs arms and thousands of miles away from Naperville.

His hands moved to her head, his fingers brushing away her hot tears. Grumbling and shushing at her, soothing at her to calm down. She gripped onto him tight as she fought to let go of this fear. Finally, managing to breath, she looked up at his dark eyes. “I love you.”

He grinned as he pulled her closer, sweeping down for a kiss. The two of them leaning into a sturdy row of books. “Love ye’, too.” He groaned in her ear when their kiss broke, relearning how to breathe.

They jerked and looked off to a grunt of disapproval towards their left. Looking at the person who interrupted their moment together. They saw an older man, frowning at them. His hair was thinning and white. His clothes a drab brown which she suspected he wore to try and give some color to his skin tone. It didn’t work. He looked like a corpse. “Are you two students?”

“No. Just looking around.” Chibs said, straightening up, taking her hand.

“Well, this is a place for learning. Not for hanky-panky. Move along now, before I call security.”

“No problem, we’re just leaving.” She reassured. The man gave them another solid look before walking away.

“Oops.” She grinned, trying to keep from laughing as Chibs led her back through the rows of books and out the door again.

“Good Lord. Fucking crypt-keeper.” He commented. Which made her laugh some more.

“God, don’t. That’s terrible.” But the hilarity of being caught by the librarian was too much for them.

“Aye. I know. Come on. Let’s go home.”

Back on the bike, they rode home. The rush of the air and open road helped leave behind her fears and she felt ready to the coming weeks. Whatever may happen, she knew that she wasn’t alone and
didn’t have to fight alone anymore.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 70

Chapter Summary

Gemma...plotting

Chapter Notes

Gemma plotting...like that can be anything good.

She sat in her broken-down task chair at the garage, trying to figure out what to do with Chibs’s gash teenager. Jax had Tara and Lyla help set up a surprise birthday party for her yesterday. This on top of giving the gash a kutte and patch. Normally, it was her job to coordinate parties. But Jax decided not to include her in the planning. Later, telling her that it was last minute and that Chibs was taking the gash off to that hippy-college elitist town, Berkeley. He couldn’t find something to do here in Charming? Chibs was only just back, now he was jaunting off out of town already.

Grabbing the economy size bottle of aspirin, she swallowed a pill down with her coffee. Fuming that the girl made Chibs leave town. Again. Turning his head to the responsibilities of the club. Especially with the deals still being hammered out with the cartel and the Irish.

She rubbed at her wrists, still feeling the grip the girl had on her. There weren’t any visible marks, no bruises or anything, but still she felt it. Ever since the incident, Chibs and the guys were careful in keeping the two of them away from each other. The guys all looking at her like she was the one that screwed up. Even Tig was on her ass over that.

Then, to find out that Jax spent the night over at Chibs place. Wouldn’t put her on the phone with him. Laughing at her for even asking. She was his mother, she always checked up on her son. It was her job.

She already told Clay that bringing that gash into the club, into the table was a mistake. An outsider who had no clue of their history didn’t deserve to be in the club.

Clay just brushed her off, saying she’s just a kid that doesn’t know shit. Soon as their seer messed up, she’d be out. That didn’t set well with her though. The girl sitting at the table, hearing their secret dealings. Things that even she wasn’t privy to. And Clay working this deal with the Irish and the cartel. Muling their drugs. Clay was losing control of the club. Jax falling in line with Clay. She’d hoped that Jax at least would see reason. Jax telling her to stay out of it. That it wasn’t her concern what the club decides or does. No, but they expected her to be there when shit hits the fan.

Now, she was feeling that she was being shut out of her grandkids. Tara and Jax, shuffling off the kids to other babysitters when it was usually her turn. Catching Tara and Jax giggling when she asked them where they’d been a couple of nights ago. Jax simply telling her that he had a date with Tara. A date. As if they were still silly teenagers going on dates. They were engaged for god’s sake. What are they doing going on dates? She asked Jax about it, he just shrugged and brushed her off.
Tara and Jax weren’t like this before that gash showed up. She must have given them the idea for these stupid dates.

And now, the guys at the garage were hanging around the gash. Asking her to call in orders for them. Something that they normally did for themselves or had her do. Catching Lowell sighing in disappointment that the gash wasn’t there to help out earlier.

The office was her turf. But even Bobby told her that Nancy had straightened up some of the files. Showed her how to work the computer and settle the bills with the customers. Jesus, give it another week and she’d be put on the payroll.

She was slowly taking over her job and her family. This little interloper, that Chibs dragged home like some rangey cat with a dead mouse. If Chibs weren’t always with her, she could have a one-to-one chat and straighten her out. But he was always with her. There was one person who might be able to help, she thought.

Pulling out a thin directory from her bag, thumbing through the pages. Searching out for the name and number of someone who might be able to get this gash off on her way and put Chibs back where he should be.
Chapter 71

Chapter Summary

A phone call...

Chapter Notes

Hope everyone is having a good Labor Day break.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sun was just setting and a couple of the neighbors were mowing their lawn or packing up their activities from the day. A few kids still playing outside. A parent yelling for the kids to come inside for dinner when they pulled into their driveway.

Unpacking and throwing a load of laundry into the wash, their Chinese takeout arrived. Too tired to cook for themselves. And it was still their weekend. No work allowed, Chibs had declared.

Sitting out on the patio, their bare feet curling around each other, feeding each other bites of food. She tried to use the chopsticks but gave up. Chibs grinning and easily scooping up the food, holding it out to her to eat. The next bite was for him, alternating. She waving away the food he held out to her with her fork, feeding herself. Catching his pout, she leaned in and gave him a kiss to his cheek.

Grunting at her, he twisted his head and caught her up in a full-blown kiss. Food forgotten as his lips and tongue swept past her lips. Mewling at the fire he stoked inside her. Her hands slid up to his shoulders, twisting to come closer to him. His hands fell to her hips, dragging her from her chair into his lap.

Their kiss broke, the two of them panting for air. “The food…” She groaned.

“Fuck the food.” He growled as he swept her into another bone-melting kiss.

His hands sliding under her t-shirt, cupping her breasts, thumbs circling her rock-hard nipples. Not that he needed to tease them anymore. She shifted so she was straddling his hips, the width of the chair making it tight. Manageable, but tight. Her fingers carded through his hair, nails scratching at his scalp.

“Jesus Christ!” He jerked abruptly as if he’d been stung by a bee.

“What?” She asked, rearing back. Glancing down at him, trying to figure out what the problem was.

He growled in frustration, twisting, as one hand dived into his jean pocket. She pulled back even further to give him room. His free hand holding her still over his legs.

Pulling out his cell phone. “If this is the club, I’m going to kill them...slowly. And I’ll fucking
enjoy it.” He promised as the phone vibrated again. She giggled at his threat.

“This better be good.” He snarled into the phone, his dark eyes pinned on her. His free hand sweeping up her spine, dragging her t-shirt up. Off, he mouthed to her.

Rolling her eyes, she grabbed at the ends of her shirt. Had it nearly over her head when she heard him speak again.

“Fi?” His voice went high in question, his threatening tone from his greeting gone. His eyes widened in shock.

Holy crap. Fiona was calling. And she was almost half-naked over her former husband. Slamming her shirt back down, she scrambled back to her own chair.

His free hand, quickly grabbing hers, preventing her from escaping the call. His eyes widened then narrowed at her as she gave up trying to give him some space to talk to his ex.

“Everything okay? Kerrianne?”

He gave a deep sigh, staring up at the dark sky as he listened to Fiona. “Not that I don’t love hearing from you, but you usually wait for me to call. Our schedules...No...It’s just that you usually wait for me to call is all. What’s wrong?”

She watched his lips press into a thin line. His thumb rubbing anxiously across the back of her hand. “Fucking Christ!”

She squeezed his hand and he looked her way. “Gemma called ye’, did she?”

“God.” She groaned, pressing her hand to her forehead.

“Well, what exactly did she say?” He pressed Fi.

“She called to tell me you hooked up with someone.”

He shut his eyes in frustration as Fi informed him of what Gemma told her.

“That you’d gone off to find her, left the club for two weeks. Bought her new clothes...got her voted in as a member. Honestly, Filip, she was raving. Woke me up in the middle of the night with this shite. What the bloody hell is going on?”

“Fi. We’re divorced.”

“I know that. I’m not angry that you found someone. But I would’ve liked to hear it from you. Not from Gemma in the middle of the goddamn night!”

“Fuck. Okay, well, I am with someone now. It’s new, I meant to call you and tell you myself, but Gemma’s a fucking busybody all of a sudden regarding me and Nancy.”

“I’m not surprised by that.” Fi snorted.

“Anyway, her name’s Nancy. She just turned nineteen. We just got back from Berkeley celebrating her birthday.”

“Nineteen? Filip, she’s just a few years older than Kerrianne! What were you thinking?”
“I know. It’s hard to explain. We’re connected somehow.” He grimaced at how lame that sounded, even to himself.

“Connected? What the hell has gotten into you?”

“It’s fucking hard to explain! Give me a chance to tell ye’ before questioning me.”

There was a pause, he waited to see if Fi would speak, glancing at the phone in his hand. The silence on the other end came so quick he wondered if the connection broke.

“Well? I’m waiting…”

Shaking his head, he knew she wouldn’t let him have the last word.

“Christ, fine. It started back when I nearly got blown up. When you were here.”

“What? What started?”

“I was having headaches all the time. I thought it was just from the blast and it was taking time for me to heal up. But they kept getting worse by the day. The doc’s all ran me through their tests and couldn’t find anything wrong with me. Gave me pills that would knock a fucking elephant out. Didn’t work. One wanted me to see a shrink.”

He heard Fiona snort at that. Her feelings the same as he when that was suggested to him. Their Catholic faith guiltling them into confessing to a priest before going off to talk to a shrink.

“You never said anything about this to me. Not even when you were here.” Fi complained.

“Well, we were busy with finding Abel and dealing with Jimmy. And I didn’t want to worry ye’.”

“Okay.” Fi agreed reluctantly.

“Right, soon as we got back from Belfast, the club was dealing with Jimmy and the ATF over here. Most of the guys spent over a year inside on weapons charges. Short-time compared to what the Fed’s could have done to us. Me, and a couple of the other guys were running things while the rest were inside. All this time, my head was killing me. I’m telling you, Fi, I tried everything. Nothing was helping. Then, a few months back I started having recurring dreams. Dreams about Nancy.”

He looked over to Nancy, his hand squeezing hers. Relieved that she was here with him now and not stuck in that godforsaken basement or worse.

“Dreams?”

“Aye. Every night. I’d be walking or sitting next to Nancy as she went about her day. And she’s had it rough, Fi. They were killing her. Starving her. I didn’t know why. Her parents, teachers, the kids in her school. Nobody did anything for her. She was forced to live in the basement of her house. Beaten nearly every time I dreamed of her.”

He breathed as he tried to control the rage he still felt at how she was treated.

“Filip…” Fi said softly.

“This was happening for months, Fi. At night dreaming about her. Then during the day, my head wanted to explode from the pain. Thinking that the dreams were just some weird-as-fuck dreams. But, I worried about her, hoping that next time I dreamed...she’d still be alive. It was bad, Fi.”
“Oh Jesus, Filip. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Like I said, I didn’t want to worry ye’. And I was half thinking it’d stop eventually on its own. Anyway, the boys got out and that was it. I couldn’t pretend anymore. I had to go find her. It was driving me insane, I had to do something.”

“Aye.”

“I figured out where she went to school from the dreams. Half the time riding there, I really thought I’d lost it, Fi. But the school was real. And I knew where Nancy would be. I felt it in my gut that she was there. And Christ, soon as I saw her...I knew I was meant to find her. Meant to be with her. Like a calling from God Almighty himself.”

“Jesus. Are you alright now?”

“Aye. Soon as I grabbed hold of Nancy, the pain in my head dropped off a cliff. Turns out Nancy was having headaches and dreams, too. Dreams about me and my life here. Given her abuse...she thought she might’ve had a brain tumor or side effects of the starvation. Nearly passed out in my arms.”

“Oh my. Is she okay?”

“Aye, she’s better. Still working on getting her appetite back. Have her smoking pot to help her eat. But we figured out that the headaches come back if we aren’t touching. We don’t know why that is.”

“That’s curious.” Fi said absently.

He grimaced, shooting her another look. She shrugged that it was okay for him to tell Fi about everything else.

“There’s more.”

“More?”

“Nancy’s...well...psychic. Anyone touches her, she reads them.”

He paused as he let Fi digest that tidbit.

“Psychic? Filip, you’re pulling my leg.”

He heard Fiona start laughing, barely able to breathe with her laughing fit. “Fi, Christ...quit laughing, I’m not joking. Nancy knows about you. Was dreaming about me when the three of us met up in Belfast.”

“What?! That’s impossible. Maybe you should go visit that shrink.” Fi scoffed.

Rolling his eyes. “Here, talk to her yourself.”

He thrust the phone into her fumbling hand.

“She doesn’t believe me.” He explained with a defeated wave.

Giving him a glare, she brought the phone to her ear. “Filip? You there?”

“Uh, hi.” She managed to say, as she was put on the spot.
“Who’s this?” Fi asked suspiciously.

“This is Nancy.”

“The one that claims to be psychic.”

“Well, yeah.” She heard Fiona breathing and spoke up before she could get going. “Look, what Chibs said is true. I’ve been reading people since I was eight years old. I was in a car accident that put me in a coma. When I woke, I started reading people.”

“Uh huh.” Fi sounded unconvincing. “If you truly are what you say you are, tell me something that proves what you claim.”

She sighed. “Well, Kerrianne loves her ipod. Won’t go anywhere without it. But that’s easy...what teenager doesn’t love their electronics. Uhmm, okay...you and Chibs had sex in a bathroom at a park here in Charming. You forgot your scarf there.”

Chibs slapped a hand to his forehead as he listened to her. Embarrassed that she’d seen him with Fi like that.

“Oh my god. I did lose my scarf. Holy shite.”

Rolling her eyes at him. “I averted my eyes when I realized what was going on.” She explained to the both of them. Chibs rolled his eyes at her.

“Yeah...ewww, really? Sexing it up in a public bathroom like that...ick. God knows what germs and whatnot hangs around there.”

Chibs reached for the phone. But he forced her on this call, she wasn’t letting this opportunity go.

“Oh my god.” She heard Fiona breathe again. “So you’re the one that has Gemma all up in arms?”

“Apparently, since she called you to try and put a wedge between me and Chibs. She hates the fact that I’m here...and well...the guys had to vote me in since I knew all their dirty secrets. Couldn’t risk me gallivanting off to the cops.”

“Wait a minute...You’re the seer that everyone is talking about?” Fiona breathed astonishingly.

Her brows shot up at that. “Uh...yeah. I didn’t think that news reached Belfast already.”

“I’ve heard rumors. Jesus, Mary and Joseph.”

“Well, it’s not rumor, it’s truth. I was voted in and named Seer for the club. This happened only a few days ago. And Gemma has it out for me because she thinks I’m pulling focus from the business of the club or something. Stupid woman.” She muttered.

“What does that mean?”

“It means Gemma doesn’t know when to let things go. She forced me to read her when she tried to kick me off the lot. I know Gemma. And it’s not good. She’s been after the guys to kick me out since I showed up. Hates that I was given a kutte and access to the meetings that she can’t get into. Worried about what kind of influence I might have over the club. Unfortunately, her war with me dragged you into it. I’m sorry for that.”

Fiona sighed. “Well unless you beat the shite out of her, she won’t back off if she thinks she’s right.” Fiona said. “Had to do it to her myself more than one occasion.”
She grinned, knowing that to be true. Remembering Fiona pointing a gun to Gemma, then punching the shit out of her in Maureen’s kitchen. She shot a look to Chibs, his brows raised in question to what had her grinning.

“Young, well, Gemma’s in a war that she can’t win, only she’s not smart enough to stop fighting. But hey, I’ve been wanting to introduce myself to you and Kerrianne. Hoping that maybe you and Kerrianne could come out some time.”

Chibs shot up in his chair at that, grabbing for the phone.

“Uh...well...” She had surprised Fiona with her easy offer to meet.

She leaned out of his reach so she could finish talking with Fiona.

“Look, Chibs...he won’t say it, but he misses the two of you. There’s been so much lost time for the three of you. And with Kerrianne getting close to going off to college...I just thought it’d be nice...Sorry...maybe it isn’t my place to suggest...” She broke off abruptly. Suddenly shy for even pressing Fiona for a visit so fast. Afraid that she was overstepping into something that wasn’t her call to make.

“Here’s Chibs.” She pushed the phone back into his hand. Standing up she gathered their leftover dinner and plates, escaping into the house. Very aware of Chibs dark eyes on her.

“Fi?” He asked into the phone, making sure she was still on the line. His eyes still on the patio door where Nancy fled through.


“I know. I really did mean to call you and tell you myself about Nancy. Things have been busy.”

“Aye...well then. I want to meet her. Kerrianne’s got tests this week before her break.”

He squirmed in his chair. “Fi...you don’t have to come out. I don’t want to drag the two of you out here if you’ve got plans made already. Kerrianne probably wants to meet up with her friends...”

Nancy came back from the kitchen, setting a beer on the table in front of him before curling up in her chair. Their hands automatically reaching for each others.

“Nonsense.” Fi said definitively, drawing his focus back to the call. “It’s been nearly two years since we saw each other. And Nancy’s got a point with Kerrianne and you connecting again before she goes off to uni. Heaven help me...I don’t know what I’m going to do with myself when she leaves...It was just the other day that she needed me to tie her shoelaces.”

He winced as Fiona dramatized over how fast the time went. He wasn’t even there for the shoelace duties. A mark of him shirking his duties as a father.

“Alright then, I’ll email you our flight information. Kerrianne’s tests end on Thursday, so we can catch a flight out on Friday. We’ll have the weekend, how’s that sound? Now, what do you want me to tell Gemma? She’s expecting me to call back.”

“Jesus. Hang on.” He twisted to her. “She wants to know what to tell Gemma.”

She tilted her head in thought. “Well, Gemma’s hoping that you and I would split up, used Fiona to do it.”
“Well, Fi’s already planning on flying out for the weekend. And I’m not letting you go, m ‘anam.”

“They’re coming?! Really?” She asked excitedly.

“Aye. They’re coming.” He confirmed, giving her a quick kiss.

“Ohhh…” She straightened up with a sudden idea.

“What?”

“Ummm...we’d need to ask Jax and Tara...but how about Maureen and Trinity making the trip, too? I’m sure Jax misses seeing them. Trinity and Kerrianne can keep each other company...watch the boys…” She couldn’t stop the small grin as she thought more on her idea.

He narrowed his eyes at her in thought. “You are truly diabolical, you know that right?”

She shrugged. “Who me? I just thought it’d be nice to have them over for Jax and Tara to get to know better. From what I remember, Maureen looked like she could use a vacation. And we’d have to ask Jax and Tara first.” She tried to stay as nonchalant as possible, but the opportunity for the Belfast contingent coming for a visit was admittedly a stroke of genius on her part.

He turned back to the phone. “Fi...tell Gemma to mind her own fucking business. Don’t tell her you’re coming out.”

“Alright then. And honestly, I don’t run my decisions by Gemma.”

He snorted at Fiona’s adamant tone. He knew since day one that Fiona could handle herself. “Aye, email me the flight info when you have it. And we’re going to ask Jax and Tara if maybe they’d like to have Maureen and Trinity come over with ye’.”

“Ohh..that’d be nice. You have enough room for all four of us?”

Shaking his head. “Fi...Trinity is Jax’s half-sister.”

“What!” Fiona exclaimed. “Wait...Maureen and JT?”

“Yep. Jax and Trin found out when we were over there.”

“Hrmph...Maureen and I need to have a bit of a talk…” Fiona decided darkly.

“Aye, well, let us talk to Jax and Tara first before assuming they can come over.” He warned.

“Aye, alright. I better go...I have a call to make to that meddlesome woman.”

He groaned, he didn’t have to imagine how that conversation would go. “Talk to you soon. Tell Kerrianne I love her.”

“Will do, sweet boy. I’m looking forward to meeting Nancy. She sounds like she’s keeping everyone on their toes.”

“You have no idea.”

He hung up to the sound of Fiona laughing.

Oh, Christ. He thought as he rubbed at his eyes, only to pull Nancy back in his lap. “How did I get so lucky?” He crooned to her, looking into her smiling eyes.
“It wasn’t luck… it was fate. And you deserve good things. I’m so happy.” She brushed a bit of his hair back.

He leaned into her as her arms slid around his shoulders, stretching to capture her lips in his.

“Shouldn’t we call Jax?” She asked, her chest heaving from his onslaught.

“Tomorrow.” He said, dragging her back into another heady kiss. His hands stripping her of her shirt.

His lips and teeth attacked her breasts and nipples, sending waves of heat through her body. Staring up into the star-filled night. Looking back down, her fingers trailing through his hair and arms wrapping around his shoulders.

He broke from her breast, breathing hard. His eyes dark. “I fucking love ye’.”

Smiling down at him. “I love you, too.”

He gripped her around her hips as he stood up. Tightening her hold around him as he carried her back into the house.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 72

Chapter Summary

Tara pov

Chapter Notes

Just a short one today.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tara went for the door, hearing the knock, Thomas’s bottle in hand. She snorted at the sight on her doorstep. Chibs and Nancy locked in a deep kiss, completely oblivious that she was standing there. Jax told her that Chibs and Nancy were honeymooning all over the garage and clubhouse. She didn’t believe it, but seeing the two of them now...she believed.

She cleared her throat, in an attempt to alert the lovebirds that she was watching them.

Chibs and Nancy kiss broke, the two of them holding each other as they swayed. Foreheads pressed to the others.

“Morning Chibs...Nancy.” She said brightly, barely holding back her laugh.

Chibs straightened up, the two of them looking at her. Blinking as if they’d forgotten they were on her doorstep.

“Aye. Morning Tara-girl.” Chibs managed to draw himself up and remember where he was. Giving her a quick kiss on the cheek. Nancy just giving her a small wave.

“Come on in.” She chuckled, stepping back and heading to Thomas in his carrier. Jax catching her amused look.

“Hey, how was the weekend?” He grinned, as he stood up and gave Chibs a backslapping hug only to sit back down.

“Aye. It was good. Saw a band. Went shopping. Checked out the University there. Good to unwind.” Chibs answered easily, grabbing up an apple from the bowl of fruit on the counter.

“Well, that is until Fi called last night.” Chibs flipped his knife out and cut a slice off the fruit, handing it to Nancy, cutting another slice for himself. The two of them leaning against the counter as they talked.

“Oh yeah? How’s she doing?” Jax asked, helping Abel with his cereal.

“Well, she was right pissed.” Chibs said casually, cutting another slice for Nancy, who refused it. Chibs eyes Nancy with a look and she rolled her eyes, taking the slice to appease him.
“Why?” She inquired.

“Gemma called her.” Nancy supplied, around the bite of apple.

She shot a look to Jax, only to turn back to Chibs and Nancy.

“What?” Jax asked, his brows popping up in surprise at the news.

Chibs shot Jax a dark look, like he should have known that Gemma was going to call Fiona. She remembered Gemma telling her how she didn’t like Fiona back when Chibs was at St. Thomas for the subdural hematoma. Fiona seemed like a woman you didn’t mess with.

“Apparently, Gemma called Fi in the middle of the night. Woke her up with her ranting about me and Nancy. Fi wanted to know what was going on.”

“Oh my god.” Jax groaned. “I’m sorry, brother.”

Nancy glared at Jax. “Don’t apologize. It wasn’t you who had Gemma call Fi. That was all Gemma, butting in on something that she should know better to stay out of.”


“Aye, well, I’ve been meaning to call Fi anyway. Tell her what’s been going on. Just wished that Gemma hadn’t gotten Fi all up in arms.”

“Uh...so how did it go?” She asked, glancing at Nancy and back to Chibs. Wondering how Fiona took the news of her ex hooking up with a teenager.

Jax watched Chibs with an amused smirk, waiting for the hilarity of the bind Chibs found himself in.

Chibs rolled his eyes. “It went fine, soon as I got her off the fucking ledge.”

Nancy nudged Chibs, he looked down at her, “Language. Young ears.” She nodded to Abel and Thomas.

Chibs and Jax glanced at Abel and Thomas. Abel busy making a mess of his cereal, glanced up clueless as everyone looked his way.

Jax shook his head and wiped a napkin across Abel’s mouth and chin. She sighed, seeing she’d have to change Abel’s shirt, it didn’t survive breakfast.

Chibs snorted back at Nancy’s admonishment, drawing her and Jax’s attention back to their conversation.

“Anyway, told Fi about what’s been going on. Thought I was pulling her leg on the psychic stuff. Had a laugh over that til I put Nancy on the line to convince her I wasn’t joking.”

“Really? How’d you convince her?” Jax asked.

Nancy rolled her eyes at Jax. “It’s not important. She believes me. Told me she heard rumors about a Seer. News is spreading about me. It’s in Belfast already.”

“Shit, that was fast.” Jax glanced at her.

“Language.” She warned, might as well start trying to curb the swearing around the kids.
Jax snorted. “Babe, you might as well give up. Between the guys and Gemma...it’s a lost cause.”

“Then you get to deal with the fallout when his teachers start calling about his language.” She threatened.

Jax heaved a sigh and turned back to Chibs. She caught Nancy grinning, watching Jax deal with parenting.

“Anyway, Kerrianne has her tests for school this week before going on break. Fi and her are flying out for the weekend for a visit on Friday. Thought maybe it’d be a good opportunity for you to have Maureen and Trinity come out as well. Told Fi we’d bring it up to you.”

Chibs tossed the apple core in the trash, washed his knife and put it away in some secret pocket of his jacket.

Jax glancing to her, tilting his head in thought. Shifting back in his chair, pulling on his beard. “It’d be nice to have them over. What do you think?” He questioned her.

“I’d like to meet them.” She said carefully. “But what are we going to do about Gemma?”

Jax looked back to Chibs, who shrugged. “Fi was going to tell Gemma to keep her nose out of our business. You know in that... special way she has.” Chibs grinned evilly.

“So you’re saying, Gemma’s going to be extra-special, cranky today. Thanks brother, appreciate it.” Jax groaned sarcastically.

“Well, Gemm started it. Fi wasn’t going to tell her about coming out. It isn’t Gemma’s call what Fi or we do.” Chibs defended.

Jax nodded, but obviously not liking the potential fight on their hands with Gemma.

“Look, think it over. You have a couple of days to decide. Call Maureen, see what she thinks. And from what I dreamed of her...she looked like she could use a vacation. As far as Gemma goes, its up to you if you want to tell her or not. But I’d warn Maureen and Trinity that Gemma’s in rare form. Just in case Gemma decides to pop in while they’re here.” Nancy concluded for them.

Jax eyed Nancy in thought. “What are you going to do with Gemma? She called Fiona...she’ll be expecting the two of you to go off on her. Hell, she’s hoping that you two had a fight and are breaking up. It’s the only reason she set this in motion.”

“Exactly.” Nancy said. Jax shot her a questioning look. “Gemma is expecting a reaction. We don’t feed the beast, remember.”

Chibs grinned. “I might even thank her for having Fi call.”

Nancy looked up at Chibs with a grin of her own. Chibs leaning down and giving Nancy a kiss.

“Exactly.” Jax shot her a questioning look. “Gemma is expecting a reaction. We don’t feed the beast, remember.”

Chibs grinned. “I might even thank her for having Fi call.”

Nancy looked up at Chibs with a grin of her own. Chibs leaning down and giving Nancy a kiss.

“Oh my god. You two are insane.” Jax groaned.

She shook her head at how insane their lives actually were.

Chibs and Nancy broke from their kiss, Chibs checking his watch. “We need to get moving. I’m scheduled at the garage. Let me know what you decide and I’ll tell Fi. Let the girls decide what flights work and such.”

Jax got up and hugged Chibs and made for Nancy automatically, Nancy froze. Chibs moved in
front of her, preventing Jax from touching her.

“Ah, shit, sorry. I didn’t think.” Jax realizing what he just tried to do.

“It’s okay. I’d hug you too if I could.” Nancy said with a shrug. Chibs glaring at Jax and sending an annoyed look to Nancy.

A gleam hit Jax’s eyes. “You’re just so tiny, feel like I could pick you up and put you in my pocket.” Jax blurted out with a silly grin. “Learning curve, right?”

"Hey!” Nancy sputtered. "I'm not that tiny. I'm skinny but tall.” Nancy refuted Jax's assertion.

“No picking up my girl, boyo. Or I’ll give you a learning curve ye' won’t forget.” Chibs threatened with a point of his finger.

Jax just laughed and went back to his seat next to Abel. “Relax. Go on, let us finish our breakfast. I’ll be by the garage in an hour or so.”

“Let’s go, mo gràidh.” Chibs took her hand and Nancy looked back and gave them a wave goodbye as they swept out of the house.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My darling = mo gràidh
Chapter 73

Chapter Summary

Preparations...

Chapter Notes

Ignoring work writing this. Needed a lot of clean up from my original notes. And it's been freaking hot and humid as heck here the last few days, making sleep impossible. Fingers crossed that you like this next installment. Working up to the next few chapters.

Thank you for reading and your comments. Keep them coming, they help motivate me to keep writing and posting. I'm blown away by how everyone seems to be liking this story. So, thank you again.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chibs was taking a water/headache break, hip on the corner of her desk, their free hands holding the others when they saw Gemma pull into the lot. Watching her climb down from her SUV and sling her bag over her shoulder. Keys jingling from her fingers.

She turned to look back up at Chibs who was watching Gemma for another moment, before turning back to her. She grinned and stretched upwards while he bent down and captured her kiss.

She started to pull back, but he pressed for more. His lips and tongue caressing hers, making her moan.

Vaguely, she heard Gemma halt to a clattered stop and give a frustrated snort.

They pulled back, their eyes locked for a moment longer only to turn to look at Gemma.

“This is a place of business, not where you two can make out.” Gemma hissed.

“We are working. Have been since the place opened. You’re just late...as usual.” Chibs said standing up. Stalking towards Gemma.

Gemma looked around a little as Chibs walked towards her. The nervousness in her body language easy to see as Chibs pinned her in place with just his dark look.

Slinging an arm around Gemma’s shoulders, bending Gemma to listen to him. “I just want to say thank you for having Fi call. I’ve been meaning to calling her myself.”

Gemma shook herself from Chibs arm. Her eyes dancing with anger. “I didn’t call her. Why would I call her?”

“You saying Fi’s a liar?” He challenged Gemma. His brow rising, knowing she was lying to him.
Gemma’s lips tightening into an angry thin line.

“Well, no matter.” He shrugged. “Had a good chat with Fi. A lot to catch up on. She and Kerrianne are flying out for the weekend.”

“What! She didn’t say….” Gemma exploded, unwittingly admitting to calling Fiona.

“Oh, aye. They want to meet Nancy.”

Gemma shot her a look and she just shrugged and smiled back easily.

Chibs put his hand to Gemma’s shoulder, forcing her to look at him. “You ever do something like that again…going behind my back, I’ll break your fingers so you can’t dial another fucking phone. You understand me?”

Gemma’s eyes went wide as he threatened her.

Taking advantage of her stunned state, he gave her a nudge towards the office. “Now, then, we can’t be chit-chatting on company time. We have work to do after all.”

Gemma stumbled a little as he left her to go back to her, giving her another kiss and then back to his engine repair.

She shot Gemma another look before turning her attention back to her laptop. From the corner of her eye she could see Gemma gather herself up and storm into the office, the door banging shut and the loud toss of her purse onto her desk.

He was amused when the reality of Fiona and Kerrianne’s arrival hit Nancy. Jax had confirmed that Maureen and Trinity were making the trip as well. He had Nancy check his email for him couple days after their call from Fiona, listing out their flight information.

“Oh my god…” Nancy breathed. “They’re really coming.”

He looked to her, surprised by her panicked look. “You invited them.” He reminded her.

“Oh my god…” She moaned again. “We have so much to do…”

“What do you mean?”

“We have to clean the house, mow the lawn, get the guest bedrooms ready, food, plan what we’re going to do when they’re here. Will Kerrianne want to go shopping or see the ocean? Maybe a museum?” She asked him, biting at her lip.

Shaking his head in amusement. “We’ve got time. And they won’t care if we spruce the place up. They’re coming to meet you.”

Screwing her face up at him. “Are you kidding me? I won’t have them staying in a messy house. I want them to like me.”

He stood her up from her chair and sat down, pulling her back down into his lap. She growling in panic and frustration, reaching for a pad of paper and pen. Started writing things down of all the things they needed to do. “What kind of food does Fiona and Kerrianne like?” She quizzed him.

Grabbing the pen from her fingers. “Oy...listen to me...we’ll get things ready and they’ll like you m’anam. So stop your fretting.”
He kissed her to help distract her from her panic. And for a minute it worked.

“Oh my god. You have to tell Fi and Kerrianne before they show up about us. We’ll have to keep the pda’s to a minimum. God, how uncomfortable it’ll be for them to see us going on like usual.”

“Stop. It’s going to be fine. You talked to Fi on the phone, she wasn’t yelling at ye’, was she?”

“No.” She said carefully. “But that doesn’t mean that she’ll be okay with this. Knowing about it from across the globe is one thing, seeing it first hand, that’s a whole other thing.”

He sighed as she vented. “Hey, Fi and I talked at length about one of us finding someone again. We talked to Kerrianne when we had the divorce finalized. I’m sure Fiona has talked to Kerrianne about you already. So, there’s nothing to worry about. They’re going to love you.”

Giving him a pensive look. “I hope so. I don’t want them to hate me and take it out on you.”

“Hey...it’ll be fine. You’ll see.” Giving her a steady look. “They could never hate you. Trust me, okay?”

She nodded, hoping he was right. It would kill her if Fiona and Kerrianne didn’t accept her.

Seeing her worry still linger, he handed her her pen back. She quickly started making a list of all the things they needed to do to prepare for the weekend. Halfway down the page, she glanced at him, “Sorry.” She said sheepishly.

Smiling back at her. “Nothing to be sorry for. It’ll work out.”

Her lips widening into a soft smile, she leaned in and kissed him. His hands soothing up and down her back.

Eventually, pulling back and she stood up so he could get back to work. Nancy turning back to her list and her laptop. The laptop binging softly under the hard rock blasting from the radio.

The next few days whenever they weren’t working at the garage or the warehouse, Nancy zoomed around the house, cleaning and sprucing things up. Even waking from dead of sleep to add items to their to-do list. Telling him to cut the lawn while she yanked weeds from the flower beds. She finding him wherever he was located with the lawn mower.

Handing him a cold beer, while they shared a joint to help cool off their headaches. “Oy, that’s good. Half wish we were flying out to Belfast instead. Supposed to be cool and raining over there.”

He pondered.

Nancy rolled her eyes at him. “I think you’re the only person on the planet that enjoys and wants the crappiest weather.”

Chibs took the joint back from her with a wink, passing the empty bottle to her. Pulling her into his sweaty body for a kiss.

“Gah! Sweaty man.” She laughed trying to escape his hold, in the process getting his sweat all over her. Laughing, he just held tighter and kissed her again. Nancy pulling out of his sweaty embrace and escaped back into the house to leave Chibs to finish the lawn.

Tara stopped by the other night to confer with them over scheduling and logistics. Luckily, Jax and Tara were making room for Maureen and Trinity over at their place. But they scheduled a barbeque
for all of them to get together at Jax’s place.

At Nancy’s prompting, he did email Fiona, warning her about how touchy-feely they were, telling her that it was necessary to keep their headaches manageable. Telling Fi to warn Kerrianne.

Jax telling them that they hadn’t told Gemma or Clay about Maureen and Trinity coming to visit. Wanting to try and keep their visit as drama-free as possible. He could see the excitement in Jax’s eyes for a normal, family visit. Something he imagined Jax never had given Gemma’s hold over his life and the club business somehow managing to interrupt their days.

Nancy walked through the house and mentally ticked off items that she finished or still needed to do. They’d already stocked up the fridge, she’d dusted and vacuumed, Chibs picked out the liquor, the guest bedrooms were outfitted with fresh linens and towels for the bathrooms.

Collapsing onto the sofa she decided that soon as the laundry and dishwasher were finished they were good to go. Fiona had informed them that they rented a SUV from the airport and that she’ll drive Maureen and Trinity to Jax’s place before coming to their house.

She grimaced at the logistical nightmare if they had to figure out transportation. The truck was only a two-seater, three at the most. No room on the bike. Jax floated the idea of picking them up in the van from the garage. But Tara nixed that idea, saying that it’ll raise questions why he was taking it. Fiona securing a rental was the best solution, they wouldn’t have to wait around for them to pick them up. And it made the first-time meeting a bit less public.

Grinning, remembering how Chibs let her ramble on with all that needs to be done around the house. Her nerves skittering and fraying. Hoping that Fiona and Kerrianne likes her. She was worried that they’d take a look at her and how she and Chibs are together and wouldn’t like her. Making their visit all the more stressful. He, letting her talk and fret until she ran out of steam and simply look at her like she was nuts for even thinking it. He’d kiss her and make love to her, reminding them that no matter what, he loved her.

She heard Chibs shut the mower off and pack it back into the garage, coming into the house his eyes finding her splayed out on the sofa. “Come on, help me clean up.”

Smirking, she knew it simply wouldn’t be right if they didn’t take advantage of their alone time while they still had it. She laughed as Chibs chased after her, tossing her clothes off in the bedroom. He catching her as she was fiddling with the shower temperature controls. His boots making a thud behind her. He shimmying out of his jeans, his eyes dark as he watched her in the shower, lathering up with the scented soap. “Coming?” She asked him innocently.

He didn’t bother answering as he joined her in the shower. Capturing her lips into a deep kiss. “A witch is what ye’ are.” He growled and purred into her skin.

Her hands sliding over his skin, spreading the soap over him. They twisted and turned enjoying their caresses and kisses. His cock thick and heavy against her hip, he groaned as he pressed her into the cool tiles, his hands reaching for the stash of condoms.

He pressed a deep kiss on her again, stealing her breath. His hands lifting her up. She gasped, her legs wrapping around his hips as he fitted himself inside her. She was constantly amazed at how well they fit. They took a moment to look into each other’s eyes, checking that they were okay. She shifted and sank a little more over him. His eyes fluttered and his breath hitching.

He held still, his body quivering as she adjusted around him. Her hands and arms grabbing hold of
him. She whimpered the longer he held still, her eyes went from soft to glaring at him for making her wait.

He grinned devilishly at her and started rocking his hips, pushing and pulling himself inside her. Hitting her sweet spots that he knew drove her crazy. His lips and teeth latching onto her nipples, his hands supporting her hips as he loved her.

Her fingers sliding into his hair and scratching at his scalp that sent goosebumps over his skin. His spine curling and twisting as he pushed and pulled them to their climax. The water falling down over them. She groaned and gasped for air, her muscles clenching at him.

By unspoken signal, they both fell into their drive for satisfaction. She tightened even more around him, his hips working, he slipped a thumb to press her clit and that did it, he thought his cock would have a bruise at how tight she was around him.

She screamed as she came, and he echoed her as he gave another deep push inside her and let go. She still shivering and rolling through the extension of the climax. He wasn’t sure if it was one really long one or if it was a series one after another. It took everything in him to keep from dropping to his knees.

His head fell into her shoulder as they came down from their high. Her hands gently sliding over his shoulders. His lips finding hers, purring in contentment, his hands letting her down. Making sure she had her feet, he grinned as he saw her hazy eyes and smile. Snapping off the condom, they did a quick rinse.

They dried off and spread more anti-itch cream over their tattoos. She let him brush out her hair. He loved watching the light play off the red in her hair. Giving her a kiss when he set the brush down. She grumbling as she saw a hickey when she looked in the mirror. Giving him an annoyed huff, but he simply kissed her silly again.

“Are you excited to see them?” She asked as they settled into bed.

“Aye. Two years is a long time.”

“It’s too bad it’s only for a weekend.”

“It’s okay. There’ll be more visits I imagine.”

“Mmm. Sorry, I’ve been a bit self-involved with my freak outs.”

He grinned and shook his head at her. “Don’t fash yourself. It’s cute you worrying so much.”

She sighed as he curled her into him.

“Sleep, m ‘anam. All ye’ have to do is just be yourself and it’ll be fine. Fiona told me Kerrianne is looking forward to coming out on her break. Regaling her friends that she’s coming out to sunny California while the rest were stuck in gloomy Belfast.”

“Huh...maybe we should try and get to a beach.” She tiredly mumbled into his shoulder.

He didn’t bother replying, she’d fallen asleep with that last thought. He was excited and nervous he thought to himself. He wanted things to go well and hoped that Fiona and Kerrianne would understand his life now. Maybe be happy for him. Unlike Gemma’s instant dislike.

After his threat to Gemma, she’d kept herself scarce finally. Hopefully, that’d be the end of
Gemma trying to break them up.

Next week, they were gearing up to make their first trip to Tucson. He hated the idea of the muling they’d have to do on the ride back. He didn’t want Fiona or Kerrianne to know or be around for it. Get them safely back to Belfast before all that bullshit started. But, until then, he’s going to enjoy having them over.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 74

Chapter Summary

Arrival

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry for not updating earlier. Work has been and continues to kick my ass.

I've been working on this chapter for weeks, working out how things would go. End up scrapping most of it to start over.

Anyway, I finally finished on it and fingers-crossed hope that you like it.
Enjoy. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Fucking hell, she’s driving a fucking Suburban…” Chibs said as he peered out the front window, moving to the front door to meet Fiona and Kerrianne as they carefully pulled into their driveway.

She followed after him and took in the monster of a SUV that edged behind their truck. It was a tank. A bright, white tank that filled the driveway just sitting there.

Chibs had reached the drivers side door, helping Fiona climb out of the massive vehicle.

She watched Kerrianne hop out of the SUV, straightening her shirt, looking around. She bit her lip as she gave a small smile and wave as Kerrianne’s eyes caught sight of her.

Chibs hugged Fiona and stepped back from each other a little as they rounded the front of the car.

Chibs look over Kerrianne, taking in all the changes since he’d last seen her. “Christ, look at ye’.” He said gruffly before quickly scooping Kerrianne into his arms for a deep hug.

Kerrianne’s arms hugging her father tight in return. Fiona smiling on.

“Why the hell did they give you this behemoth?” He asked them when he managed to let go of Kerrianne, swiping at his eyes.

“I have no idea. I reserved one of those CRV things.” She waved her arm at the tank. “It’s fine, once I got the hang of driving it on your highways.”

“Should’ve collected ye’ in the van.” Chibs sighed.

Fiona glared at Chibs as she slung her large purse over her shoulder. “Filip…it’s fine. With your schedule and our flight home, it wouldn’t work. This way we can take off without any fuss.”

“It’s got TV’s in the seats, Da’.” Kerrianne supported the SUV.
Fiona and Chibs in unison rolled their eyes.

She just stood there and watched the three of them bicker and hug. Her head wanted to go screaming off into the growing dark as the sun set over the horizon. But she hesitated to go to Chibs until he had his fill with Kerrianne and Fiona.

She breathed a sigh of relief that he came to her side, his arm looping around her waist. His fingers sliding under her shirt across her skin, their touch making them shiver slightly as their headaches eased off.

Kerrianne shot a look between her and her father. Her eyes turning suspicious. Fiona’s dark eyes swept up and down again.

“Fi...Kerrianne...this is Nancy.” Chibs nodded towards her at the sudden uncomfortable silence.

“Hi.” She gave a slight wave. Cringing inside at how lame she sounded. “I’m glad you could make the trip.”

“Dear heavens...you’re nothing but skin and bones…” Fiona tsked.

Her eyebrows shot up at Fiona’s observation.

“Fi...I told ye’.” Chibs groaned.

“Aye, right...sorry. It’s lovely to meet ye’ lass.” Fiona stepped forward towards her. Her arms out to grab her into a hug.

She stiffened and took a step back. Chibs stepping in front of her slightly to block Fiona.

“Fi...I told ye’. Ye’ can’t be touching her. Either of ye’.”


She bit her lip, bobbing her head a little. Feeling the blush rush to her cheeks at the awkward greeting, cut short because of her oddity. Chibs pulled her closer, his hand running up and down her spine.

‘It’s okay, I forget myself sometimes.” She shrugged. “In any case, you two must be tired and want to freshen up. We’ve got the guest bedrooms set up for you.” She diverted the conversation and get everyone moving into the house.

“Aye, let’s get you settled.” Chibs said, releasing her as everyone moved to the back of the tank.

She trailed after them, reaching for a backpack but Kerrianne grabbed it from her.

“I’ve got it.”

“Okay.” She nodded.

“M ’anam, get the door would ye’. Jesus, what the hell did you pack in here?” He joked to Fiona who tsked at him. “Maybe it was a good thing ye’ got the Suburban if this is any indication.”

“Filip...” Fiona sighed, at his teasing. “I brought some things from home for ye’.”

She manned the door as they all trouped inside.
“Oh, my, Filip...this is a lovely house.” Fiona commented as they worked their way through the house to their bedrooms. “I love how open it is. You must get some fantastic light during the day.”

“Aye. Too much sometimes. Still working on fixing the place up.”

“Do you have a pool?” Kerrianne asked in a rush.

“No...thought about putting one in, but I’m working or traveling too much to maintain it. Besides, it’s a bit cool yet to use one.”

She followed after them as Chibs took control of setting their luggage in the guest bedrooms, Fiona and Kerrianne in their own rooms across from each other. She didn’t need to explain anything, everything was laid out for them.

“All right then, freshen up, take a nap if ye’ want. Dinner will be in about an hour out on the patio.” Chibs prompted. “Steak okay with ye’?”

“Yes, sweet boy. Thank you.” Fiona patted Chibs cheek.

“All right then.” He nodded, giving Kerrianne another hug.

The doors to the guest bedrooms shut, leaving the two of them breathing in relief that they were here and settled. He grinned at her and pulled her into a hug, walking them back into the family room. Where the collapsed onto the sofa, listening to the soft sounds of their guests moving around, the showers turning on and off.

“Love ye’, m ‘anam.” He said into her eyes. His hands brushing her hair back from her face.

Smiling back at him. “Love you, too.”

Chibs checked his watch and got up. “I need to warm up the grill.”

“Oh.” He gave her a kiss before walking out to the patio. It was early yet to start the rest of their dinner.

She picked up her book she’d been reading, settling in back into the story. But she only got a couple of pages in when Kerrianne came out of her bedroom. She was dressed in jeans and a dark blue top.

“What’re you reading?” She asked.
“The Count of Monte Cristo. You read it?”

“No. Just finished the Canterbury Tales for school.” Kerrianne sighed in relief as she sat down.

She grimaced. “Good god. At least it wasn’t Beowulf, I had that my sophomore year.” Kerrianne sharing their mutual feelings on the torture of old and middle english literature.

“That any good?” Kerrianne asked of her book.

“Hmmm...It’s one of my favorites. Here...you can borrow it. See if you like it.” She passed the book to Kerrianne who took it, looking at the cover, scanning the summary on the back of the book.

“Oh, no, I couldn’t.” Kerrianne sputtered.

“It’s not a problem. I’ve read it so many times I have it practically memorized.

She watched as Kerrianne thumbed through the well-worn pages where she’d made some notes in her code and underlining particular passages that resonated with her.

“You’ve read this a lot. Why keep re-reading it?”

“It helped me.”

“Helped ye’?”

“Everytime I read it...I find something new in it. Some deeper thought or idea that I hadn’t considered before. And it’s about a prison break.” She said to Kerrianne’s questioning eyes.

Before Kerrianne could question her further, Chibs groaned as he plopped down next to her, pulling her onto his lap. Giving her a deep kiss, her arms sliding around his shoulders. She tried to keep the kiss as chaste as possible, but he had other ideas. Her spine bending and twisting under his forceful, playful kiss.

She hid her face in the curve of his neck when the kiss broke. Catching the shocked look on Kerrianne’s face from the corner of her eye. Chibs eyeing his daughter, waiting to see what her reaction would be.

“Holy shite. Ma told me, but seriously?”

“Kerrianne…” Chibs started.

She suddenly didn’t want to be part of this discussion. Forcing him to let her go, she got up. “I’m going to start dinner.” She escaped to the kitchen, Chibs giving her a look that he knew what she was doing.

Even in another room, she could make out Chibs and Kerrianne talking as she pulled out the potatoes to get ready for the grill.

“Da...seriously? She’s half your age.”

He scoffed. “I know you like to think that your Ma and me have been around since the dinosaurs roamed...but Nancy isn’t half my age.”

“You sure on that...you’ve got some greys coming in.” Kerrianne teased.
“Dear god. I hope you don’t say that to your Ma.”

Kerrianne laughed at his groan.

They were interrupted by Fiona walking into the room. “What’s going on?”

“We’re just getting caught up. How were your tests?” He easily changed the subject.

She heard Kerrianne sigh. “Let’s just say I’m glad they’re done.”

“I’m sure ye’ did fine.” Fiona reassured to her daughter. “Where’s Nancy?”

“She’s in the kitchen.”

“What’s with the records?” Kerrianne asked.

“What do you mean?”

“They aren’t in alphabetical order.”

“They’re in my order.” She heard Chibs and Kerrianne move towards the record collection, he diving into his system for order.

“Oh Jesus.” Fiona sighed.

Kerrianne laughing, “That’s insane, Da.”

“’Tis not.” Chibs easily countered. "It makes perfect sense.”

The sound of Kerrianne laughing and Chibs chuckling had her smiling as she finished wrapping the potatoes in olive oil and tin foil. Setting them on a tray to put out on the grill.

“Oy, anything I can help with?” Fiona asked as she walked into the kitchen.

“Oh, you don’t have to do that. I’m just going to make up a salad. Chibs will be taking the steaks and potatoes out to the grill soon. And you’re a guest. Sit.” She waved Fiona to one of the breakfast bar chairs.

“Nonsense, I can help chop.” Fiona refused to be kicked out.

She pulled out the greens and vegetables for the salad, showing Fiona where the knives were. And soon they were settled at the counter side-by-side.

Chibs soon came in and nuzzled her into a hug, cooling off their headaches. Giving her a searching look, checking that she was okay. Giving him a shrug and a smile he relaxed and lit up a joint, taking a pull on it, leaning in and shotgunned the smoke to her in a kiss.

Winking at her as she heard Kerrianne and Fiona freeze as they watched the two of them. Chibs pulled back, giving her a grin and a wink before handing her the joint.

“Can I have some?” Kerrianne asked.

Chibs frowned at his daughter. “No.” He and Fiona both said in parental unison.

“But…”

“Kerri…” Fiona warned.
“No. Get the door for me.” Chibs quickly grabbed up the tray of potatoes and steaks to put onto the grill.

Kerrianne groaning as she opened the door to the patio, following her father outside.

She was alone with Fiona again. She gathered her courage up to look at Fiona. See if she was mad at her for opening the door to potentially corrupting her daughter with her smoking the pot. But Fiona just had this amused smirk on her face.

Relaxing she held the joint out to Fiona.

Fiona eyed it, glancing at the door.

“He’ll keep her busy out there.” She nudged.

“Heaven help me.” Fiona muttered, carefully taking the joint from her.

She chuckled at Fiona’s furtive pull on the joint. Quickly handing it back to her, her eyes checking on the door to the patio.

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph that’s smooth...and strong.”

She shrugged. “Chibs is in charge of the pot.”

Fiona shot her a confused look.

“You mentioned my weight before. I’m actually better than I was when he found me.” Shaking her head a little, “I just don’t have an appetite anymore. This helps me eat.”

“Filip told me you were being starved...abused. I’m sorry that happened to ye’.”

She shrugged, “It’s okay. I survived.” Taking another pull on the joint. Fiona turned back to the salad. Everything was torn and chopped, it was just a matter of tossing it in the bowl. She turned to the fridge again, grabbing several kinds of dressing.

“So...Gemma’s certainly upset with you showing up.”

She huffed at Fiona’s careful inquiry. “That’s putting it mildly. The queen is upset that I’m at the table. That if the club didn’t accept me...Chibs would walk away from the club. And with that...potentially killing the club’s gun business.”

Fiona’s brows shot up.

“And well...Gemma’s got problems of her own than to worry too much about me.”

“I don’t know if I want to know.” Fiona mused as she took the joint again.

“Gemma tried to kick me off the lot one day...she grabbed me.”

“So, you read that demented woman is what you’re saying.” Handing her the joint back.

“Ended up having grand mal seizures from being in her mind and soul.” Taking another toke, waving her hand, wafting the smoke around her face a little.

“Jesus. Just the thought of that...I’d be having seizures, too.”
“Well, like I said, Gemma’s got issues. God, the whole club does. But I’m working on them.”

“Working on them?”

“Poking holes in their thought patterns, being a fresh eye to things around here. I really am glad you are here. Things are going to be busy the next few weeks.”

“I’m glad to be here, too. It’s been a long time since I’d had a proper vacation.”

“I thought that things would be better after the club took care of Jimmy.”

“Oh, aye. But the Cause is still taking its toll.” Fiona waved off her concerned look. “Enough about me. Tell me about yourself, Filip gave me the warning about you being the Seer. Hinted at the abuse, but not much else.”

She sighed, rubbing at her forehead. “There really isn’t all that much to tell you. I was in school until Chibs came for me. Surviving my parents and everyone. I had headaches and dreams. The whole time I thought there was something wrong with my brain or the starvation was affecting me. I had no idea that Chibs was real until he was standing in front of me.”

“Now, wait. You were in school? Have you signed up here to finish?”

“No. I don’t need to.”

“How’s that?”

“I took the GED last year. I graduated school as a junior. I wasn’t supposed to show up my senior year...but, nobody told me not to show up. I had a class schedule. I went anyway.”

“What about uni? Any plans there?”

“Not right now. I’m still getting my feet under me being here and with the club. Maybe in a few years.”

“You thinking of having a baby?”

“No. Not yet at least, I’m still not at a normal weight.” She shot Fiona an amused look. “Are you sure you aren’t Gemma? She grilled me on all this at one of her dinners. Even thought I suckered Chibs with my scar.”

“What? She did not?!” Fiona blinked.

“That and more. Went with the gold-digger angle, too. It was hilarious watching her grasp at straws. Trying to find a soft spot to exploit.”

“That woman…” Fiona growled. “I’d say I can’t believe she’d go that far...but I know she would.”

She shrugged. “It’s okay. I’m having fun teasing Gemma.”

“Jesus. Teasing that woman? Are ye’ sure ye’ aren’t daft?”

She laughed. “Very sure. Part of my helping fix things around here. Gemma calling you...it just shows she’s getting desperate.”

“Ye’ don’t want to be putting Gemma in a corner like that. She’ll kill ye’.” Fiona warned.
“It’s fine. Chibs is with me so she can’t do anything. I’m a member of the club, that carries heavy penalties to attack a member. And I know Gemma better than she knows herself. I could ruin her.”

“What would you ruin her?”

She gave Fiona a heavy look. “But I don’t want to do that. I’m trying to help her. She just doesn’t realize it yet.”

Fiona tilted her head at her in thought. “I just hope you’re being careful. I told ye’ on the phone that the only way to get her to back off is to beat the shite out of her. She’ll just keep coming at ye’.”

“Actually, it’s Tara that should be doing that. But neither one of us wants to get physical with Gemma. It’s ridiculous to be dragged into a fight over being top alpha...bitch. Pardon my language.”

“Aye...I know what ye’re saying. But its the way of the clubs. Even in the Army, although it’s more structured like the military. Ye’ get promoted by earning the position. But still, there’s quite a bit of politics involved.”

“Gah...politics. So tiring sometimes. Get all worked up on what someone says until reason knocks down the paranoia. Hopefully, not too much damage has been done.”

Fiona snorted. “It’s the way of the world I’m afraid.”

“So are you okay with me and Chibs?” She asked the million dollar question.

Fiona looked her over again. “Filip and I came to an understanding when we signed off on the divorce. I talked to Kerrianne several times about him or me finding someone. Even talked to her again after our phone call. I’m glad that he found you. Found someone to love again. I was a bit put off by your age difference and these headaches you two have. Are you with him just to keep the pain at bay? Or do you love him, truly?”

“With every fiber of my being. I think it started in the dreams. I’d admonish myself sometimes for falling for a man in my dreams. But his life here was so different than the one I was in. It was an escape for me when things got particularly difficult. To have the chance to be with him...it means everything.”

“Good. He should have someone who loves him truly.”

She nodded. “I hope that we could come out for visits in the future. Chibs he misses you and Kerrianne so much. You have no idea what you being here this weekend means to him.”

“Aye. That would be fantastic. We could show you around Belfast proper.”

“That sounds like fun. Although, I think Chibs misses the weather more.”

Fiona snorted. “It’s bloody raining and cold when we left.”

She grinned. “Don’t look at me! He’s the one that likes the crappiest weather. Proud of it, even.”

Fiona grumbled, tossing the salad.

She couldn’t help her low laugh. Fiona side-eyed her before snorting a laugh herself.

Kerrianne burst into the kitchen drawing their attention to her. “Da says the steaks are ready.”
“Okay. Here...take the dressings out to the table.” She pointed to the dressings on the counter. She pulled out another tray and started stacking plates, silverware, napkins while directing Fiona where the glasses were. The two of them making trips to bring out the salad and drinks.

Fiona choosing red wine, a coke for Kerrianne while she and Chibs had a beer.

She ate what she could, but mostly just leaned back and listened to Chibs converse with Kerrianne and Fiona. The three of them laughing and talking about what was going on in their lives. She smiled as Chibs eyes lit up and danced in the light as he soaked everything in.

Chibs held her hand, his thumb rubbing across her knuckles, glancing at her to check on her. She’d squeeze his, releasing him back to the conversation.

“So how was your flight over? Any troubles?” Chibs asked.

“Bloody fantastic. Got upgraded to first class. All four of us.” Kerrianne burst out.

“Aye..thought it was a mistake. Nearly took the man’s head off at the counter.” Fiona said ruefully. Quickly biting her lip. It took a bit of footwork with the airlines and money to get those seats.

Chibs whistled at the news. “Really, first class, ye’ say?” He turned to look at her. “Quite a bit of luck there.”

She ignored the pointed look Chibs shot at her, fighting to keep from blushing under his suspicious glare.

“Oh, aye. I’m feeling a bit spoiled, won’t want to fly anything but first class from now on.” Fiona said.

Chibs sighed, leaning in and giving her a kiss on the cheek. Giving him a small grin that he’d figured out what she did.

She caught Kerrianne staring at her mother while she was watching them. Feeling nervous, she noted that everyone seemed to be finished eating. Sliding out from his hold and her seat she gathered up the plates to take back into the house.

Kerrianne stood up, too, grabbing a few platters to help her.

“Thanks.” She said to Kerrianne as she checked on the warming pie. The girl moving to the side of her at the counter, helping her with the dishes.

“So you and my Da.” Kerrianne broached as the coffee was brewing.

Nancy felt her headache building as she looked to the girl that was only a few years younger than her. The age differences wasn’t lost on her. “Yeah.”

“I’ll admit when Ma told me about what was going on, him and you, the seer thing. I thought she was pulling one over on me.”

“That seems to be the reaction everyone has at first.” She said ruefully.

“Do you love him, truly?” Kerrianne asked, echoing her mother.

“I do. He, he’s the world to me. But he loves you and your mother, too. I don’t want to come between your father and your mother. I want him to be happy, he deserves to be happy. It killed a
part of him when he had to leave you and your mother all those years ago.”

“He’s told you about that?”

“Some. He didn’t have to though. I saw his pain. And from the dreams, I was there in Belfast. He was so happy to see you. I cried when I woke up from that. The absolute love he has for you. I never had that kind of love from my own father.” She looked to Kerrianne seriously, “Don’t ever take that love for granted. Do you hear me?”

“Aye. I had no idea you saw that. I hadn’t seen my Da in ages. I didn’t know what to think at the time.”

“I know things were hard for you and your mother. How could it not. But know that they love you and would die for you. Live your life, find your passion, find your own to love, have your own children. Teach them what is important in life. Just as your mother and father have and continue to do for you. You deserve to be happy, that is the greatest gift you could ever do for your parents. And get to know your father, he’s missed so much of your growing up. He regrets not being there, but you know, he couldn’t be there. His, your mother’s...your lives were at stake. It wasn’t a choice for him, it was forced upon him.”

“I know. Ma told me. She told me sooooo many times. It got to the point that it didn’t mean anything. Then he shows up. And I saw the violence that everyone was shielding me from. I was scared. It hit me then what Ma had been telling me all that time. I was such an arse.” She huffed.

“Well, you were only thirteen. Gotta let you have some leeway on your behavior just for that. Your father doesn’t hold a grudge on that at all. He knows. It was hard for him. But he knows its what parenting is about. He’ll never stop loving you. Well, unless you told him your undying love for Justin Bieber...he might get a tad annoyed.” She teased.

Kerrianne’s rolled her eyes. “God, he is such a music snob. Bieber’s not that bad. Rich and famous. Bet he’s got the biggest house in the world.”

She huffed laugh as Kerrianne went on about Chib’s arch nemesis of the music world. She turned back to the oven and pulled out the warm pie.

“Grab the ice cream out of the freezer for me, would you?”

“Really? Apple pie and ice cream?” She snorted.

“You’re in the US. When we come visit you, you can feed us Irish food.”

“You’re going to visit? Really?”

“Sure, I’m not sure exactly when, but I don’t see why not.” She shrugged, as she gathered plates and silverware for their dessert.

Her headache notched up that had her gripping the counter. Blinking and trying to focus on the sound of Fiona and Chibs talking in the backyard.

“You okay?” Kerrianne asked right next to her, making her jump.

She blinked hard again. “Yeah. I’ve got to get back to your father. My head is killing me. You take the tray, I don’t want to drop it.”

“Would you read me?” Kerrianne asked out of the blue as she took the tray.
She doubletaked at Kerrianne’s request. “What...Why?”

“Curious to know what becomes of me, if Liam gets his head out of his arse and notices me.” Kerrianne shrugged.

She sighed, she should have expected this. “When I read someone, I get all of their memories, their secrets, the emotions, everything from their past, present and what the future may hold. You’ve heard of people being hacked...that’s me, only worse. And I think, you really don’t want me to know you like that.”

“But that sounds so cool. Like a superpower.” Kerrianne argued excitedly. “And its not like you haven’t read people before.”

“No. It’s not cool.” She started packing up the tray with coffee and dishes. "It’s a violation. I hate that I can do it. And the people I’ve read, most of them forced me to do it. For their own entertainment. It was torture for me. How would you feel that a virtual stranger knowing all of your secrets, things that you may have forgotten yourself. Started talking about them with your friends. Used that information to humiliate you. You’d feel violated. It wasn’t information you were willing to give freely. I don’t want to be that with you or your mom.” She trailed off.

She winced as her headache ratcheted up another level. She glanced at Kerrianne and was relieved to see that she wasn’t angry at her for refusing to read her.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know.” Kerrianne apologized, her eyes wide in fear at her outburst. Kicking herself for going too far.

“It’s okay, I’m sorry, too. I’ll do it, but you have to aware of the consequences. And I won’t do it unless your mother and father agree to it. And finding out if Liam likes you or not, doesn’t come close to a good enough reason for a reading.” She explained.

Kerrianne dropped her head. “Aye.”

“Come on, let’s get this out there, your father is about to come find me.” Leading the way back to the patio.

She turned back to Kerrianne behind her at the sliding door. “And Kerrianne, if Liam is being an ass, he’s either a complete idiot for not noticing you or gay.”

Kerrianne’s jaw dropped.

Grinning as she stepped back out onto the patio. Chibs already had his hand out to her. She clasped his warm hand and sighed in relief as they touched and reconnected. Their headaches drawing back.

“There is no way that Liam is gay.” Kerrianne retorted vehemently, as she set the tray down. Fiona taking up the pie knife. Chibs pulled her into his lap with a relieved groan.

“Liam’s gay?” Fiona asked, pausing in cutting and serving the pie. “That would explain some things.”

Kerrianne huffed. “He’s not gay.” She argued back again.

Chibs raised a brow at her. She giggled in relief as her headache became a distant memory. And how she’d deftly twisted Kerrianne up over this Liam boy. She kissed Chibs with a smile.
Turning back to Kerrianne, “Well, then he must be a complete idiot not to notice you.” She said as Fiona slid her and Chibs a slice of apple pie à la mode.

“Who the bloody hell is Liam?” Chibs piped up. She couldn’t help her giggle as the conversation over Liam’s questionable sexuality ran rampant.

Chibs feeding her bites from his plate. She gave Kerrianne a wink. Kerrianne huffed and rolled her eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Ignoring work...this is rough somewhat. Any bad grammar is all my fault. Sorry. I'm just excited to get this part up to worry too much about it.

And I have no idea what to title this chapter without giving away stuff.

Hope everyone is staying dry if you're on the east coast dealing with the effects of Hurricane Florence.

Thanks and enjoy!

“You okay, mo ghaol?” Chibs asked huskily, holding her as their bodies shook from their shared orgasm. Running a hand along her arm, tangling their hands together. Bringing her hand to his lips, laying a soothing kiss to her knuckles.

“Mmm. You always know how to take care of me.” She sighed, placing a kiss to his shoulder. “How do you always do that?”

“Just love ye. It’s all I know.” He said with a satisfied grin. “So was it you that switched their tickets?”

Blinking at him, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Rolling his eyes at her. “The Suburban?”

“I didn’t realize just how big it was.” Squinching her face up at her admission.

He groaned, his lips curling into an amused grin.

“At least I didn’t hire a driver for them.” She added.

He shot her an alarmed look only to bark out a laugh. “Jesus, I’d’ve loved to see Fi’s expression if ye’ did.”

She popped up on an elbow, looking into Chibs dark eyes seriously. His attention drawn towards her. “Kerrianne asked me to read her.”

His eyes turned concerned. “What?”

“I told her no. Not without your and Fiona’s permission. Told her that I didn’t want to know her like that. I just thought you should know that she asked me.” She concluded softly.

“Why would she want that?” His eyes strained, his voice trembling with his confusion and worry.

“Said she wanted to know if Liam was going to wake up and ask her out or not.” Chibs sighed heavily, rubbing his hand over his eyes in frustration. “Don’t be mad, she’s young and thinks she’s in love with a boy. And maybe…wanted to test me.” She shrugged, putting a calming hand to his
“Test you?” His eyes went back to hers again.

She fingered the Kerrianne tattoo over his heart. “I’m your new girlfriend, taking your attention and affection away from her and her mother.”

“Seriously? She thinks that...that I would replace her?” His eyes going wide.

She sighed. “I don’t think she really thinks that, maybe a moment of doubt for her. Seeing me, only a few years older than her. How we’re all touchy-feely. Maybe a little put off that I have so much of you, everyday. When she’s been in Belfast, unable to see you. It’s not like she wants you to pack up and go home with her to Ireland. She has her friends and school. Once she’s back home, she’ll move on and chide herself for her doubts.” Giving him a slight shrug.

“I told Fi. Told her to warn Kerrianne.” He said still upset.

She could feel him want to get up and talk this over with Kerrianne, ignoring that it was just after one in the morning and their guests were deep asleep.

“I know.” She flipped over so she was laying over him. Trapping him with her knees at his hips, kissing his chest, halting his squirming. “Maybe tomorrow, try and talk with Kerrianne, reassure her that you’ll love her no matter what, no matter who is in your life. That she’ll live inside you until the end of your days.” She kissed his Kerrianne tattoo. Chibs hand stroking down her spine. Her hips curling into his, his cock thickening again as she rubbed against him. Not a frantic need, just for an easy comfort, his cock sliding and wedging in her soft folds.

He groaned under her, eyelids fluttering. “She’s not the only one, you’re in here love. Can’t imagine being without you. Don’t want to think about that. Just want to love you every day.”

They kissed deeply. “Just as you are in me, every day, loving you.”

Their bodies sliding as they took their pleasure to the next level. He sat up, swiftly putting a fresh condom on. Her ankles hooking behind him as she sank and rode his cock inside her. His lips and teeth worrying at the cradle of her shoulder. Making her arch and shiver in his hands.

“Besides,” she caught her breath, “you need to educate her on the evils of Justin Bieber and boy bands with their flouncy hair.”

He gripped her tight, “Witch. Get me all riled up.” His voice rough at her teasing.

Grinning at him a moment before kissing him again. “I love you.”

“Mmph, ye’ better.”

The next morning, they woke and their need for each other drove them into another round of lovemaking.

He over her, their hands threaded, holding them down over her head. Her legs hooking around his pistoning hips. Her hips rising to meet his. Their foreheads leaning against each other, catching deep kisses and shared air.

Her internal muscles spasming around him. Trying to pull him ever tighter into her, deeper, until he was so deep inside her, he couldn’t see his way out of her. Her body accepting his, claiming him
for her own.

And he growled into her, wanting her to claim him. Needing her to mark him for everyone to see and know. That he was hers completely. Just as she was his.

He twisted his hips, hitting all her most sensitive spots that sent shock waves through her entire body. Her spine arching painfully as the intense pleasure raced inside her. Gasping for air.

The top of her head wanted to slide off letting her brain simply ooze out as he brought her over the edge. He following with her.

She felt him inside her, not just her body but their spirits, merging together, a gold haze surrounding them.

She heard him yell out as his body gave over. She focussed on breathing, something so simple yet so difficult. The feel of his strength over her, the masculine scent of him invading her senses. His hands on hers.

Tears skating across her cheeks. Her heart thumping, the noise loud, a drum beating steadily in her chest. Vibrating her bones with it’s tempo. Their bodies coming together, felt as though their skin thinned and merged into each other’s, hearts pounding against each other.

She grabbed tight around him as she felt herself scattering and reforming all at the same time. Her mind expanding and breaking apart. To reform back with him. She couldn’t make sense of where she ended and he began.

The sound of Chibs thick gaelic accent filtered into her ears, whispering through her veins, carrying his words through the rivers and branches of her veins and arteries.

A hush fall over them, as they drifted in each other as if they were resting under the shade of a large tree, the wind and sunlight playing over them. The branches gently swaying over them, sheltering them.

She felt a burning and itching stretch over her skin as he breathed hard, his gasps raised goosebumps where his breath wafted over her skin. His forehead resting against hers as he recovered with her.

The itching annoyed her, pulling her from her graceful drift under the giant tree.

She heard him hiss and his body moved...then froze. She shivered as he slid away from her. Seeing the shock in his eyes as they moved to their hands and back to her eyes. That look pulled her further from the drift. Becoming more aware of her surroundings, her itching intensifying.

“Babe? What is it?” She ran her hands down his chest to play with his necklaces.

She cocked her head as he opened and closed his mouth trying to form words.

Finding his voice, “Oh, mo leanabh.” He said pensively.

She noticed his eyes weren’t looking directly into hers. She raised her brows in question. And saw him gulp, his adams apple rising and falling.

“What? Tell me, you’re starting to freak me out.” She shivered as the itching grew and his sudden nervousness unsettled her.
“It’s nothing bad. Don’t panic. We’ve got some more tattoos is all.”

Frowning, she glanced down their bodies but didn’t see anything that had him freaking out.

Seeing what she was doing, he grumbled in worry. Letting go of her hands, twisting back he showed her the back of their hands and saw the intricate celtic knotwork. “Huh, those are cool.” She commented absently.

He was looking at her forehead again. Her eyes went wide at his silent look, finally taking in on where exactly she was itching. “Please, tell me I don’t have a tattoo on my forehead.”

He stayed silent, his eyes telling her more than she wanted to know. She closed her eyes and bit her lip, trying to find it within her to be okay with this. He quickly touched the sides of her face, soothing her with his voice.

“It’ll be okay. It’ll be okay.” He kept repeating.

Once she felt like she had some tenuous grip on her emotions, “Let me up. I have to see.”

He gave her a careful look, like he didn’t trust her emotional state. She glared at him, “Let me up.” He sighed and got up from the bed, holding a hand to help her up.

She took it without hesitation, which made him feel better that she wasn’t tossing him out on his ass. But they paused as they saw the celtic knots on the back of her hands were on the tops of her feet, as well. His feet were bare of any tattoos.

She stood up, her legs shaky either from their fantastic sex or from shock she wasn’t sure. He let her take her time to move to the mirror in the bathroom, his eyes carefully watching her.

Staring at the marble countertop, procrastinating. She couldn’t look yet. Once she realized what she was doing she huffed and looked up.

Watching her as she stared at herself in the mirror. His hands coming to her shoulders. He noticed her tree tattoo was refreshed too. The details filling in even more. By the level of itching, his griffin had more work done as well.

He waited for her to digest the tattoo now gracing the center of her forehead, large enough to dip slightly between her eyebrows.

The intricacy of the tattoos was extraordinary, he conceded. He just wished the tattoo on her forehead wasn’t on her forehead.

Her eyes floated to his in the mirror. His heart broke as he saw the pain in them.

“Come on.” Guiding her to the shower where he washed her carefully. Not speaking. Just giving her space to get used to the idea.

As he massaged her neck and shoulders, she groaned in pleasure.

“If I was a vain person, I’d be super-pissed and threaten to never have sex with you again. But I love you and I love having sex with you.” She admitted.

He huffed at her unique way of accepting the new tattoos. “Aye, I love you. And love having sex with you, too. So, I guess we better make plans to join that circus you were talking about.” He ventured with a small joke.
“My back and leg is itchy, too.” She complained with a sigh.

“Youre tree and ivy got some more detail work on it. My griffin, too. Do you feel different?”

Picking up the soap she started washing him, returning the favor he’d done for her. “I think I’m too much in shock to feel much of anything right now. Ask me later.”

He gently pulled her close and laid a reverent kiss to her lips. Turning her so she was under the spray, carefully washing her hair. His strong fingers massaging her scalp. Playing with the foam. She doing the same for him. His eyes drooping at her touch.

Rinsed off, he helped her from the shower and quickly toweled off. Both going to the closet for clothes. She grabbed a joint, lighting it as Chibs pulling out the ointment for their tattoos. The cooling effect felt good and she was rubbing ointment onto Chibs griffin, noticing the detailing, the eagle’s feathering and eyes were sharper and distinct.

She passed him the joint as they switched with the ointment.

She jerked suddenly as she heard movement outside their bedroom door. He looked at her with her sudden movement. “Oh no, Fi, Kerrianne. Why did this have to happen now? Her eyes wide with panicked horror.

He sat down and pulled her into his lap, handing her the last of the joint. “It’ll be fine.” He tried to reassure her, as he quickly braided her hair.

“Sure, sure, yeah, fine. Okay. Just walk out there and show your ex-wife and daughter our new tattoos.” She panicked. “Yeah, okay, that’ll be just fine.” She berated as she drew on the joint.

“Mo ghaol, I love you. No matter what. I could care less what anyone says. Just know, I love you and I’ll protect you.” He said with his thick accent and heartfelt.

She took a cleansing breath and another one. She smelled someone cooking bacon and her stomach rumbled. His lips twitched as he heard it.

“I love you.” She said, giving him a quick kiss.

He smiled in joy with her in his arms. He could just hold her forever like this. Her stomach rumbled again. He laughed as she hid her face in his shoulder.

“Fine, we can’t hide out in here forever.” She grumbled. Stabbing the joint out in the ashtray on the nightstand. Slipping on a pair of jeans and a loose peasant blouse to let her back heal again.

He just pulled on a pair of jeans and tossed a t-shirt over his shoulder. His hand held out for hers as Kerrianne yelled for them to breakfast.

“I hope you don’t mind, we started making pancakes. There’s bacon over there.” Fiona said, her attention still on the skillet she was standing over.

“Aye, thanks love.” He replied absently, pouring out their tea, adding the sugar she liked.

“What the bloody hell!” Fiona yelled.
There it was. The reaction she was waiting for. Good god. She thought to herself.

Fiona dropped the spatula to the floor as she caught sight of them. Her eyes going from his hands to her, mostly on her and her forehead. “Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.” Fi swore.

Chibs bent and grabbed the dropped spatula, rinsing it in the sink.

Kerrianne coming into the kitchen from the patio, her eyes popping wide as she double-taked. She felt like she was on display at a zoo the longer they stared at her.

She blushed under the hyper-focussed attention. “Um, yeah...” She looked to Chibs who just shrugged with a smirking grin, the traitor she mentally labeled him for leaving her to explain this.

“...so, well...” Fiona raised her brows at her stuttering.

She threw her hands up with a shake of her head. ”Nope, there’s no good explanation.” She gave up and quickly grabbed the tea from a smirking Chibs. Who, she was sure, was enjoying her struggle to explain the impossible. Shooting him an annoyed glare.

“Holy fuck, Da! Your hands. And shite, your back.” Kerrianne went to her father to inspect his tattoos, Fiona joining her, turning him in the light to see it better.

“Oy, language!” He said over his shoulder to Kerrianne. But his daughter and ex-wife had their attention on him and ignored his attempt to correct Kerrianne’s foul language.

She smirked back as he huffed in annoyance as they ignored him. Poking and prodding him so they’d get a good look at his tattoos.

“These are protection symbols. And the griffin, that too. A powerful symbol. Who did this work? I’d never seen anything like it! And what, did you two go out last night and get these done?” Fiona demanded.

He gave her a glare like it was her fault he was being manhandled. She shrugged and grabbed a plate of pancakes and a couple strips of bacon, escaping out onto the patio.

“Good Lord, woman. Let me sit down and eat first.” He growled exasperatingly. Grabbing a plate, forcing Fi and Kerrianne back, stalking after her to the patio table. Fiona and Kerrianne following with their own plates, like dogs on a hunt.

She tangled her bare feet with his and he slid a grateful look to her. They still had headaches, she noted. Their brief moment of separation in the kitchen had raised the pain level, but as soon as they touched, it abated as usual. Wondering what else was needed until the headaches would go away. Or if they ever would. She sighed in frustration that she was no closer to an answer to that question.

Kerrianne sneaking looks to her and her father as she ate. Glancing at the tattoo on her forehead.

Fiona sipped her tea and gave them both hard looks. “Well? Is someone going to explain?”

She pointedly stuffed a forkful of pancakes in her mouth and looked to him with a wide-eyed innocent look. He rolled his eyes at her. His toes curling against her arches under the table.

“It started a couple of weeks ago...not long after we got here. Woke up one morning and I had the griffin on my back. Nancy, she’s got a tree of life on hers. The ivy vines were next. Now these. They just appeared. Never went to a shop or nothing. Swear to God, they just appear.”

“Just telling the truth of it.” He stuck to his guns.

She bit her lip as Chibs fell silent, chewing through his bacon. Her foot wiggling as she thought about their tattoos. Each time they got one, it was while they were in the throes, epic-sized throes, it seemed. He looked at her as he felt her still.

She couldn’t stop herself as she turned to Fiona, “When you and Chibs were married, would you classify the sex as epic?” She asked.

Kerrianne’s eyes bugged out, Chibs dropped his fork and groaned m ‘anam at her. Fiona fought to keep her sip of tea swallowed at her abrupt question.

She looked to Chibs and their guests realizing just now how her question sounded. “Sorry, learning curve.”

He gave her a glare but his lips twitched so she knew he wasn’t all that angry with her question.

Fiona looked between Chibs and Nancy’s shorthand conversation. “Err, well, it was good, I thought it was epic, but I think your standard of epic is in a class all its own.” Fiona answered diplomatically, Chibs shifting uneasily in his chair his eyes glancing at Kerrianne.

Fiona thought a moment and followed up. “Are you saying...are you two are getting the tattoos during sex?”

“No.” She said quickly to Fiona’s relieved look. “Well, not every time.” She said offhandedly as she thought more about it to herself. Fiona eyes widened in alarm again. “The griffin, the tree and the ivy seems to get more work done on it at times.”

“Way to go, Da.” Kerrianne chimed in with a grin and to his horror.

Pulling her into his lap. “What are you doing to me, m ‘anam? I think my daughter’s eyes pop out.”

She looked to Kerrianne and back to him. “Hey, stop that. You don’t get to make me feel like crap because you’re uncomfortable talking about sex with your ex and your teenage daughter. Who probably knows more than you think she does about sex. While all you got are the tatt’s on your hands, I’ve got one on my freaking forehead, my hands, my feet.... If anyone deserves to freak out its me.” She argued to him.

His eyes widened at her angry rant over his attitude of trying to maintain a fatherly role with Kerrianne while they’ve got bigger issues to deal with.

Fiona started laughing, everyone turned to look at her falling apart as she waved at them. “Oh my god, Filip.” Fiona broke up again. Kerrianne just looked confused.

She caught Fiona’s eye, “Welcome to our world.” She said dryly. Which set Fiona off again and Chibs knocking his forehead onto her shoulder.

“Can I see your tree tattoo?” Kerrianne asked.

“Uh, sure.” She pulled the back of her blouse up, twisting to show her her back. Her eyes landing on his, she sighed in defeat. His hand coming to her back, helping with her blouse.
“Sorry, I’m freaking out.” She apologized to him.

They forgot about Fiona and Kerrianne in that small moment and hearing the ooohhs from Kerrianne and Fiona in the background, as the two of them admired the ink.

“I know, I’m sorry too.” He said kissing her.

Kerrianne asking her mother for a tattoo. “No, not until you’re an adult and out of the house and supporting yourself. You can do what you want then. Not before. Besides work like these, these are gifts from God. Surely they have to be.”

“Do you know what the tattoo on my forehead and hands and feet mean, by any chance?” She asked Fiona. Picking up the knowledgeable tone as she spoke of Chibs tattoos in the kitchen.

Fiona took another look at her forehead, her eyes intent. She felt like she was going cross-eyed.

“The one on your forehead, it’s a triskele, a triple spiral. It’s usually drawn in one continuous line, yours is much more elaborate. But the basic design is there. I’d have to do some research when I get back home. It's definitely Celtic. But from what I remember, the three legs, represent dominion over the earth, water and sky and how they are all interconnected to the universe. Also, could represent birth, life and death.”

Fiona looked at the ones on her hands and feet. “Your hands and feet are the same pattern, they’re dara knots. Dara or doire translates to oak tree. Oak trees are very powerful. Represent destiny, strength, wisdom, endurance, and leadership. They’re signs of the divine. Along with your tree of life, your ability to read minds, a seer, they are all symbols of your power to see back in time and into the future, into the very nature of the universe. Very powerful symbols.”

“Do you feel any different?” Fiona asked her.

“I don’t know, I’m still a little freaked out. It’ll take some getting used to. Man, the guys are going to flip. I’ll never hear the end of it.” She groaned. “I’m blaming you.” Warning Chibs. Fiona laughed again.

He chuckled as she started freaking out again. “It’ll be fine, mo gràidh. Right as rain. you’ll see.”

“Fine, yeah, okay fine.” Her eyes brightened, “Hey, at least this will freak out Gemma. That’ll be fun. Push the rumor mill some more for the club. Come at them all spooky like. Maybe I should get a cape.” She mused.


“I like it.” She mused on Kerrianne’s idea. “But a cape isn’t very practical on a bike though.”

“Aye, see your point there.” Kerrianne mulled over the issue. “Maybe a blouse with a big hood? That could work.” Kerrianne said perking up.

“Really? I’ve got a shirt without the back to show off the tree, but no hooded ones.”

Kerrianne and Nancy went off to her laptop in the living room, surfing the net to some sights of clothing.

He looked off to where they disappeared to. His head starting to throb again. He glanced at Fiona and her contemplative look. Her eyes sweeping over him.
“What?”

“You thinking of marrying her?”

“Aye.”

Fiona nodded. “Good, I like her. She’s good for you. You seem lighter, more connected when she’s around.”

“Thanks Fi. It means a lot. I worried, she’s so young yet. But with everything happening.”

“Age has nothing to do with it. She may be young in body, but her soul, she’s as old as time. Now if you were to marry someone like Gemma or some skanky porn diva, we’d be having words.”

He quailed at the thought of hooking up with Gemma. “Dear God, woman, don’t put that thought in my head.”

Fiona grinned, but turned serious again. “When you do the ceremony, do it the old way. Blood handfast her. You two are bound, the tattoos, they all point to druids like Kerrianne said. Might want to pick a day that falls on the solstice or the like. Feels important for it to be done that way, especially with her triskele, she’s power.”

Listening to what she was saying. He liked the idea the more he thought of it. Wanting to lighten the mood, “You just want me to get all kitted out in the kilt and plaid.”

Fiona blushed at his teasing. “Well, you do have nice legs. Gotta show ‘em off once in awhile.” She laughed and helped him clean up the dishes.

He made a pit stop to grab a kiss with Nancy as she and Kerrianne surfed websites.

He felt his heart expand as he watched his daughter and his girl. Appreciating how much Nancy has filled his life. How much she’s grown and changed since he claimed her from back in Illinois just a few short weeks ago. Resolving to never take advantage of that. He was fucking lucky and he knew it.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My darling = mo gràidh
My love = mo ghaol
My baby = mo leanàbha
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 76

Chapter Summary

Barbecue at Jax and Tara's...

Chapter Notes

I've been especially loquacious today. Meaning, I did some writing and ignored work for most of the day. Hopefully this doesn't completely suck. Lemme know, thanks!

Errr, Trinity and Kerrianne are a little younger than canon. I'm not going to get specific on ages because, I'll trip myself up at some point in this tome.

And this whole part of the story is pretty big, so I had to break it up. This chapter is pretty big all on it's own. Are you liking the big chapters, I wonder?

Anyway, enjoy and have a good weekend!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She never realized packing up for a ten minute drive to Jax and Tara’s house could be so involved. Kerrianne spent an eternity in her bathroom. Well, okay, twenty minutes. Emerging with a fresh coat of makeup and perfume trailing after her. She sneezed as Kerrianne passed her. She raised her brows at Kerrianne’s choice of a tight miniskirt with red and white striped leggings and a pair of thick boots. Her top was a short, cream sweater that bared her navel. Interesting choice she thought.

“Kerri! Go wash that makeup off ye’. And rinse off that perfume.” Fiona catching sight and smell of the amount of makeup Kerrianne was wearing, told her to go wipe it off. “We’re going to be around the wee ones...ye’ can’t be reeking of that perfume with them. And change your clothes while you’re at it.”

“Ma! All my friends are wearing makeup and clothes like this.” Kerrianne argued her case.

“Ye’re too young for that much makeup. My eyes are bleeding. Go change.” Fiona countered authoritatively.

“But Nancy likes my outfit.” Kerrianne looked her way. Her eyes begging her to help her.

How she got dragged into this she had no idea as the mother-daughter argument shifted to her. “Don’t look at me. I don’t know a thing about clothes or makeup.” She shrugged helplessly.

“Christ...Kerri...what the hell are ye’ wearing?” Chibs piped up when he came back from their bedroom getting ready himself.

“Da!”
“Go change. It’s only a backyard barbeque.” He growled as he put on his leather jacket and kutte.

Kerrianne pouted at her parents. But under Fiona’s continued glare and a point of her finger Kerrianne stomped back to her bedroom to change and fix her makeup, grumbling under her breath as she went.

Fiona, meanwhile, had chosen a couple of bottles of wine from Chibs stock and bringing out a bottle of Irish whiskey from her suitcase as well. Chibs telling her that Tara had told them that they didn’t have to bring anything. But Fiona wouldn’t hear of it.

Chibs tossed his hands up in the air, giving up. He came to her side with a groan, pressing his lips to her cheek. “When do they leave again?” He asked her softly.

She snorted and patted his cheek. He picked up his head and caught her eyes with his. Grinning at her, finding the hilarity of the proceedings going on.

Kerrianne came back and Fiona gave her approval to the fix she did to her makeup and clothes. Even Chibs grunted an approval. His daughter rolling her eyes.

“All right, let’s go.” He prompted to hustle everyone out the door.

“Oh, but we should bring some snacks or side dish…” Fiona gasped, taking another step back towards the kitchen.

“No, we shouldn’t. Jax and Tara have the food. Now, let’s go.” He ushered his ex and daughter out the door while she locked up behind them.

She waited for Chibs at the bike, grabbing her helmet, as he helped Fiona into the tank. Kerrianne easily hopping into the passenger seat by herself.

“Just follow me. It’s only a short bit away.” Chibs fussed to Fiona, who just waved him off as she settled behind the wheel.

"I know that...who do you think dropped off Mo and Trini?"

She grinned at his mild frustration with the Belfast women in his life. He caught her grin and gave her a quick kiss before they climbed onto the bike and secured their helmets. Fiona was already on the road waiting for them to take the lead, honking at them.

“Jesus Christ.” He muttered as he fired up the bike. “The rate things were going, I’m shocked they even made it to the fucking plane to get here.”

His comment had her snickering as she wrapped her arms around his waist. He rolled out of the driveway and took point leading them across town to Jax and Tara’s place.

It was a perfect day, reminding her of her vision of being under the tree from their sex this morning. A sex vision, she coined to herself. She wondered if Chibs saw them under the tree, too. She’d have to ask him when they were alone.

The closer they drew to Jax’s place, the more nervous she was getting. The new tattoos still itching mildly. Reminding her that she was going to have to explain this new development to Jax and Tara. Maureen and Trinity. Christ, the club, too. Why did this have to happen now? Or at all? She lamented to herself. She hugged Chibs tighter as they made a turn though downtown Charming.

Chibs, either, brought his hand to hers at his waist or dropped it to grip her knee and thigh.
whenever they were stopped at a light. He seemed to sense that she needed that reassuring touch.

All too soon, they pulled into Jax’s drive rolling the bike next to Jax’s Dyna. Fi, parked along the curb. Followed by another production of getting out of the vehicle and gathering their things.

In the commotion, Jax stepped out to greet them. Hugging Fiona and Kerrianne, while Chibs helped her off the bike. Jax telling and pointing Fiona and Kerrianne into the house where Maureen and Trinity were with Tara and the boys.

Chibs met up with Jax as Kerrianne followed her mother into the house. Giving Chibs a robust backslapping hug.

“Hey, brother.”

“Jackie, how’s it going with Maureen and Trinity?”

She couldn’t make herself take her helmet off right away, looking out over the street as a couple of cars passed by. Listening to Chibs and Jax converse behind her.

“Good, it’s good to see them again. How’s it going between Fi and Nancy?”

“Went fine.” Pulling at his goatee. “And, well, had a bit of excitement this morning.” Chibs hemmed.

She sighed as she pulled off her helmet, setting it on the seat of the bike. She couldn’t put this off forever, she braced herself.

“Oh?”

Turning around, she watched Jax’s blue eyes go wide and jaw drop. Glancing back to Chibs who just shrugged, Jax moved towards her to get a closer look. She jerked back a little under his intense scrutiny.

“Holyyy shiit.” Jax gasped, as he tilted his head around so he could take in the jet-black, swirling triskele from every freaking possible angle.

She had to shut her eyes to keep from going cross-eyed. This was going to suck, she thought.

“What happened?” Jax asked.

His question had her popping her eyes open to glare at him. “How the hell do I know!” She waved her hands at him.

Jax stepped back at her hysterical yell. His eyes caught the tattoos on her hands. “Jesus, your hands too?”

“My feet as well, same ones as these. My tree and ivy are more detailed, too. He just got his hands and refreshing of the existing ones.” She huffed, just thinking about her tattoos had her itching intensifying. She knew it wasn’t the actual tattoos because she could feel the cooling cream still.

Chibs had stripped off his leather gloves and showed Jax his hands. “Calm down. Everything will be fine.” He told her again.

“Its his fault.” She glared at him for trying to sooth her when she and everyone knew that it was not fine. No where near the realm of fine.
Jax blinked between the two of them, his lips curling into an amused grin.

Chibs rolled his eyes with a put upon sigh, as he wrapped his free arm around her waist. His warm fingers at her hip shot warmth over her sensitive nerves.

Jax shook his head, catching her quiver to his touch. Chibs caught her hand in his, raising it slowly. Her eyes shifted to his whiskey ones. She felt her breath rush out of her under his intense look. “Graim thu, mo chridhe.” Laying a kiss across her knuckles.

And her bones turned to jelly as she swayed in his firm hold. Forgetting Jax was standing right there. Her heart raced and fluttered under his heated look. Mentally calculating how quickly they could find a bed. Bed was sounding perfect right now. Damn it, she closed her eyes and stiffened her body so she was standing firmly on her feet and not leaning on him. But it felt sooo good, she whined to herself.

“Jesus, you two. I want to go drag Tara off for some alone time just watching you.”

Jax’s amused comment snapped them out of their intimate bubble. Chibs grinned in that self-satisfied grin that she loved and annoyed her to no end.

She hrmphed as Chibs folded her into his arms. Jax took another close look at their new tattoos.

“Still kinda freaking out.” She replied, ignoring the hysterical edge her voice was taking on.

“I’d imagine.” He said straightening up and taking a step towards the house. “Well, come on in, we’ve got a ton of food. Maureen and Trinity are all curious as get out with you."

Chibs barked a laugh. “Fi and Kerri probably filled them in already.”

She groaned.

“Just get it over with, mo ghaol. It’ll be fine.” Chibs soothed in her ear.

“I’m still blaming you though for a while.” She complained mulishly.

“Aye. It’s all my fault.” He appeased agreeably.

Twisting around in his arms to look directly at him. “That’s right. You and your epic sex.” She growled at him pulling him into a deep kiss. Chibs quickly returning her kiss, their lips and tongues twisting and teasing each other.

“It’s only epic, because its with you, mo ghaol.” He crooned to her when they broke for air.

She held him a bit longer, still trying to catch her breath. “It’s you, too. Both of us.” She said, acknowledging that whatever was happening with them, it was a group effort.

He smiled gently at her. A smile that she couldn’t not smile back. “Aye. We’re in this together. Now come on.” Leading her into the house. They hung up their jackets and kuttes on the coat rack by the door.

They found Tara, Maureen and Fiona sporting wine glasses in the kitchen. At their entrance, the three sets of eyes shot over to her.

“Holy shite.” Maureen swore under her breath.
“Oh my god.” Tara echoed Maureen’s sentiment.

“Told ye’.” Fiona grinned gleefully.

“Hi Chibs...Nancy.” Tara smiled a little too brightly. But gamely holding her composure.

“Tara.” Chibs planted a kiss on Tara’s cheek. “Nancy, this is Maureen Ashby, Maureen, Nancy.” Chibs introduced. “Mo.” He gave Maureen a kiss on the cheek in greeting.

“Hi. It’s nice to meet you.” She said politely. “Are you having a good time?”

“Aye, you too.” Maureen said a little stunned, staring at the tattoo on her forehead. “And yes, thank ye’.”

“Where’d Jackie run off to?” Chibs asked.

“He’s out back with Trinity and Kerrianne, trying to get the grill going.” Tara said.

“Thanks.” Chibs pulled her with him out back, escaping the trio of woman's eyes. Fiona laughing behind them as they escaped outside. Good lord. God only knew what Fi was telling Maureen and Tara.

She took a deep breath, trying to settle her nerves. “Thanks for getting me out of there, I was feeling like a zoo animal or something with them staring.”

“Don’t fash yourself, they’ll get used to it.”

Jax introduced Trinity to her.

Trinity’s eyes wide as she caught sight of her tattoos. “Cool.” Trinity breathed.

“I know, right?” Kerrianne said to Trinity.

She wanted to argue ‘not cool’, but the girls started chatting with her about clothes. She just let them talk over her, they were really just talking to each other.

Chibs worked with Jax to get the grill fired up. “Jesus Jackie...are ye’ sure you’re a man?”

Jax pushed Chibs for the slight. “Shut up. There…” Jax managed to get the coals lit so the grill could heat up.

Tara came outside, handing Jax a beer. Abel toddling behind his mother. Fiona and Maureen coming out next. Fiona handing Chibs a beer. Maureen handed her a glass of red wine. “This okay for ye’?”

“Yes, thank you.” Taking the glass from her.

“We’ll have have some wine, too.” Trinity piped up.

Maureen gave her daughter a glare. “You two get yourselves sodas.” She declared.

“Ma’.” Trinity complained.

“No. Go on, the two of ye’.”

Tara took Thomas from Trinity as they passed.
“God almighty.” Maureen muttered.

She grinned to Maureen’s ire. “You should have seen Kerrianne before we left the house. Makeup to the hilt, dripping in perfume, and her outfit...” She shook her head. “...looked like a demented candy cane.”

Maureen snorted. “My advice, don’t have kids.”

She shook her head. “Can’t be all that bad.” She teased, strolling with Maureen back onto the patio, towards the table that Tara and Fiona had sat down at.

“No, not all bad.” Maureen agreed. “So you really a seer like what Fi’s saying?”

“Yep.” Giving her a serious look. “I’m sorry about your brother, Kellen. And Mac. It must’ve been difficult for you. Then having to deal with Gemma on top of it.”

Maureen double-taked on her. “I...Thank ye’. You know all that?”

“I do. I read Gemma and Jax. Dreamed of Chibs while he was in Belfast with the club. You took a lot of risks to help the club. To help Jax.”

Maureen shifted on her feet, looking down a moment. “I wonder...maybe should have…” She shook her head. “It matters not anymore. Things are better now.”

She nodded with Maureen’s sentiment. They reached the table and joined Fiona and Tara. Glancing behind her where Chibs was talking with Jax. Her headache was growing but manageable a little bit longer.

The older women talking about current news and things going on with the kids. Jax and Chibs joined them. He took up her hand, dovetailing their fingers, resting their joined hands on his thigh. She glanced at him in relief as her headache abated, he pressed a kiss to her temple before turning his attention back to everyone around the table.

The conversation turned to the weather. How much Fiona and Maureen were enjoying the California sun and warm weather. Reporting it was snowing and freezing cold back in Belfast. Chibs griped about missing the cold and rain. Fiona and Maureen giving him aghast looks.

Jax laughed as he got up to check the grill then going back into the house. The ladies started talking again only to eye her and Chibs again. Chibs lit up a joint, passing it to her. Noticing the sudden attention he gave them a glare before pressing a kiss at her temple. Getting up to help Jax with the tray of meat he was taking to the grill.

She took a deep pull on the joint, holding the smoke and rubbed at her forehead. Jerking back as she remembered the new tattoo as it yelped at her. Damn it. The silence and heavy weight of three sets of eyes on her, she looked up. Noticing the disapproving look Maureen shot her. Fi hadn’t told her about the pot apparently.

“I need it, trying to put on some weight yet.” She explained.

“Well, you’re thin, but not so bad.” Maureen said, her eyes relaxing as she swept over her form.

“I’m a lot better now than a month ago.”

“What do you mean? You were anorexic or something?” Maureen asked.
“Long story short, my father and step-mother were starving me to death.”

“Holy Christ, why?” Maureen asked, as all three of them leaned in towards her.

“Just unlucky, I guess.” She saw the questions in their eyes. Shrugging, “It was a bad time. Chibs came for me. It was a near thing. Thought I was hallucinating when he showed up. Basically, put me on the back of his bike and drove me out of there.”

“Shite.” Maureen said. “Well, thank God that he did.”

She handed Maureen the joint. Maureen eyed it debating with herself. Fiona elbowing her, to take it. “I shouldn’t...it’s for you.”

“I won’t be able to finish this.” She shrugged.

“Well, alright then.” Maureen gave in and took the joint.

Maureen took a pull, her eyes widened to the strength of the pot. Pressing the joint to Fiona. Fiona taking a hit and passing it along to Tara for her turn. Tara passing it back to her.

Kerrianne and Trinity wandering by looking at their mothers. They had Abel and Thomas in tow. Catching their mothers partaking in the joint.

“Ma! Really.” Trinity scolded. Maureen rolled her eyes at her daughter. Trinity and Kerrianne moved off over by the swing playset with Abel and Thomas. No doubt complaining between themselves how unfair life was when they weren’t allowed liquor or pot.

“Ah, shite, I’ll never hear the end of this.” Maureen laughed taking another hit of the pot anyway. Fiona and Tara giggling with Maureen. “How did our kids get to be such prudes?” Maureen asked Fiona.

“Beats the shite out of me.” Fiona laughingly commiserated.

She winced with her grin as the three women got high. Tara handing her the joint again. Taking another pull on the joint, she tried to ignore her pounding head.

Checking for Chibs she saw he was already moving towards her. He sat down next to her and kissed her. Their hands linking as they reconnected and let the headaches pull back. They rested their foreheads together, Her body molding to his.

“Oh over here?” He asked, eyeing the giggling chorus suspiciously.

“Hmm, hmm.”

“Meat’s cooking.” He informed.

“Oh, thanks.”

Chibs gave Fiona a warning look. “Oy, go easy on the drinking and the pot. You’re driving. And don’t get her drinking too much.”

Fiona waved a dismissive hand at him. “Pfft. I can still out drink you, ye’ worrywart. We’re taking good care of your girl. Now go away.”

Rolling his eyes, he kissed her before escaping back to the grill with Jax. Jax shooting them a worried look. But the three of them just started cackling again, enjoying the nervous look they
“God.” She moaned, seeing the amusement the women had for the Chibs and Nancy show.

“I’d never believe it til I saw it. I mean, I know you told me, but Christ.” Maureen said to Fiona.

She buried her face in her hands, to get a bit of time before being bombarded by Maureen’s questions. Dropping her hands back to the table saw Maureen looking at her tattoos. “So its true then. You’re a seer, truly?”

“I never put a name to it until Chibs did. I didn’t know what I was when it all started. Just whenever anyone touched me, it’s like drowning. I avoided touching or being touched for a very long time, over ten years. Until Chibs came for me. He’s the only one who can touch me that I don’t fall into. He’s sort of an anchor for me. Instead of drowning, I’m wading and floating. I’ll still get everything, but I won’t pass out and puke my guts out afterwards. We didn’t figure that out until recently.”

“And the tattoo’s?” Maureen asked, her hand waving at her forehead.

“I’m blaming Chibs for that right now. I’m a bit freaked out with the placement.”

“Epic sex.” Fiona sighed, as she set her wine glass down again.

She nodded taking the last toke, her eyes hazy. “Absolutely, epic sex. Thus, his fault.”

Maureen and Tara blinked at each other only to turn their attention back to her and Fiona.

“Been a long time since I’d had some epic sex.” Fiona pondered lazily. Then realizing what she’d said and who’d heard her. Giving a blush and squirm. “Oh, shite, that is good weed.” She huffed.

“Sorry, you can’t have Chibs back to scratch that itch.” She grinned to Fiona, which cracked Fiona up.

“Wait…hold on...” Maureen said, pushing her hand towards her to gain her attention.

“Are you saying that you got that tattoo from sex? How?” Tara interjected. The doctor in her spinning.

“Not just this one, all of them. Don’t know why. First ones showed up not long after we got here to Charming. First time, Chibs and I had sex.” She eyed Fiona gauging her reaction. But she didn’t seem upset by it, so she kept on. Maybe they could help her figure out what was going on. The design of the symbols were leaning celtic, after all. Tara and Maureen looked to Fiona themselves. Fiona shrugged.

“Woke up the next morning and I found a freaking tree tattoo on my entire back and down my hips. Chibs has a griffin on his back.” She continued.

“Bloody fantastic that is. He swore to me ages ago, he’d never have a tattoo that large. Didn’t like having to sit still for hours to have something that big put on. Then to have to keep getting it redone every few years.” Fiona added, taking another sip of her wine.

She glanced at Fiona, mentally trying to gauge just how high and drunk she was. But she was pretty high herself, so she couldn’t be throwing stones.

“Anyway, in the morning, shower sex, an ivy vine appeared up on my leg and his wrist and up his
forearm. Doesn’t happen all the time. Sometimes the back tattoos get more detailed. Sort of expecting to have an actual tree come bursting out of my back, the rate things are going.” She sighed.

“This morning, woke up, his hands got tattooed. And I got all these.” She waved to her forehead and her hands, ending up propping her head on the heel of her hand, elbow to the table.

“Do they hurt?” Tara asked.

“No, just itches for a day and then they’re fine. At least until the powers-that-be decide they need some more work done on them.”

“Can I see the tree?” Maureen asked.

“Oh, aye, you gotta see it. It’s bloody fantastic work. Don’t tell Kerrianne, I’m fucking jealous.” Fiona chimed in eagerly.

“Sure, I guess.” She shrugged, looking around vaguely.

“Let’s go in the house, one of the bedrooms.” Tara prompted.

The women got up in unison. She saw the three of them congregate around the wine bottles, refilling their glasses. She went over to Chibs for another kiss and hug before doing her show and tell.

“Hey…”Jax greeted her. “How are the girls doing?”

“Getting drunk, high and potentially horny.” She teased. “Be ready to take care of the kids when the party winds down, Dad.”

“We are seriously outnumbered, brother.” Jax grumbled as he turned back to the grill with a shake of his head. Chibs snorted at Jax’s comment.

“I already told Fiona she can’t have you for some epic sex. So don’t worry there.” She added.

“Protecting my virtue, m’anam?” He grinned, looking into her bright eyes. She clutched at him as her headache eased off. Grinning back up at him.

“Absolutely. You’re mine now. There’s no escape.”

He wrapped his arms tight around her, swaying on their feet as their weight moved. “No place I’d rather be than with you.”

“God, you two are sappy.” Jax snorted.

They looked at Jax sharply. “Oy, should I be reminding ye’ of how sappy you and Tara were when you were in school? God, thought my teeth would rot out the way you were going on.”

“Just watch the meat.” She ordered. Turning back to Chibs, “Maureen and Tara want to see my tree tattoo. Be right back.”

“Want me with you?” He asked concerned.

“I’ll be okay. Just flashing some skin and we’ll be back.” She assured him.

He kissed her again. His hand along her waist, as his concerned eyes looked her over. “Okay.” He
agreed and let her go.

She walked into the house and found the women in the master bedroom. They were chatting and sipping at their refreshed glasses of wine. Fi telling them that it was all true. What exactly she was referring to she didn’t know, she was too buzzed to worry about it though.

Their eyes fell on her as she walked in. “Okay, just don’t touch me. Chibs is still with Jax, I don’t want to accidentally fall into one of you.” They all nodded and she lifted her shirt over her head, holding it in front of her, covering her breasts. Turning her back to the women, she reached and twisted to the side to shift her braid to fall over her shoulder.

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Would you look at that.” Maureen said.

She felt the three of them step forward to get a closer look.

“It really doesn’t hurt?” Tara checked again.

“No, like I said it’ll itch, like it’d been worked on. Chibs has a cream for his regular tattoos that cools it off and then they’re fine.”

“God, it looks so freaking real. Like if you touch it, you’d feel the bark and the heat of the leaves. And fuck, it looks like the leaves are moving in a wind. Are you seeing this?” Maureen asked Fi and Tara. The two of them studying at her back longer. Confirming what Maureen was seeing.

“Damn, how can I get one of these myself?” Maureen asked.

Fiona slid a glance to her. “Epic sex.” They said in sighed unison.

“It must be.” Maureen declared.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

I love you = Graím thu
My heart = mo chridhe
My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 77

Chapter Summary

Chibs seeks sympathy from Jax. (grin)
And has a heart-to-heart with Kerrianne.

Chapter Notes

Didn't think I'd get a chapter out today. Had a ton of errands that needed doing.
It's a shorter chapter but it was fun and satisfying to write and upload to you to enjoy.
Not to worry, more drama is coming.

He turned back to Jax after Nancy disappeared into the house. Catching sight of Kerrianne and Trinity playing with Abel and wee Thomas. “How are you liking having a sister now?” Tossing his chin in Trinity’s direction.

Jax glanced to the girls location. “It’s great. I’ve always missed having a sibling growing up. Ope was kind of like my brother when we were kids. But its different.” He shrugged. “How are Nancy and Fi getting on? I was betting there’d be bloodshed by now.”

“I told ye’ it was fine. Fi and Nancy talked already over the phone. Kerrianne’s a little freaked seeing me and Nancy holding onto each other. Seems to be handling it. Just needs to know that she’s not some gold digger after her Da, I suppose. Of course, it didn’t help when we woke up with the new tattoos.”

Jax shook his head listening to him. “They are cool. Do they have any meaning, with your super powers and all.”

“Fi says these are shield spirals. Protection symbols. Makes sense with my griffin and my protective drive over Nancy’s well being. The one on her forehead, is a triskele. Supposed to represent a dominion over the earth, water, sky, and how they all connect to each other. The spirals on her hands and feet, those are dara spirals. Represents oak trees. Celtic lore is rich with oak trees, represents divinity primarily.

“Dominion, divinity? Fuck.”

“Aye.” He nodded to Jax’s silent assessment. “Back when we got the back and ivy tatt’s, Nancy wondered if we were going to keep getting them after we have sex. Joked we should be prepared to join a circus, we’d be covered in tatt’s.”

Jax huffed at Nancy’s dark humor. “So she’s a little annoyed with me. Like I did it on purpose.” He complained, poking at a steak with the tongs. “Nancy, she turns to Fi at breakfast, I kid you not
asks her when Fi and I were married, if Fi would classify our sex as epic.” He raised his brows at Jax, expecting Jax to feel as miffed as he was and be in his corner on the incident.

Jax looked at him and stepped back from the grill as he burst out laughing. Bending over, hands on knees, hysterically laughing like a fucking hyena.

“Fi just barely kept from spewing her tea. Kerrianne, shite, thought her eyes would pop out of her head. I just couldn’t believe Nancy said that.” Jax had tears now he noted, annoyed at how amused Jax was finding his tribulations.

“Oh my god.” Jax wheezed. “Wow. You are so screwed.”

“Thanks, Jackie, really appreciate your sympathy there.” Jax still fighting to get hold of himself.

He just prodded a few of the steaks, ignoring the laughing idiot. Kerrianne and Trinity wandered over with the kids.

“Hey, what’s so funny?” Trinity asked Jax.

“Well, when you have a current girlfriend ask the ex-wife…” Jax’s eyes brightened at the opportunity to poke fun at him.

He swiftly grabbed the back of Jax’s neck. “Jackie…” He growled. “If you value your life, you will not finish that sentence.” Jax just laughed and shifted on his feet trying to get out from under his tight grip.

“You mean when Nancy asked Ma about your sex life at breakfast?” Kerrianne blurted out.

“What?” Trinity asked as her jaw dropped.

“Kerrianne!” He yelled as Jax shook off his hand. Whipping his head around to glare at his daughter. Everyone looked at Kerrianne, her eyes widened either at their sudden attention.


Jax started laughing again like a lunatic and filled Trinity in on the news of latest foibles with their epic sex; whose face reflected the shock of the news and bursting into a fit of laughter herself.

Rolling his eyes to the sky, seeking a way out of this mess, he wrapped an arm around Kerrianne’s shoulders. Leaving the giggling siblings to man the grill as he lead Kerrianne to the picnic table for a wee talk. Remembering what Nancy told him last night.

“Sorry.” She said when they settled down.

“I’m not angry, just frustrated and I have a headache again.” Kerrianne looked at him in concern for him. “Nancy told me you asked her to read you.”

“Aye, I did. She said no, though.”

“Nancy’s ability, its an all or nothing deal for her. When she falls into someone, she gets everything. Nancy’s had it rough growing up. Her parents, the teachers, she never had friends to lean on. Nobody was there for her, they ostracized and bullied her. Almost killed her. Would have if I didn’t come for her.”

“She said she didn’t want to read me because it would be a violation.”
“She’s right on that. It is a violation, she feels guilty sometimes when she reads someone. She would know you on such an intimate level that not even me or your Ma would or could ever know you. She knows how much you and your Ma mean to me. She’s scared though that she’s ruining my life with her being with me. With the way she’d been treated, she’s different. Not as confident as you or your Ma. She’s learning though how to navigate around the guys, the club, and me. Add the powers and the tattoos, she’s rattled. This is the first time she’s had a chance to make real friends. But when anyone comes to her wanting a reading, she feels used, like you don’t want to know her.”

“I didn’t realize that until she told me last night. And Ma told me what you two were like, but hearing about it and seeing it...is completely different. And especially when she’s only a few years older than I am.”

“Kerrianne, I want you to listen to me, no matter what happens between Nancy and I, we’re just rolling with the punches with the tatt’s and her reading and such. But nothing would ever make me forget you or make me stop loving you. You’re always in my heart and never far from my thoughts.”

“I know, I guess I kind of panicked a bit when I saw the two of you. I do like her, she’s funny and she’s good to you. I’m glad you have someone.” Kerrianne hesitated, picking at her fingernails for a moment. “I’d... I worried for you all these years, being sent here to the states away from Ma and me. That you’d be alone.”

“I know, mo leanabh.” He hugged Kerrianne a little bit more. “You’re going to be going off to uni soon. Your Ma’s already harping about you leaving home and she’s a little scared herself, being alone with you going off to school and going out with your mates, dating and such. And I’m sure you want to go out in the world and explore for yourself what you want to do with your life. Life lessons that you need to learn for yourself. But no matter what, I’ll always be there for you, along with your Ma.”

He leveled a serious look at Kerri, making sure she was listening to him. “And Nancy, too. She’ll always will listen and will help you if you need it. All ye’ have to do is call. And we’ll be there for ye’.”

“Kind of hard when you and Nancy are here in California and I’m in Belfast.” Kerri said solemnly, not looking at him.

Her careful accusation flayed him. All the time he’d lost with her growing up, the loss of that bond. Fucking Jimmy.

He sighed ignoring his headache. Knowing he had to fix this. He couldn’t leave his daughter with this doubt. “I know it was difficult for you when I had to leave. I didn’t want to. You were just a babe. I’ll regret that for the rest of my days. I can’t go back and fix that. No one can. But I had to go or risk you and your Ma’s lives if I dared to stay.”

“I’m sorry.” Kerri apologized in a small voice.

“Hey, there’s nothing to be sorry for. None of what happened was your fault. Okay?” He watched Kerri nod her head. “And yes, it’s hard with you being in Belfast and me here. But there’s cell phones and emails. We skye. Your Ma keeps me up to date on what is going on with you. So don’t be thinking I’m in the dark over here. I expect you to call me if you ever need my help. Nancy does, too. Hell, she’d probably help you with your maths if you ask her.”

A frown graced Kerrianne’s forehead. “Really?”
“Aye. Nancy’s a whiz at math. She talks in her sleep sometimes. Working out a math problem while she’s sleeping.”

“No way.” Kerri’s eyes widened. “God, if I ever end up doing math in my sleep, kill me now. A nightmare that is.”

He chuffed at her reaction. “That’s a bit harsh. A little math won’t kill ye’.”

“Don’t be too sure on that.” She grumbled.

He grinned at her dire warning.

Kerrianne swiftly hugged him, he automatically returned the hug. His baby girl growing up. “Feel better?” He asked as she pulled back from the hug.

“Aye.”

“Good.” He nodded, glad they had this talk and settled some issues. “Now, this dating thing, if a boy doesn’t treat you right or worship the fucking ground you walk on then they aren’t worth your time or energy. Gay or not.” He couldn’t resist teasing her.

“Liam is not gay, Da! God. Nobody listens to me.” Kerrianne pouted.

He barked out a laugh. “We do, lass. We do. Now, why don’t you go light a fire under Jax and Trini’s arses to get the food done. I’ll go find your Ma and her gaggle of girls.”

“Don’t forget your girlfriend.” Kerrianne teased.

“As if I could.”

“You love her right?” Kerrianne asked seriously. God her emotions shifted on a dime.

“I do. It’s all been very fast though, can hardly catch my breath sometimes. Not to worry, it’ll all be fine. Go on now.” He sent Kerrianne off to Jax and Trinity.

He was just about to open the door into the house, when Tara yanked the door open. Her dark eyes wide and panicked.

“What’s wrong?” He demanded going on high alert.

“Nancy...she...uh...she’s asking for you.” Tara stammered after him, pushing his way into the house and searching out where she was. Tara hot on his heels.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My baby = mo leanabh
Chapter 78

Chapter Notes

hrmmm...not sure what to say about this chapter. Lots of talking and more supernatural issues are cropping up. Hopefully, this isn't a complete mess. Although, any grammar mistakes are, naturally, mine.

Let me know what you think.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She slid to the floor, her back to the wall. Her head was pounding like she hadn’t felt in a long while. Tara was sitting on the edge of the bed, Maureen standing next to her. Fiona leaning against the bureau.

Maureen ticked a sigh as she looked down at her. “It’s just...she’s so young, to be...I don’t know...forced into a relationship like this. I like Filip, don’t get me wrong, he’s a good man. But their ages. And her being a seer, it’s just too much on anyone. I couldn’t imagine this on anyone.”

“Maureen....” Fiona admonished. Taking on the job to protect her when it wasn’t her job to do such a thing.

“If I could change what’s happened to me. I would have.” She looked up at the three women, who paused their own conversation when she spoke up. “If my mother hadn’t crashed the car, she would still be alive. I never would have been in a coma. I would have grown up, possibly very much like Trinity...Kerrianne..or any other normal girl.” She shrugged.

“Nancy…I...” Maureen flushed as she tried to apologize.

“But it happened.” She stopped Maureen from trying to ease her feelings on something that she’s known her entire life and wasn't Maureen's fault. “My mother died, I was in a coma. I have headaches all the time unless Chibs is touching me. And I can’t touch or be touched by anyone else. There’s nothing I or anyone can do to change that. I had to survive. I learned how to survive.”

She rubbed at her forehead. “The dreams helped. Thought that’s all they were. My mind playing tricks on me, giving me a distraction, a lifeline of escaping my life for a little bit of time. How much he loves being in the club. Riding his bike. He lives his life. I...I was just clinging from one day and into the next.”

Sighing, “After a while, I felt bad for using Chibs in my dreams. That I was witnessing something that I didn’t have the right to do that. But I couldn’t stop. No matter what I did. I had no idea he was real. No idea he was dreaming of my life.”

Her breath hitched as her eyes teared up. She looked up at Fiona and Maureen. Even Tara looked stricken at what she was telling them. “And I’m ashamed that he was essentially forced to witness what my life was. Felt like a failure in comparison.”

“Didn’t anyone help you?” Maureen asked. “Did you go to a doctor for your headaches?”

“Couldn’t.” She shook her head. “Locked up in the basement. And I didn’t want to have anyone
touch me, afraid I’d fall into someone and never get back into my own mind and body. Plus, my parents didn’t want me seeing one; given their plans of killing me and all.”

She was getting depressed as she thought back to the days she was stuck in that house, the basement. How she was preparing for her death.

“Jesus.” Maureen breathed. The three women all glanced at each other nervously.

“It’s okay. Chibs came for me. Saved me.” She smiled softly. “Couldn’t believe it when he showed up at my school. Thought he was a mirage, if I moved or blinked he’d disappear. But he touched me and my head cleared. I could see he’d been in pain, too. When we kissed, I felt like I was expanding and contracting all at the same time. A bond formed or solidified, not sure. His touch...was the first time I’d been touched in any sort of comfort or affection in over ten years. And I savored that. Still do. I can’t help it.”

“I’m still a mess, but a bigger mess then. Chibs and Tig took me to a local bar...restaurant for some real food. I wanted to cry when the burger and fries was put in front of me. Managed to get a few bites down. Then a salesman at the Harley dealership touched me. It was so fast, fell in him. Tossed what little I managed to eat. It’s when Chibs started giving me pot. It helps me get my stomach back on track. And now these start popping up.” Waving her hand at her forehead. Giving Fiona a rueful look. “If I could have avoided coming out of the bedroom this morning I would have, but you just had to cook that bacon.” She mildly complained.

Fiona laughed apologetically. “Oh, lovey. I’m so glad Filip found you, sweet girl.”

Tara and Maureen nodded along with Fiona’s sentiment.

“Thanks. Anyway, I really wished this tattoo was somewhere else on my body. Not exactly how I wanted you to find out I’m like some crazed freak. Chibs cares for you and Kerrianne. I don’t want you to feel I’m stealing him or I don’t know, making him turn from his feelings for you and Kerrianne. I’d never do that. It hurts him when you talk about something that Kerrianne did growing up and he couldn’t be there for. I don’t want him to miss out on anything else.”

Fiona reddened at the slight verbal slap.

Tara and Maureen glanced at Fiona, checking on how she was taking the admonishment.

“I...I thought I was helping by telling him that, still be part of things in a way. You can’t know how hard it was when he left.” Fiona said.

“You can’t expect him to enjoy these stories you share, thinking its as amusing as you do. He couldn’t be there to share in that experience. To witness it first hand.”

“He never said…” Fi gasped.

She glared harder at Fi. “Of course he wouldn’t.” She said crossly.

“There’s two sides to this...ye’ can’t put the blame on Fi like that.” Maureen dared to interject.

She shifted her glare to Maureen. “I’m very well aware of that fact. The blame is on neither one of them. It was a shitty situation, no doubt about it. But I’m warning you...” She turned back to Fiona. “…don’t ever hurt him like that again. Your words carry consequences for him. He takes everything you and Kerrianne dishes out without complaint. He would carve his own still-beating heart out for your and Kerrianne’s safety and happiness. I won’t stand for the two of you to hurt
him again."

Tara and Maureen shot Fiona a careful look. Fiona stared at her stunned, as if she’d grown a second head.

Grimacing as she forced herself to breath and try and purge her sudden rush of anger. “Shit. Sorry. I didn’t mean to go off on you. Damn it.”

Fiona blinked at her, frowning now. “Don’t be sorry. You didn’t do anything wrong. I...I didn’t realize. Shite, I should be apologizing. I didn’t know how bad it was for him. But I should have.”

She shook her head, berating herself. “God. I don’t know what’s wrong with me. I never got this angry before. My emotions are all over the map ever since I got here. It’s freaking me out. And Chibs told me his side of things. Said he didn’t have any regrets. Told myself I wouldn’t hold that grudge.”

“Well, you’ve been under a lot of stress.” Tara said, trying to make her feel better.

“Aye. I’d be stressed with the tattoos for sure.” Maureen echoed.

“Nancy...there’s nothing to be sorry for. I’m not angry at ye’.” Fiona stressed.

“That’s no excuse. I want all of us to get along.”

“And we do. It’s okay, lovey.” Fiona said again.

She gauged Fiona’s dark chocolate eyes to the truth of what she was saying. Biting at her lip. But something was wrong. It must be a trick of the light. Shifting her eyes off to the side didn’t change what she was seeing. Who she was seeing.

Her heart raced as she took in the man standing next to Maureen. Taller than her, brown hair with golden highlights as the light played through his hazy figure. The ghost ran a hand over Maureen’s hair, his hand floating through the blonde hair, unable to push it back behind Maureen’s ear. Maureen shivered and shifted on her feet. Unaware of who was trying to playing with her hair.

She gasped as the man looked at her. Recognizing him. Oh God.

She felt as if her blood had completely drained from her body as the man crouched down in front of her. Goosebumps danced across her skin and felt her triskele wake up. Staring into those golden brown eyes.

“I’m sorry.” Her voice thick with sorrow as the man considered her. His hand pulled at his beard the same way Jax does sometimes. “I’m sorry.” She repeated.

“Jesus.” Maureen muttered. “She looks like you’re going to beat the shite out of her.”

“Maureen...” Tara warned.

She stared at JT in front of her. “There is a reason that you are here.” She said to him.

“What?” Maureen asked confusedly.

She tore her eyes from JT to look at Maureen. “You are here for a reason. You are meant to reconnect with Jax. Meet Tara and the boys.” She pressed her lips together, staring back at JT in front of her. “This weekend wasn’t an accident. I want Chibs to be able to travel to Belfast, to visit and see Kerrianne off to university or when she gets married. I want Jax and Tara be able to come
visit you and Trinity.”

Her head was screaming at her as JT leaned in closer to her. She pressed back into the wall behind her. Yet, a part of her, was curious to know if she touched him. Would she read him like everyone else or would it be as if he was never there? Or was he just a memory brought forth because Maureen, Jax, and Trinity were here. She didn’t think he was a memory though. The more she looked at him the more solid he looked. She could smell the worn leather from his kutte.

Fiona said brightly. “I’d love for you to visit. Aye, Maureen? It’d be a blast.” Her enthusiastic response trying to drag her out of her weird mood.


“Really? You see this happening?” Tara asked hopefully.

“Its a possibility. Things still need to be dealt with yet. But yes, its a possibility.” She answered Tara and JT, both.

“There’s a lot that has to happen first, takes time and trust. Jax is doing the best he can. Gemma’s been grooming him for a very long time. He thinks he’s untwisted from her, but not truly. And with the boys, Gemma’s already pushing for them.”

Her breath hitched when she saw JT’s eyes flare angrily when she brought up Gemma.

“Give him time and talk to him. You are his center. Without you, he spins out of control. Gemma takes advantage of that. We’re helping him with that.” JT’s angry eyes dimmed as he searched the truth of what she was saying. Testing if she was lying to him. And she had a feeling she didn’t want to know what an angry ghost does when lied to.

“Grooming? What the hell is going on?” Fiona asked. Maureen shrugged to her questions.

“Tara, he needs to know all of the information. Hanging onto those letters...he needed to know.” She ignored Fiona and Maureen.

“He was just so excited. Had a plan of leaving...of getting out. I thought they would only pull him deeper into the club.” Tara said. This was just a repeat of what they’d talked about in their therapy session.

“I know, but you didn’t trust him. Trust in the two of you as a unified front. Don’t ever stop talking to him. He hears you. Every decision he makes, he hears your voice.”

This double speaking was flipping her out. She didn’t miss the ramifications of her message to both Tara and JT.

JT shifted to look at Tara. Tara nodding, oblivious to the ghost of JT in the room, only hearing her taking her to task in her lack of faith in Jax and his ability to make things better.

Her head was pounding, she rubbed her eyes and temples trying to alleviate the pressure. And still freaked out that JT was there. Wondering what he was going to do or when he’ll leave. He seems to be learning about what was going on as he listens to them talk.

JT looked back at her, the question he didn’t have to speak. It was clear in his eyes.

“And Jax may never get out of the club, we’re working to change it.” JT’s eyes flared again. The challenge clear to succeed where he failed. “Change it so you can go and travel, even go to other
states and hospitals to have you do surgeries there. Don’t let Gemma’s rules dictate your life, your career, your relationship with Jax and your sons. We talked about this.”

Fiona and Maureen shot each other confused looks as she and Tara talked.

“I know. I know.” Tara sighed. “Thank you for doing what you did that day. Jax and I, we’re better now because you forced us to face issues that we never would have spoken about before.”

“Good. I worried I went too far with you, Jax especially. I hated pushing him so hard.”

“No, he needed to know. We’ve talked about it. He was raw and upset at first, but he’s better for it. He’s a better father and husband now. Now that he knows what it was that happened.”

“What letters? What the hell are you two talking about?” Fiona asked. Her questions drew her and Tara’s attention back to them.

“JT wrote letters to Maureen.” Tara told Fiona. “I found them in his bag after he and the guys had gone inside for fourteen months. He never saw or knew about them until Nancy came into town and told Jax to ask me for them.”

“What?” Maureen uttered. “All that time, he didn’t know about them?” Maureen directed to Tara.

“Things were busy around here when they got back from Belfast. I was kidnapped by a local ex-gang member who had a grudge against Jax and the club. Then everyone was busy dealing with Jimmy and the ATF were circling.” Tara defended. “Jax and the guys were inside before you could blink.”

JT shifted to look at Tara and then Maureen as the two women spoke.

“I only wanted him to know his father. I’d heard the pain in his voice about how he wasn’t supposed be in the club. That Abel wasn’t supposed be with a father who had blood on his hands. Gemma slapped Jax for not taking Abel when he found him. Yelled at him that she didn’t care how many people he killed, Abel was his son. Their flesh and blood. He was so torn and disillusioned over JT and the club, his life and Abel, he almost didn’t get Abel back. Thinking he was saving his son from what he had to grow up in. I only meant for him to know his father the way I knew him. JT was such a tender man. And Gemma chewed him up. I couldn’t let Jax know JT only from Gemma’s eyes.”

She looked up at Maureen. “I know. You meant well, but to Jax, to the club, Gemma and Clay... Those letters are a ticking time bomb.”

“How? How are a bunch of letters a time bomb?” Fiona asked, waving her hand at them to fill her in.

“JT spoke about Gemma and Clay growing close. A meeting he’d had scheduled with Father Kellen and the Kings.” Tara said.

“A meeting? What meeting?” Fiona demanded.

“A meeting to get the club out of the gun trade.” She said, staring right at JT. He frowned at her, the regret in his eyes over his failure in that plan.

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph.” Fiona swore when she put together the bits and pieces of information she was learning with what she knew already.
“Oh my god, I’m so sorry. I never thought.” Maureen’s eyes teared up, pressing her palm to her lips. “I just...I couldn’t stand the idea that Jax thought his father was so uncaring. John was anything but that. He was such a loving man...a loving father.” Maureen’s tears renewed. Fiona went to hug Maureen. Tara put her hand to Maureen’s arm in support. “He fought to save his club...to save his son, right to the very end.”

It wouldn’t help anyone if she started crying along with Maureen. It wasn’t her pain or grief to monopolize. “It’s okay. The decision was made. If you could go back, would you have withheld the letters? Withhold what really happened to JT, the man you loved?” She asked Maureen.

That question had JT looking hard at Maureen. Watching her along with the rest of them of how she was going to answer.

Maureen shook her head after a moment of thought. “No.”

She breathed a bit easier now that Maureen wasn’t so caught up in her grief.

“Free will, there are lessons that we learn in this life. Action, reaction. Instead of hiding the letters in his luggage, you could have physically handed them to Jax. That decision would have changed events right there.”

The three women shared a look between them. Thinking similar thoughts of how events might have been different. But it was moot point anyway. The deeds were done and there was no way to change that. Only how to deal with the ramifications now and going forward.

“Small decisions ripples out through time. Changes the board. But we are here, now. The letters are here and their truth will come to light. Another decision point. And its not all on you Maureen. The club has gotten itself in a deal that is far more complicated than anyone realizes. It’s taking time to unravel it.”

JT shifted his attention back to her again at that tidbit of information. She curled up tighter into a ball as he leaned in towards her. Her fingers ached to reach out and touch him.

“Why are you here?” She asked him. No longer able to ignore him, her head cracking under the pain of her headache. She knew she should get up and get Chibs. But she couldn’t move.

JT leaned closer to her. “What are you? I can see and feel your power, it draws me like a moth to a flame.”

“Uh...a seer.” JT frowned at her, thinking hard.

“Nancy? What’s going on?” Tara stood up and moved towards her but she only had eyes on JT. She felt her triskele flare to life.

“Mo...they can’t see or hear me, can they?” He asked her.

Shaking her head. “Did you want me to tell them something for you?” She offered. Maybe he just needed to say hi and he could go back to wherever he’s supposed to be.

“You really helping them get the club out of guns?” JT questioned her.

“Yes.”

“Don’t let them fail like I did.”
She breathed. “You’re only failure was not getting the club behind you on what you were doing. It let Gemma and Clay build a lie that now has turned into truth.” She scolded him.

JT scowled at her.

“Nancy? Who are you talking to?” Maureen asked.

She jerked her eyes off of JT to look at the three women who stared down at her in mixed worry and confusion. Looking at JT he shrugged at her. Rolling her eyes at him for his lack of help.

Her head exploded and she bit back a scream of pain.

“Nancy, lovey, are you alright?” Fiona asked, moving closer to her.

“She’s here.”

“Who?”

“JT!”

She couldn’t seem to focus on anyone except JT. Everyone else was hazy and fading into the background. Her stomach clenched up and she couldn’t seem to catch her breath.

“She’s here. Lovey, she’s here. Head hurts, need Chibs. Get Chibs!” She half-yelled through clenched teeth.

Tara ran out the door as Fiona moved closer to her. Maureen frozen where she stood.

“That’s not possible. John’s dead! He can’t...” Maureen cried out.

“Maureen! Stop talking. Look at her.” Fiona snapped.

She didn’t know what Fiona was talking about. She couldn’t pull her eyes off of JT. He raised a hand and reached out towards her. She curled up ever tighter, trying to avoid his touch. “Don’t.” She whimpered.

Ignoring her plea, he laid his hand across her forehead, covering her new tattoo. Heat sizzled where his palm rested over her forehead. Her spine cracked, her head snapping back to slam against the wall behind her. Then floating. She couldn’t feel anything. Suspended without the weight of her own body.

Time stopped and she was drifting in a golden haze. She had a brief moment where she thought she wasn’t reading him. Joy filled her in that moment, but it was short-lived when she felt the pressure of John. Pushing his way into her. Forcing her to take his memories and emotions. Learning what he knew and experienced in life.

The joy of his children being born, the feel of the wind across his face as he rode his panhead, the love he held for Maureen. The comfort Maureen gave him when he was being torn apart by his club and wife. The pain of losing his son, Thomas. The betrayal the club had become as Gemma and Clay undermined his authority. The hope he had to get the club out of guns. The hope and dreams of living a life with Maureen and Trinity. To fighting for Jax when he was settled in Belfast. And the grim realization that he had failed when his bike faltered under him.

“Succeed where I failed.” He said to her.

Anger flared at him for laying that challenge at her feet. “I’m only the messenger. Adviser. I can’t force anyone to do what you failed to achieve.” She mentally argued with him.
“Then advise them.” Her ears rattled from the rolling pitch of his voice.

Stubborn man, she thought.

JT grinned at her as if he’d heard her. “You have no idea how stubborn I can be. I’ll be watching you.”

The last thing she was aware of was Maureen crying and Fiona swearing yelling for Tara and Filip.

Tara rushed at his heels, as he looked in the nursery down the hallway looking for Nancy. “Master bedroom.” Tara told him.

Taking the quick strides down the hallway, he could hear Fiona yelling at Maureen to shut up. Then yelling for him and Tara. He only heard Fiona sound that scared twice in his life. His heart leapt when he heard a deeper voice from the room ahead.

“I was coming for you, Mo. Had to finish with business though; get the club legit, give Jackson a chance. Once the club was straightened out, was going to divorce Gemma. Wanted to marry you, Mo. I love you, Mo. Ran out of time. I’m sorry for leaving you. Wanted to be free with you. I never wanted to hide you. Hated how you had to hide. But you can stop hiding. Stop hiding in the booze. Stop hiding your love for me. Stop hiding Trinity from me. The letters, even those, you hid.”

“What the…” He muttered as he burst into the room. Maureen and Fiona were huddled by the bureau staring down at Nancy who was curled up on the floor. Her back arching against the wall, her head looking up at the ceiling. Her hands clasped together tightly, shaking in front of her.

“Who touched her?” He demanded of the girls.

Nancy turned her head towards him. Her purple-gold eyes glittered at him, unseeing. “Rí Claíomh, old friend. Protect my son...my Mo...my Trinity...my club.”

Goosebumps crawled up his spine as he recognized the voice. “Dùin am fuck suas, ye’ bastard. Let her go, John!” He yelled back.

“Protect them. Promise me, Rí Claíomh.” John demanded again.

He swore as he watched Nancy’s tears slip down her pale cheeks. Fucking asshole, using her to scare the shite out of them.

“Of course, ye’ bastard.” He crouched down in front of Nancy, grabbing her shoulders. Speaking into her eyes but knew looking at them, it was John talking to him. John who hijacked his girl.

“Promise me...promise me…” John demanded furiously.

“I promise. Now let her go and fucking go haunt Clay and Gemma.” He ordered.

It was a tense minute when he finally felt Nancy slump in his hands. She didn't have far to slump to as she was still on the fucking floor. Her body passed out and shivering. Her eyes shut and she seemed to be breathing normally.

Holy fucking Christ, he swore to himself as he picked up Nancy in his arms. Turning to lay her down on the bed. Maureen cried jaggedly behind him. Fiona hushing at her. Tara moving next to him as he stared down at Nancy. Waiting to see if John was going to make another appearance or not. After a minute, nothing happened except her continued shivering.
He laid the back of his hand across her cheek and felt how cold her skin was. “Shite.”

“What’s...what can we do?” Tara asked him.

He looked at her, remembering he wasn’t alone in the room. “Nothing. All of ye’ get out.”

“Filip?” Fiona questioned him. “She was talking and...and…”

“I know, Fi.”

“...with a ghost…” Fi kept on.

He moved and corralled the women, herding them towards the door. “I know. Just let me deal with this. Now, go on with ye’. We’ll be out when she’s better.”

Tara frowned at Nancy. “She looks like she has hypothermia.”

He gently but forcibly pushed Tara towards the door. “I got this.”

“But…”

“No buts.” He cut her off.

“There’s blankets in the closet.” She called out as he firmly shut the door.

Shaking his head he went to the closet and dragged down a folded up blanket. Giving Nancy another look, he quickly shed his shirt and boots. Doing the same to her, letting their clothing fall to the floor. Then, gently pushing her over he slid in next to her, fluffing the blanket out and covered the two of them as he pulled her into his arms. Rubbing at her bared skin.

Her shivers kept on for a few long minutes then died down a bit. Eventually, she went completely lax and molded herself into his side. Her steady breaths wafting over his chest. Relieved that she seemed to be more herself and not at risk to be taken over again, he replayed what happened. It scared the shit out of him seeing her like that. Hearing John talking to him from her lips. Making him promise before he’d leave her alone. Fucking asshole he swore again.

The heat of their bodies trapped under this thick blanket had him sweating. He wanted to kick the blanket off but held off to keep her warm as she slept. Shifting a bit with a relieved groan as his headache ratcheted down, he let himself drift off. Questions could be answered later.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

King's Sword = Rí Claíomh
Shut the fuck up = dùin am fuck suas
Chapter Notes

Big chapter here. Couldn't seem to find a break point. And I might have written myself into a corner with upcoming sections. Not sure. But this felt right for the characters. Might be a little clunky here and there.

Lemme know what you think. After this, we'll be getting into the canon storyline. Thanks for letting me swing into this side exploration of the characters and stories.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He stirred as he felt Nancy jerk against him.

“Hey, you okay?” He asked, shifting to his side to get a better look at her.

“It feels like my heart is breaking apart.” She cried, tears slipping down her cheeks.

He gripped her tighter, brushing away her tears, hushing at her. Racking his brain what he could do to help her. Feeling useless that all he could do was hold her.

“Such a wasted life. Ripped apart by jealousy, anger and greed.” She cried harder.

“Aye. That’s why we have to fix the wrong done.” He hushed to her. Holding her tight until she calmed down.

“He told me. Told me to succeed where he failed.” She clutched at him.

“How are ye’ feeling?” He asked her again, brushing her hair back from her face, swiping away her tears.

“Better. Still feeling a bit raw.” She said shakily. “Why are we half-naked?”

“You were shaking and cold to the touch. Like ye’ had hypothermia.” He shrugged. “Want to tell me what happened?”

“The girls wanted to see my tree. We started talking.” Memory of what happened earlier slammed into her brain.

“Okay, what then?” He prompted.

“Umm, kind of warned….threatened Fiona.” She squenched up her face.

“What?” His eyes sharpened on hers.

“I know you told me you were cool with how everything ended up between you and her and Kerrianne. I didn’t mean to bring it up, it just...I see how much it hurts you when they take what you do for them for granted. Talking about their lives, moments that you should have been there for.”

“M ‘anam….” He groaned.
“Sorry. Fiona wasn’t angry at me for bringing it up. I told her that I wasn’t going to make some stupid play to push her or Kerrianne out. Wanted for all of us to get along so that we could have more visits between us. Maybe go to Belfast to see Kerrianne off to university or get married one day. Told Tara the same to her and Maureen and Trinity, have them take the boys to Belfast for a real vacation. Tara asked if I’d seen it happening.”

He sighed as she explained what happened. He’d let all that expectation go a long time ago, thought he’d explained it to her that he was fine with how things worked out. But she couldn’t seem to let it go. Part of him was ecstatic that she was taking up protecting him. Making sure that he was involved in his daughter’s life from now on. He pushed some of her hair behind her ear that had come loose from her braid, fighting to keep from going all gooey at her sentimentality.

“Anyway, that’s about the time that JT showed up.” She bit her lip a little as his eyes caught hers again. “He was listening to the three of us talk. Everything I said I was talking with him and to the girls. I was freaking out. He came up close to me, stared down at me as he crouched in front of me. I could smell the leather of his kutte.” She breathed hard, trying to keep from thinking too hard about that. Worried that he might come wandering back.

“Jesus.”

“Like I said, he was listening to what we were saying, like he didn’t know what had been going on. Tara and I speaking about her lack of trust in Jax regarding the letters. Keeping them a secret from him.”

“Told her it was a possibility for vacations to Belfast.” She cringed again, “God...kind of lectured her on trusting Jax, give him time to work things out. Shit, didn’t mean to do that...lecture her like that, especially not in front of Maureen and Fiona.”

“I don’t think she minds, Tara’s tough.” He mollified.

“Yeah, well, I told her she should have showed the letters to Jax right away. When we started talking about the letters. Maureen said she only wanted Jax know his father. Not to give up on JT as a father.”

“Told her she had good intentions by packing those letters in his bag, but they posed a greater threat here with Clay and Gemma. For the club. Fiona was demanding to know what the hell we were talking about. Tara filled her in on some of it.”

“How much of it?”

“Tara told her that JT wrote to Maureen. Told her about a meeting with Kellen and the Kings. Get the club out of guns. We didn’t have to spell it out for her...Fiona figured out that JT died before the meeting could happen.”

“Maureen was horrified that she’d inadvertently put us in danger with those letters. I asked her if she had another chance at it, if she would have withheld the letters. Kept them a secret still. JT was really curious to her answer to that. Maureen said no. She would have given them to Jax.”

He grunted at that as he listened to her. “What happened then?”

“I don’t know. I couldn’t stop looking at JT. And he was staring at me. Staring at my tattoos. He started talking to me. Asking questions. I offered to tell the girls a message, thinking he just wanted to say hi or something. But he figured out that we were working to fix the club. Taking up his plan to fix things but I said it was going to take time. Things were complicated. He told me to succeed
where he failed. It ticked me off that he foisted the future of the club and everyone’s lives on my shoulders. Told him that I was just a messenger, an adviser. He just leaned in and told me to advise then.”

“God, he’s stubborn.”

“That’s what I thought!” Her brows popped up comically.

He snorted humorously, watching her recount her interaction with his old friend.

“Anyway, the girls figured out something was up when I started talking directly to JT. My head was killing me. I knew I should have come find you, but I don’t know...I couldn’t move. And I was too curious about the ghost in front of me. Tara ran out to get you. Next thing I knew, he put his hand over my forehead. I told him no. But he didn’t listen to me.”

“Did you read him?”

She thought about that. “Not at first, I think. I wouldn’t have if he hadn’t pushed his memories at me.”

“Do you remember John talking to Maureen?”

“Huh? Nooo...I don’t think so.” She frowned. “Felt I’d been yanked outside of myself. I just got the sense that he needed to say something to her the entire time. But the actual words, no.”

“Hmm. I didn’t know it was you at first, your voice changed. Soon as I came into the room, you looked at me.”

“I did?”

“Well, it was John. Using you to look at me. Made me promise to protect his family. Scared the shite out of me seeing you like that.”

“Sorry. I don’t remember any of that. What did I say to Maureen? Did you hear that?”

He sighed. “Don’t be sorry. Uh...just remember you...John telling her to quit hiding. Soon as I walked in, he made me promise to protect his family. Called me the Rí Cláiríomh instead of my name.” He shrugged to her grimace. “Told John to let you go and go haunt Clay and Gemma instead.”

“God...what am I going to do? I’m seeing and talking to ghosts now? Using me to talk to people? As if I weren’t a freak enough.” She stressed out.

“Hey...you’re not a freak. Don’t say that.” He countered sternly, tracing her triskele gently. “I think this has something to do with it.” He shrugged at her look. “You said it yourself, your powers are growing stronger.” Glancing around the room, “Is John still here?” He asked.

She checked the room again. “Not in here, at least. He might be following Maureen around. I don’t know. I feel better. More normal. Well, what’s normal for me. I’m not sure what that is anymore.”

He studied her, brushing her hair back from her face. “Normal is overrated.” He leaned down and kissed her. Her breathing hitched as her sensitive nipples grazed across his chest. Her arms and legs wrapped around him as their kiss deepened, finding each other again.

Breaking for air, nuzzling into the curve of her neck. Sweeping another kiss at her jawline. “Love
“Love you, too.” She sighed, running her hands through his hair. Her nails scratching at his scalp. “But I don’t think Jax or Tara would appreciate it if we had epic sex in their bed.”

Chuckling, “Nah...I think their bed needs a proper christening.”

“We can tease them about it, though.” Grinning up at him.

“Aye...it’ll have to do.” He agreed. “You hungry?”

She thought about it. “Not really. Damn it. I lost my high.” Flopping back, releasing Chibs from her hold around him.

He grinned at her consternation. “Not to worry, I’ve got another joint in my shirt pocket.” Giving her quick kiss he clambered out of the bed.

She shivered as he moved off her, missing his heat. Grabbing up the blanket, curling it around her. “God...how is it that you’re so warm? Like a freaking furnace.”

He smirked at her, picking up his shirt. “I’m just that hot. There’s no denying it.” He lit the joint and handed it to her with a wink.

Snorting a laugh, watching him put his boots back on. “So...how’s your day been going?” She asked ruefully, taking a hit on the joint.

Shaking his head at her, taking the joint from her. “You were right about Kerri.”

“Oh, yeah? How’d it go?” Leaning back against the headboard. Tara and Jax probably be pissed they were smoking pot in their room.

“Fine. Worked things out. Told her that she just had to call if she needed help. That you’d help her, too. Even with her math.” He handed her the joint again.

She raised her brows at that, taking another hit of the pot. He picked up her shirt, shaking it out a little. “Can’t we just stay in here?” She whined, realizing that she was going to have to go back to the party. Not looking forward to dealing with an angry and upset Maureen.

He eyed her. “Nope. Jax and Tara will want their room back sooner or later.”

“Thought they’d have a king-sized bed.”

“The room’s too small for a king. Now, quit stalling.” He said, taking the joint from her, tucking it into the corner of his talented lips. His hands steadying her as she found her feet. Quickly sitting down again as her head swam.

“Okay?”

“Just a little light-headed. Give me a minute.” Pressing her lips shut tight. “Did you have some of that cream for the tattoos with you?”

“No, why? They itching?”

“The one on my forehead. Stupid JT. I felt it...wake up…”

“Wake up?”
“Yeah. Right before he touched it. Said that he felt my power, was drawn to it.”

“Hmmm...it looks the same.” He said, peering intently at her tattoo. “Let me see if Jax has something we can use. Put your shirt and boots on.”

He left the room in search for some cream while she dragged her boots and shirt on. The pot was starting to hit her and her head swam. She felt all discombobulated and wasn’t sure she could walk without help. She gathered the blanket and folded it, setting it down next to her when Chibs came back with a small tube.

“Found this in Tara’s bag.” He quickly opened the tube and spread the cream on her forehead.

“Oh, god. Yeah. Right there.” She groaned as the cooling effects took over, leaning her head against his massaging fingers. “God...I love you. Such talented fingers.” She hummed.

“You sure you’re okay?” He asked again.

Nodding. “I’m really high.”

Rolling his eyes at her. “Okay, come on you. Let’s get some food in you.” He helped her up onto her feet, his hands gripping her tight as she swayed.

“Can you walk?” He asked in worried concern.

“I think so.” She checked the bed and patted at the pillows and duvet to straighten them out.

“Good Lord...leave the bed alone.” He ordered, his hands catching her before she collapsed back on the bed.

“I just wanted to straighten it up a bit.” She complained, as he helped her through the house and back out onto the deck. She felt like an old woman, stepping carefully so she didn’t trip over her own feet. She kept moving, feeling his tight hold on her and his concerned eyes.

Soon as they stepped outside, everyone’s conversations halted abruptly. She clung a little harder under the multitude of eyes swung in their direction. Well, Abel and Thomas were oblivious, keeping Kerrianne and Trinity focused on their duties with helping the kids eat their lunch.

Fiona sat next to Maureen, rubbing at her back soothing the blonde. But her heart broke at the sight of Maureen. Hunched over and smoking a cigarette like her life depended on it. Her plate still untouched. She quickly scanned the backyard and didn’t see JT. That’d piss her off. He scared the living crap out of everyone, it’d be added insult to injury if he’d hung around.

“I hope you don’t mind, we started without you.” Tara interjected the unnerving silence and stares. “There’s plenty left.”

“It’s okay. Sorry.” She apologized as Chibs helped her down into a seat.

“Stay there.” He ordered, giving her a hard kiss.

“Where would I go?” She joked sarcastically.

Shaking his head, he went to the grill and packed up a couple of plates for them. Jax got up and brought over a couple of beers for her and Chibs.

“You okay?” He asked, setting the bottles down.
“Yes, thank you.”

Nodding, he went back to his chair next to Tara and Maureen.

Chibs came back and set a plate down in front of her. A steak, baked potato drizzled with sour cream and chives. Coleslaw on the side. His plate filled with similar items, just larger portions. She was aware of the eyes that were shot her way. They were trying to be polite, but their mix of curiosity and fear weighed on her. But she just couldn’t handle dealing with it at the moment. Picking up her fork and knife, she cut her steak and took a bite.

Chibs pressed a kiss to her temple as she chewed and turned to his own food. Eventually, the conversation slowly picked up again and they were left in peace to eat their food.

Of course, she caught Chibs sending everyone a warning glare that helped them along back to what they were talking about before. Or most likely a change in topic.

She felt better with some food in her. Her plate still half-full, but she felt better. Taking a deep breath and raising her face to the sun overhead, letting its heat soak into her. God, she was tired.

Trinity and Kerrianne had taken the boys over to the swingset as the rest of them settled in. Tara, Maureen, and Fiona all grouped together talking about something. She didn’t know what. But Maureen was looking a little better so she didn’t want to interrupt them.

Jax moved over next to her and Chibs at their end of the table. Smoking a cigarette with a fresh round of beers for the three of them.

Chibs sipped at the beer, setting it down, he lit a cigarette for himself. Even with the smoking of pot, she didn’t like smoking cigarettes for herself. Mentally making a note to talk to him about trying to cut back on them. She wanted him around for along time...not get sick with lung cancer in a few years.

“You were talking with JT?” Jax asked.

She looked to Jax’s hurt eyes. “Whatever it was that I...JT said to Maureen, it was meant for her.”

Jax gave her a hard look, clearly not liking her answer.

Chibs ran a hand along her back.

“Truth to power, Jax. Not everything is about you.”

Jax grimaced at her rebuke. Looking over to where his kids were playing then back to her. “I miss him.”

“Jackie…” Chibs warned.

She shook her head. “JT wrote for you. He gave you himself. His innermost thoughts in that book and those letters. A man, that is as flawed as the rest of humanity. Maureen, she truly loved your father with her whole heart and soul. Just as you love Tara. What do you want your sons to know about you? The myth or the man? Because if they only see you as a myth, it will be impossible for them to measure up against you when they grow up. Something you’ve had to do yourself growing up.”

Jax rubbed at his beard in frustration.
“You want to know more about your father? Go ask Maureen. She’s had to bottle up her memories and feelings for him for decades. She’s dying to talk about him.”

Leaning closer to Jax, making sure he heard her. “There is a reason that she is here. Learn from her. Don’t waste a fucking minute you have with her and Trinity. It’s a gift and you’re sitting here complaining that you didn’t get to talk with him?”

Taking a cleansing breathe. Glancing at the women at the other end of the table, their attention on her again. She didn’t think they could hear her but it had her remembering that this was supposed to be a party.

“No...” She smiled pointedly. “...go be a good son and talk to Maureen, your step-mother, if JT had succeeded. I scared her by what happened.” She shooed him off, refusing to bend under the weight of his silent pressure to divulge more of what she got from his father.

She picked up her fork again, forcing herself to eat some more. Ignoring Jax staring at her. Thankfully, he got a clue and wandered back to Tara and Maureen and Fiona.

Sighing, she and leaned into Chibs. “So not a learning curve. What the hell is happening to me?”

“You powers are growing, Seer.” He said, his hand stroking down her spine soothingly.

The girls came back with the boys, Thomas crying and Trinity looking frazzled. Tara quickly got up and took him from her.

“Time for their ‘n-a-p-s’. ” She announced. Kerrianne and Trinity followed Tara into the house, herding Abel with them.

Fiona took the opportunity to leave Maureen to Jax and sit down near them after refreshing her wine.

“You doing better, lovey?”

“Yes. Thank you. Sorry for...” She waved towards the house.

“Don’t be sorry. I suspect it was something you couldn’t help.”

She nodded. “How’s Maureen holding up?”

Fiona glanced at the blonde. “She’s naturally rattled, but worried about you.”

Rubbing at her eyes, glancing to Maureen again.

“Don’t fash yourself over it.” Fiona interrupted whatever it was she was going to say.

“I can’t help it. I wanted this weekend to go smoothly. And this all crops up?!” She stressed.

Fiona laughed. The laugh had her looking at Fiona again. “Lord, in heaven, this is going smashingly good. Nobody’s been hurt bleeding or dead...that’s as smooth as you could get around us Irish lot.”

“Oy...Scottish over here.” Chibs interjected humorously.

“Aye...ye’ do get yourself into some scraps, too....Rí Claíomh.” She leaded.

Chibs shifted on his chair. “Don’t.” He warmed with a point of his finger.
“I thought it was all just stories, the Rí Cláíomh. But it’s true, isn’t it? It’s you? Isn’t it?” Fiona pressed.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Fiona glared at him. “I know what I heard, Filip.”

“Buail é.”

“Ní dhéanaimid ag caint faoi seo.”

She didn’t know what they were talking about, but by their angry eyes and harsh tones, they were fighting.

“Is féidir leat gach rud a theastaíonn uait a labhairt, ní ábhar.”

“Hey...quit it. There’s been enough weirdness around here. I don’t need the two of you fighting on top of it. At least, do it in english so I know what the hell you’re saying.” She admonished the two of them.

Fiona and Chibs looked her way.

“Sorry, m ‘anam. You’re right.” He pressed a kiss to her cheek.

Fiona’s eyes glittered, still in fighting form.

She pushed her glass of wine closer to her. Fiona’s eyes shifted to the glass and away from Chibs. And Fiona’s anger faded as she took hold of the wine. But looking at Fiona’s eyes, she knew the fight wasn’t over. Just pushed off for a bit.

“Later.” She ordered, leaning in closer to Fiona.

“Aye. Later. I will have my answers.”

“Jesus Christ, Fi…” Chibs groaned.

“Filip…”

“Stop it. Both of you. Now is not the time or place to have whatever this discussion is about.” She told them harshly.

Fiona breathed in as if to argue with her some more about it.

“Fiona...let it go.”

Fiona huffed and shifted in her chair. Her lips pressed tight, finally relaxing and taking a sip of her wine. Nothing was settled, but pushed off for now at least.

Their truce was interrupted by voices coming from inside the house. Harsh and threatening to accusatory. God damn it. Now what?

Jax and Chibs perked up, looking towards the house. Kerrianne and Trinity came striding out. Kerrianne slipped into the seat next to her mother, hunching over. Trinity was angry and sat next to her mother. Snatching her mother’s glass of wine and taking a healthy gulp.

“What is it, Kerri?” Fiona asked.
“Gemma’s here.”

Tara came striding out of the house, beelining right for Jax. Her body stressed and Jax quickly stood up, grabbing hold of her. Before Tara could say anything, Gemma stood in the doorway, glaring at Maureen. Maureen glaring back at Gemma. Jax looked pissed.

“She’s here. I told him to tell Gemma all of you were coming.” She muttered towards Fiona and Kerrianne.

Fiona snorted next to her.

“Ma! What are you doing here?” Jax yelled at his mother while helping Tara to her seat.

“She’s doing what you’re doing here?” Gemma demanded with a pointy finger jabbed at Maureen direction.

“Gemma!” Tara admonished, ready to get up and go after Gemma if necessary. But Jax’s hand kept her in her chair.

“We were invited.” Maureen hissed.

“I’m not talking to you.” Gemma’s voice dripped of disdain.

“Aye...but you’re talking about us.” Maureen returned.

“Gemma, why don’t you get yourself a drink and some food. Relax.” She interrupted the brewing fight. She felt everyone’s shock that she invited Gemma to join the party.

Gemma’s eyes landed on her and she saw them widen in surprise but then narrowed again. Apparently, her new tattoo’s were enough to back Gemma off.

“This is your fault. Bringing these people here.” Gemma accused, stepping closer to her. Chibs stood up, putting himself between her and Gemma.

“Ma!” Jax rebuked sharply. But Gemma didn’t take notice of it.

She rolled her eyes at Gemma’s wild accusation. Because of course, she was the source of the worlds problems according to Gemma.

“What are you doing here, Ma!” Jax rounded on Gemma.

“I came to check on the boys. Thought I’d take them to my place for the night.”

“No. The boys are just fine right here. You know you are supposed to call first before showing up like this.”

Gemma glared at her son a moment longer, her eyes turning soft and hurt. Like Jax betrayed her. Man, she was good and twisting him up.

“What are you doing, baby? What’re you thinking having these people over at your house? Getting close to your children? They are not your family.”

She heard Fiona hiss at how Gemma was talking to Jax. Maureen shot a wild look to them, not sure she heard Gemma right. Tara rested a hand to Maureen’s arm. Trinity and Kerrianne’s eyes shifting amongst the adults.
Jax stood there, his jaw tight, blocking his mother from stepping closer to them. “That’s it.” He said. “That’s why I didn’t tell you. I knew you’d be like this.” His voice growing stronger.

“Like what? Protective of my boys?”

“They are family. Leave, Ma. Now.” He ordered.

Gemma backed up a step, staring at Jax angrily. “Not without my boys. I won’t leave them here with them around.”

Jax snapped and grabbed his mother, forcing her back into the house. Their voices rising. A door slamming shut. A tense few minutes everyone watched the direction Jax and Gemma disappeared to.

“Did that just happen?” Fiona breathed next to her.

She glanced to Fiona, silently confirming the fucked up-ness that was going on.

“And you invited that to join us?” Fiona blinked.

She shrugged. “It’s part of helping her. Getting her to loosen her grip over Jax and the boys. Learn to let things be. I’ll admit...it’s not going very well.”

Fiona and Chibs snorted in tandem to her assessment.

“Hey...I’ve only started. Give me time.” She shrugged.

“You’re going to need the next millenia to get that woman to bend.” Fiona said.

They heard a car door slam and then a roar out onto the street. The sound of an engine fading as Jax walked back out, looking pale and shaken. Chibs quickly grabbed him up into a bear hug. Chibs let him go after making sure Jax was okay. Jax nodding as Chibs let him go. Chibs sat down next to her again. Taking her hand in his. Everyone watching Jax as he moved towards Tara.

He pressed a hand to Tara’s shoulder as he passed by her. His eyes pinned on Maureen. Maureen’s own eyes wide as he pulled her up into a hug.

“You’re my family.” He gruffly said to her.

Maureen wiped at her eyes as Jax grabbed up Trinity into a hug, too. Trinity gripped her brother tight. “You think you could get away from us? Got another think coming, brother.”

The three of them laughed, surreptitiously swiping away their tears.

“Dear God, we’re a frightful mess.” Maureen lamented.

Jax grinned ruefully. “Nah...you fit right in.”

“Jackson.” Maureen scolded lightly. To which, he just grabbed her into another hug and gave her a kiss to the cheek.

They all sat back down. Jax relaxed and smiling at his new family members. She quirked a brow at him from across the table. He rolled his eyes at her. “Sorry. I should have listened to you.”

She shrugged, letting him off the hook for a lecture. It was a party after all.
He pulled out another cigarette as he leaned on the tree next to Jax who was lost in his thoughts. “It’s good having them over, aye?”

“Yeah. They all have such different ideas and perspectives. It’s refreshing from the usual crap that’s doled out by Clay and Gemma.” He said. Looking over at him. “You holding up okay? It’s been quite a day for you, too.”

He huffed, “You could say that again. Nancy’s having a hard time, her powers are growing. Jesus, I don’t know what to think with her channeling JT. Scares the hell out of me. And the tattoos. Just feel like we’re gearing up for something big and I don’t know what or where it’s going to be coming from.”

“I hear you. You have no idea how much I just want to pack Tara and kids up and just take off. Leave all this behind. I hadn’t put it together what JT was really trying to do with the Irish. And I know, if JT really was leaving Gemma for Maureen, Gemma never would have let me out of her sight. I remember a lot of fighting and strained silences back then. Thought it was all mostly due to Thomas dying. But, I don’t know, she’s got a point with JT, the myth or the man shit. Feel like I have to revisit every conversation I’ve ever had and reexamine everything that I’ve done. God, why can’t things just be easy? For once, let it be easy.”

“I think the club had a hand in perpetuating the myth of JT for you, at least. You ever think what the club would look like if JT had succeeded in getting us out of the guns? JT was complicated, didn’t let people in easily. But he loved you, Jackie. Make no mistake about that. Nancy never had that kind of love from a parent, so she recognizes it when she sees it.”

“What about her parents?”

“Her mum died in that car accident. Her father was never around and when he was...as she would say...he was critical and cold. She told me that she thought her father might come look for her, or her step-mother, too. Scared they’d track her down.”

“What? Why? They were arrested for the embezzlement?”

“Aye, probably has no clue where she is, but she worries.”

Jax checked the activity around the house.

“Told her that if her father or step-mother ever shows up, I’d put them in a cold, dark basement myself for the wrong they did her.” He said darkly.

“Well, she’s a member of the club, she has the club behind her. I’m behind her, just say the word.”

“I’d feel better if we got this whole cartel deal straightened out.”

“You and me both, brother, you and me both.”

“Come on, Nancy’s looking a little horrified by Fi and Mo. Wonder what those two are cooking up?”

Jax grinned, “Man, you are so whipped. How do you find these women?”

He shook his head, “It beats me, just lucky I guess.” Giving Jax a wink as Jax laughed and went into the house to find Tara. He sitting down next to Nancy, pulling her into a kiss.
Night was falling, Fiona and Tara were clearing the table with Trinity and Kerrianne’s help. Setting the kitchen up for dessert and coffee. Chibs and Jax were off deeper in the yard, leaning against a tree talking and smoking. She sat down across from Maureen, who had moved on from wine to whiskey.

“I’m sorry if I said anything that upset you. I wasn’t completely aware what was going on. This whole seer thing, the tattoos, it’s all a little overwhelming at times. I’m sorry.” She apologized.

“I miss him so much.” Maureen admitted. “What you and Chibs have, JT was like that. Not with the whole epic tattoo sex, but it was pretty good.” She said wryly, pulling from her funk.

She blushed. “I’m sooo not going to live that down. I know its going to sound strange. But I think its good that you think of JT like you do. Jax does on occasion but its not the same, he sees JT as some myth, an ideal to live up to, most of the club does. You knew him as a man, warts and all. I think JT would like knowing that someone here knows him as he was, and loved him. Told Jax you were his step-mother.” Maureen sat up at that.

“What?”

“JT was leaving Gemma. He wanted to get Jax out, if he succeeded, you would have been his step-mother this whole time. Grown up alongside with Trinity.”

“Shite, I didn’t think of it that way. Gemma never would’ve let that happen.” Maureen’s surprise turned bitter at the thought of Gemma.

“Yet, here we are. Opportunities coming full circle. Don’t let it waste away. Jax could use a real mother.”

Maureen looked intently at her, the two of them recalling how Gemma spoke to Jax.

“Gemma did a real number on Jax, didn’t she?”

“Yes. Yes, she did. And he’s learning the truth of that. We’re trying to fix things, but habits are hard to break.”

“Jesus Christ.” She muttered. “I loved John. I wondered for years what...how life might have been if things were done differently.”

“Constantly looking to the past...it doesn’t give you time to explore what’s ahead of you.”

“Aye. True that.” Maureen sighed softly, taking another sip of the whiskey.

She frowned at the blonde with her drinking so much. “Look, I know you’ve had a shock. JT’s ghost, Gemma, the ramifications of the letters. Things are going to become busy and dangerous with the club. I said it to you, to JT, and to Jax...there’s a reason you are here today. Jax needs you. He won’t say it in so many words, but he needs you and Trinity in his life. Show him how to live outside of the club.”

“I’m a friend of the club back in Belfast. I’m not outside of it. I’m doing my best to keep Trinity as far away from it as possible.”

Nodding, “You’ve done a great job raising her. She’s an intelligent woman. But I see her watching you. She’s worried about you. I’m worried about you.”

Maureen frowned at her. “I’m fine. Surviving just as I always do.”
“Surviving...that isn’t living. Chibs told me what JT said to you about hiding.” She took up Maureen’s glass of whiskey. “Hiding in this. I hope that you’d take stock and decide to taper off of this. There isn’t anyone around anymore that can hurt you or Trinity. Except yourself.” She set the glass down.

Wincing under Maureen’s icy look and her headache. “Shit, sorry.” She pressed her hands to her temples. Glancing off to where Chibs was still huddled with Jax. Her head pounding. “I don’t know where some of what I say comes from. It’s your life, what to do with it. I just hope that you take advantage of your future and stop hiding in the past of what-if’s. It’ll drive you crazy.”

“Was it really JT talking to you, you know, before?”

“Yes. But I’m not sure what he said to you. He touched me and I was flooded with his memories and emotions. I was yanked out of myself. I don’t know how else to describe it. I’d never seen or talked to a ghost until today. I’m freaked out what’ll happen the next time a ghost pops up. Will they try and use me, too? I don’t know.”

Fiona slipped in beside Maureen as she was talking about what happened. A glass of whiskey in hand, too.

“You’re a seer. I think with that triskele, it’s opened you up more into the spirit world. Tapped into the universe.”

Maureen looked at her triskele in thought.

“Great, just what I need, a faster internet line to the universe. Well, it’ll at least fuel the rumors pretty quick. And if I flip out, bonus.” She cheered in mock glee.

“Why do you need to fuel the rumors?” Maureen asked.

“Chibs tried to get through church without me. Even though we’re together, we still get really bad headaches. We can’t function without each other. He threatened to leave the club if I couldn’t be with him. The guys needed to figure out a way of explaining why I was in the room, going on their runs, when even old ladies aren’t allowed. Chibs told them its easier to just tell the truth than try and keep up with a lie. We had no idea that Chibs and I would get so esoteric. My powers are growing, still. I’ve never channeled a ghost before today. And I have no idea what’ll happen next.”

“Jesus, these boys. Thinking they’re running anything at all.” Fiona said.

“I bet Gemma would be holding that damn gavel if she had an actual dick and balls.” Maureen added.

“Who says she isn’t.” Fiona and Maureen turned their gazes to her again. “She’s been the queen for a very long time, she loves the attention it gets her. She won’t give up her power easily.” She shared. “You saw how she was.”

“Is there anything we can do to help?” Fiona asked worriedly.

Her heart swelled at the looks of friendship. She smiled at them. “You’re already helping just by being here. Believe me, Gemma will remember your visit here, that you’ve been welcomed with open arms, allowed into Jax’s life, with his blessing. Allowed to have access to her grandchildren.” She looked directly at Maureen. “Remind Jax and Tara that they have family outside of the club and Charming.”

“Shite, sounds dangerous. Gemma can be unpredictable.” Maureen said.
“I know. But we need to strip the queen of her powers. She’s a very good liar. She couldn’t stand
the idea of Jax going to Belfast without her when they had to go find Abel. She wasn’t supposed to
be on that flight.”

“But...he knows. Gemma and I told them.” Maureen said, alarmed.

“Separately. You don’t know what she told Jax. How she spun the story of JT walking out on her.
Making sure Jax sympathized with her plight. How different would that be if it were you that told
him what happened?”

“Oh, Jesus Christ. Are you kidding me?” Maureen gasped.

“No. I read Gemma. I read Jax. I know what happened. It’s why Gemma’s so pissed off with me.
She can’t control me or manipulate me like she does with everyone else. Jax needs to learn of her
manipulations, how she has infiltrated his life so well. It’ll be hard for him. And it’s not just Jax,
the club does it, too. Makes excuses for her behavior. They’ve been doing it for years. It's like a
knee-jerk reaction.”

“But, he’s read the letters, he knows what she’s like, isn’t that enough?” Maureen asked.

“Reading about it is one thing, but actually seeing her do it and the ramifications of her actions are
two very different things. He’s learning but it still trips him up. She is his mother after all. Hard to
break that kind of relationship into something that allows him to breathe and live.”

“Well, we can at least stir the pot with the rumors.” Fiona said. “I’ll tell ‘em you can commune
with the dead, with JT. Which is what you did before. That’ll shake up the Belfast chapter, the
Army will hear of it.”

“Aye, tell ‘em you’ve been graced by the gods. The old gods, with your tattoos.” Maureen added,
turning to Fiona, who nodded in agreement.

“I wonder...there’s got to be research into druids back home. You have the signs of druidry, the
tattoos coming to you, sex magic. I’d like to look into it, if you don’t mind.” Fiona asked her.

“Sure, whatever you can find would be helpful. I’ve been googling stuff, but I really can’t trust
what’s up on the web. If it’s posted by some crackpot or not. And the library here is limited. Even
the tattoo’s when they first showed up, the tree and griffin, it was just a guess. Chibs and I are
really winging things as they come up.”

“Well, I think we can help you with that for sure. Chibs brother, Andrew, is a university professor
at St. Andrew’s. I’ll give him a ring. See if he can help, too.” Fiona added.

“Really? That would be great. Any information would be helpful. Even if its just something we can
look out for that might pop up out of the woodwork.”

“Of course. Anything to help. Scaring the shite out of boys in the charter and the Army even is
going to be fun.” Maureen grinned. Her eyes brightening with a project to work on.

Fiona grinned and leaned to Maureen. “You should have heard them early this morning. Had no
idea Filip could make those sounds at all.”

She blushed. “God. We weren’t that loud.” She complained, hiding her face in her hands.

Fiona barked a laugh at her. “Why do you think Kerrianne and I got up so early and started
breakfast?”
“Really? It couldn’t have been that loud, could it?” Maureen joined in teasing her.

She thunked her head to the table as the two of them giggled over her embarrassment.

“Thought the house was going to come down around us.” Fi joked.

“Oh God.” She glared at Fiona. “No wonder Gemma is so scared of you. You’d run circles around her and then some. Freaking hell.”

Fiona and Maureen laughed happily as she just shook her head at them. But, she couldn’t stay mad at them for poking fun at her.

She saw their excitement. Hmmm, needed to put some brakes on this before it got completely away from them, she thought.

“Just stick to what you’ve actually seen me do. Truth is always so much more effective than some exaggerated story.” She warned.

Fiona and Maureen just stared at her like she was an idiot, replaying what she just said. “Damn, the truth is already so far-fetched, who am I kidding?” She realized to herself. Fiona and Maureen giggling at her mortification.

“Oh, come on, after all the crap we’ve had to deal with, this is going to be fun.” Fiona said brightly. Maureen grinning along with her.

“Oh dear god.” She sighed as she gave in. Knocking her head to the table again.

Chibs slid in next to her. Shifting closer to him, their hands linking. “What are these two doing?” He asked her, eyeing the giggling twosome.

“Coming up with rumors to spread when they get home. By the time they’re done, the Irish will be crapping their pants, thinking I’m the second coming or something just as diabolical.” Chibs frowned and eyed Fiona and Maureen as they looked at Nancy and conferred again.

“Oy, no epic sex stuff. Like to keep that somewhat private if you don’t mind.” He ordered at them; as if that was the most important of their problems.

She huffed a laugh, as she heard them swearing at Chibs directive. “Swear to god, have to keep a leash on those two.” He griped as she kissed him on the cheek, knowing it would be a lost cause.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
King’s Sword = Rí Claíomh
Drop it = Buail é.
We aren't done talking about this. = Ní dhéanaimid ag caint faoi seo.
You can talk all you want, won't matter. = Is féidir leat gach rud a theastaíonn uait a labhairt, ní ábhar.
Chapter 80

Chapter Notes

Hi, err, kind of a transitional chapter. Sorry, work is still being annoying. But I am working on this throughout the day. Growing frustrated that I can't stop work and just write. gah.

Also, a little church/religion bashing in this one. Just a tiny bit...you can skim over it if you want. But Chibs finds it hilarious.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They rode into town and stopped at the local pharmacy. At her apprehensive and questioning look, “Need to pick up some things. Come on.”

She held his hand as they traversed through the store. Grabbing a plastic basket, he tossed in deodorant and shaving cream. Ignoring the shocked looks the other shoppers sent her way.

Yesterday afternoon, Fiona and Kerrianne left to fly back to Belfast with Maureen and Trinity. Chibs was out of sorts as he had to let them go for them to make their flight. Repeatedly, telling them to call when they got in.

Kerrianne sought her out, grilled her on her math skills and promised to email her when she was stuck on a problem. Promising to let her know how things went with Liam; who was not gay. She emphatically reiterated.

The house felt unnaturally quiet with their guests gone.

She curled up with a book as he paced around the house a little, trying to figure out what to do with himself. Eventually, he put some music on and curled up on the sofa with her. His head in her lap, she ran her fingers through his hair as he sighed and cuddled with her.

“I miss them.” He said sadly.

“I know.”

“Thank you, m’ anam.”

“For what?”

“For kicking my ass to bring them here.”

“It really wasn’t that hard to do.” She teased. “I mean, Gemma started it.”

He grunted in disgust. “Don’t bring her up.”

“Okay. Get some rest. Got a busy week coming up.”

He shifted a little and settled down. She went back to her book. The club was gearing up for the first shipment of guns and their mule haul. Busy indeed.
She pulled out of her thoughts as he led her down another aisle and grabbed a couple more tubes of their anti-itch cream. Chibs growling that it didn’t come in a bigger tube, deciding to grab a third one, tossing it into the basket.

He grinned at her as he stopped in front of the condoms. “Definitely low on these.”

“Ha ha. You’re hilarious.”

His eyes narrowed, lips curling into a knowing grin as he pulled her into his arms. Holding her that her back was to the shelves. Reaching for a box, he swept her up into a deep kiss. The basket dropped to the floor as his hands pulled her up by her hips, her legs automatically wrapping around his. Her arms latching around his neck for support.

Boxes fell to the floor as he pressed her back into the metal shelving.

“Ooh...ow.” She gasped as her back hit the edge of a shelf. His eyes widened and set her back down on her feet. Twisting around to rub at her lower back.

“Sorry. Got carried away.” He said, picking up the items that fell off the shelves.

She bent to pick up a couple of condom boxes that he hadn’t picked up yet. “I’m fine. Maybe we should wait til we’re alone and in a more comfortable spot before trying to do that again.” She said, eyeing the few other customers who had slowed or stopped in their tracks to witness their attempted sexcapade. Anyone she made eye contact with, quickly turned their heads and walked away.

Rolling his eyes, he tossed the fallen items haphazardly back onto the shelf. Condoms tossed into their basket. Cruising her up and down several more aisles, tossing in soap, shampoo, toothpaste. There was much debate over vitamins.

“You should be taking a multivitamin, with your health.” He pondered, considering one brand of multivitamin over another.

“I’m doing better. I feel fine. And I read that multivitamins actually don’t do anything for you. They’re useless to take or spend money on.”

She shrugged, as he eyed her at that. “We’ll ask Tara. If she thinks you should be on them, we’ll come back.” Setting the bottles back onto the shelf.

As they cruised through the pharmacy, she stuttered to a halt in front of a wall of makeup and nail polish. The sheer amount and colors available were dizzying.

She idly picked out a bottle of nail polish. The color was a pale pink. “Lyre?” She read the name of the color. “Who picks out these names? What a cushy job that would be.”

He grinned and held the bottle up to the light. “Nope, not your color.” He determined.

“Huh? I didn’t realize I didn’t have a color.”

“It’s too light, with your skin tone, you’d never see it. Need something darker.” His eyes scanned the colors.

“Not black.” She quickly instructed. Black nail polish reminded her of Gemma. From her reading, she didn’t used to wear black so much. Just lately, everything she wore and put on was dark and heavy. Down to the black nail polish. Too much a reflection of her inner life, sucking all joy and
color into her black hole of controlling issues. She wondered if the guys had picked up on it. Tig and Jax didn’t seem to notice.

Chibs finally picked out a dark, red color that had gold glints in it. “Red?”

“Aye, it’s perfect. It’s dark, but the gold will pick up the light. Trust me.”

“Okay.” She set it into the basket, stepping back towards where they’d been heading, only to stop and look back. Catching him still looking through the displays of makeup intently.

He started picking out more makeup for her. Eyeshadow, lipstick, mascara. He grabbed an eyeliner and she lunged back to him, grabbing the item out of his hand.

“Nope. I’ll poke my eye out with this.” She explained setting it back onto the shelf.

He grumbled at her, but let it go. “Well, you don’t need foundation, you’ve got such perfect skin.”

“No, I don’t.” She huffed. “Scar? Tattoo?” She raised her brows at him.

“Aye, perfect.” He said emphatically, giving her a quick kiss to halt her arguing.

He grabbed up some sunscreen for her and cleansing cloths to take off the makeup. She sighed at the added items. She really didn’t need makeup. She’d been fine without it. “Are you sure?” She asked him.

He captured her again in his arm. “I saw you in the dreams. You’d stare at the stuff you wanted to buy but couldn’t. You’re not there no more. You can buy whatever you want. If you hate it, you don’t have to wear it. It’s up to you.”

“Okay.” She gulped.

Up at the cash register, the cashier eyed her nervously but managed to ring them up. Chibs grabbed one of the boxes of condoms, tucking it into a pocket of his jacket. Grinning wickedly as he made a show of it. The cashier quickly bagged everything else up as Chibs tossed some cash on the counter.

She heard a strangled noise behind her, looking in the direction, she caught sight of Ivy, the receptionist from the bank that threw them out a few weeks ago.

Ivy visibly paled as she caught her tattoo. Her lips thinned and eyes narrowed. “I pray for your immortal soul.” She announced to her.

She blinked back at Ivy, “Knock yourself out.” She shrugged. “Waste of time, in my opinion.” She muttered.

“It is not a waste of time. Not when your soul is in peril with who you are associating with. What they make you do. Having sex outside of the holy bonds of matrimony. Desecrating your body that the Good Lord gave you.” Ivy countered, flicking a disapproving look to Chibs and back to her.

She blinked again as Ivy continued to spread her narrow-minded opinions. Chibs made a slight move to put himself between her and Ivy. The threat of his move was clear if Ivy didn’t back off. But Ivy seemed to be clueless as she pursed her lips at her.

“You say that, thinking you know anything about me and my relationship with Chibs. But you don’t. Or you wouldn’t have dared to confront me with this shit.”
Ivy took a breath, looking outraged that she would defend herself.

“Don’t.” She pointed at Ivy. “I allowed you to have your say and express your unsolicited opinion. The state of my soul or anyone’s soul is not your responsibility. I’d worry about your own soul than anyone else’s. And yes, I have sex outside of marriage. But again, it is not your business. But for your information, the sex is fantastic, epic really.”

She heard Chibs choke a laugh as Ivy’s eyes widened in shock. They were gathering an audience, as she took this stuffy woman to task.

“And what century do you think we’re living in? You don’t have to be married to have sex. But since you brought it up...as far as I’m concerned, I’m already married to Chibs. I don’t need a piece of paper or some man in a stupid robe regurgitate words out of a book to be married. You apparently need that though. Which is sad...that your relationship with your husband is so tenuous that you need the trappings to make you feel better about yourself and your husband.”

“Well, I never…” Ivy gasped.

“That’s right, you never. You cling to your religion and suffocate everyone around you to conform to your narrow view of how people should live. And if they don’t, you threaten them that you are praying for their souls. Which I’ve already told you, you have zero input on anyone’s soul or life. So I suggest, you keep your opinions to yourself.”

Silence fell over the pharmacy, the cheery, piped-in music a stark contrast to the confrontation that was going on. Everyone frozen and unsure what to do if anything.

She grabbed their purchases from the counter and turned back to Ivy. “Now, go, run back to your idiotic husband and have him fuck you silly so you’d get that stick out of your sanctimonious ass.”

Chibs pulled her out of the store before Ivy could yell at her some more.

“Unbelievable.” She growled, stomping to the bike. Tucking their purchases into the saddlebag with her laptop.

Chibs handed her her helmet, his eyes stern. But his lips curling into a tight grin. He was full-blown laughing his ass off as he righted the bike.

“Glad I could amuse you.” She swung her leg over to get on behind him. Her comment sending him into another laughing fit. The bike weaving a little as he pulled out. Her hands gripping him tight.

Chibs pulled his bike into the Teller-Morrow lot, parking it in the line already standing in front of the clubhouse. They were early for church. Clay was to show them the route and times that they were to hit for their first trip to Tucson. She sighed as she mentally prepared herself to see the guys again. Well, they to see her new tattoos. Hopefully, Jax had talked to them already.

Looking down the line of bikes, she didn’t see his bike to her dismay. She looked to Chibs as she set her helmet down. He was still giggling at her smackdown at the pharmacy.

“You okay?” She asked.

He unlatched the saddlebag and she grabbed her laptop while he took the plastic bag.

“Oh my God. That was bloody fantastic.” He breathed.
He wiped at his eyes, calming down finally. Pulling her into his arms. Her hands sliding up to wrap around his shoulders.

She wanted to frown disapprovingly at him for finding humor in the dust up. But his joyful amusement over it had her grinning back at him.

He brushed her hair back from her face as the wind picked up and swept some strands in her face. “Love you, m ‘anam. Though I do want us to actually get married one day soon. Make an honest woman out of ye’.”

She chuckled. “I’ll still say yes...when you ask, that is.”

“Hmmm, ye’ better.” He gave her another quick kiss. “You ready to go inside?” His eyes flicked to her triskele and back to her eyes.

Sighing heavily, “They’re going to find out eventually. No sense in putting it off.”

He shook his head sympathetically. “Come on, mo leanabh...the horde awaits.” He teased.

“Jax could have shown up early and warned them.” She groaned.

Chibs just laughed and led her into the clubhouse.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
My baby = mo leanabh
Chapter Notes

I'm impatient to get a new chapter up for you. Probably should've taken another day or two to fine tune this. Forgive any grammar or rough transitions.

Anyone on the Florida or East Coast, be safe and hopefully dry with Hurricane Michael making landfall.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The clubhouse was half-filled with members and croweaters making the rounds distributing drinks or simply cozying up to various men. Juice and Miles were shooting a game of pool with Happy watching them play. Piney situated in his chair at the end of the bar with a bottle of Tequila and the newspaper in front of him. He was listening to Opie talk about something about Lyla. Rat and Phil behind the bar. She caught sight of Tig leaving church, reaching for his phone, Clay’s voice bellowing behind him to call whoever wasn’t here yet.

Bobby was the first to greet them as he came out of the kitchen area. Licking at his fingers, only to wipe them across his shirt. Chucky sidled out of the kitchen only to run past them and out the door, barely giving them a glance.

Giving Chibs a one-armed, guy hug and a huge grin. “Hey, brought in some homemade muffins, stashed a few of them for you. Totally organic.”

“You obsessing over Martha Stewart again?” Chibs joked.

“Hey, she’s a classy lady.” Bobby defended his lady-love from afar.

“And with a record...old lady material, perhaps?” She shared with a grin.

Chibs snickering in amusement at her comment and Bobby’s reaction.

Bobby looked he’d been hit with a sledgehammer. His eyes going wide as he caught her new tattoos, his laugh turning into a choked gasp.

“Holy shit! What the hell happened to you!” Bobby’s exclamation brought everyone in the room attention. She winced as a series of eyes shifting in their direction, landing on her.

Tig led the charge of everyone gathering around her to stare at her in a mix of shock, curiosity, and horror. “Oh man, oh doll.” He breathed, his hands rising as if to grab hold of her. Only to fall back at his sides, leaning closer staring at her triskele.

Chibs pulled her into his arms when she tried to take a step back from uncomfortable weight of their combined stares. Her back to his chest steadied her.

“They showed up the other morning.” She explained, with a wave of her hand. Which only drew their attention to her tattoos on the back of her hands.

“Shit, hands, too?” Opie breathed, pulling at his beard. “You, too?” Including Chibs with his
question.

Chibs held out a hand to them so they got a look at his new celtic knots. “She’s got ones on the tops of her feet, too. Same design as her hands.”

But it was her triskele that had their attention. She couldn’t take the shocked silence anymore, her shyness battling for her to remain calm, but the longer they stared at her the more uncomfortable she was getting and cross-eyed.

“Chibs, man, what the hell are you doing to the poor girl to get these wicked tatt’s?” Tig asked with a joking tone.

The guys all started razzing and sending teasing comments to Chibs.

She turned in his arms, hugging him. Catching his whiskey eyes giving him a soft smile. Her hand coming to his cheek. He sighed and quickly kissed her.

“Hell, might as well embrace the epic sex.” She sighed with a quiet voice meant only for him.

His eyes widened in understanding, latching onto her suggestion. He pulled her in tighter and laid another whopper of a kiss on her.

“Witch.” He growled at her making her giggle.

“All right, you wankers, that’s enough.” Chibs ordered gruffly to the rabble still surrounding them.

“No, really what’s your technique?” Tig asked.

The guys all looking at Chibs for his answer.

“How else do you love a seer with divine powers? You worship her like the goddess she is.” He said with a straight face.

The guys slid a considering look to her. She merely smiled back at them. Shifting a look to each other, a few of them drifted back to where they were.

“So, what oral?” Tig asked after a moment of thought.

She dropped her head into her hands at Tig’s query.

“Tig. You are on very thin ice.” Chibs growled at him for his crass question.

“What? I’m just curious is all.” Tig explained.

“Go stuff your curiosity elsewhere.” Chibs ordered him. Tig frowned at them, but stomped off to watch the pool game that had restarted.

Bobby and Piney taking another serious look at her tattoos.

“You doing okay?” Piney asked her.

“Yeah, it was a shock but, I’m getting used to it.” She saw their concerned looks, shrugging at them. “Eventually.” She admitted.

“Shit, anyone would be thrown by those. I doubt you could find any artist put a tattoo on someone’s forehead. Have your powers changed you think?” Bobby asked.
“I haven’t had much time with it. Saw a ghost. Fiona said I was communing with the dead.” Chibs hugged her tighter.

Bobby’s eyebrows raised, “Communing?”

“With who?” Piney drilled at her.

“John.” Chibs said gravely.

“JT?” Bobby asked in a broken voice.

“What did he say?” Piney asked.

“The message was for Maureen.” She was reluctant to repeat what JT said to Maureen, even Chibs. Bobby and Piney weren’t in the know of all that is happening. Piney has his suspicions and will be hunting for the letters on his own with his battle with Clay. No point in muddying the waters with this latest wrinkle.

“Maureen? Maureen Ashby?” Bobby connected the dots.

“Aye, Maureen and Trinity flew out with Fi and Kerrianne for the weekend.” Chibs informed them.

“Did Clay or Gemma see them?” Bobby asked.

“Gemma showed up at one point. It was good to see them. It was small and close family. Just a couple of days, they’re already back in Belfast.” Chibs explained with a shrug.

Bobby and Piney shared a pointed look, only to wander off over to the bar.

Their attention shifted to the outer door and Jax walked in, striding quickly deeper into the clubhouse. Beelining towards them. Disappointment etched in his eyes. “Damn...I missed it.” She glared at him.

“What? I wanted to see everyone’s reaction when you walked in.” Jax said, collapsing onto one of the leather chairs.

“Ass.” She muttered as Chibs led her to the couch. Jax shrugged and grinned at her unrepentant. A croweater slinked over to their VP and handed him a coffee.

“Take off your boots, m’ anam.” Chibs ordered. He had pulled out the nail polish and was giving it a good shake.

Raising her brows at him. “Do we have time?”

Rolling his eyes. “We got time. Come on.”

Another quick glance towards church and the lack of activity of the guys to head inside for the meeting convinced her to do as Chibs instructed, tucking her socks inside her boots.

Stretching out so her feet were in his lap, giving her toes a waggle. He grinned as his hands started massaging them and making her groan blissfully at his ministrations.

“Ye’ got such bonny feet.” He commented with a sly grin, as he twisted the polish open. Positioning her foot and took hold of her toe so he could paint the polish on.
“They get me from point a to point b without falling over. All’s good in my book.” She joked.

He chuckled as he deftly moved from one toe to the next. When one foot was done, she angled her leg out of the way, twisting her foot under the dim lights of the clubhouse. The red was dark but with the gold, it did catch the light, like he said it would. She loved watching the colors shift and kept waggling her toes.

“You going to do my hands, too?”


“You’re good at this. How’d you learn to paint a girl’s nails?”

He slid her an amused look. “It’s like touch-up paint for cars. Have to do it in light, even layers. Make sure each layer is dry before the next gets put on for it to look good.”

She laughed as he explained in the most manly of ways how he knew to put nail polish on.

Done with her toenails, she shifted around and thrust her hands at him. Staring down at her feet, wiggling her toes.

“Oy, relax you’re hands.” He drew her attention.

“Sorry. Not used to being pampered like this.”

He gave her a quick kiss and went back to work painting her nails. She caught Jax watching them as he sipped at his coffee.

Juice and Tig wandered over and settled into chairs around them. Watching Chibs finish the second coat on her hands. They didn’t say anything, just watched intently. It was curious, she thought, watching them watch Chibs pamper her. Like they were learning something. Glancing towards Jax, he was attentive to Tara she knew. But he could be a bit oblivious at times. Club business, the kids, and Gemma garnering his attention more often than not. And Tig...well, he doesn’t let women into his private life very much or at all. Alicia came close, but she died when the his bike went down before Tig was even patched into the club.

It seemed like it should be Clay and Gemma teaching them how to treat each other. Show them how to be in a relationship. She cringed internally at the thought of that. Clay and Gemma being all soft and attentive to each other...no. That wasn’t either of them, too much politics to let their guard down with each other and with the other members of the club. And sadly, that kind of behavior only set the tone for the rest of the guys on how to behave.

“All right, there ye’ go.” Chibs voice drew her thoughts and attention back to him. Chibs twisting the cap back onto the bottle. She wiggled her fingers, watching the subtle shift in color under the light. Her toes and fingers spread wide to keep from smudging the wet polish.

Chibs set an arm around her shoulders, pressing a kiss to her temple as she kept staring at her nails.

“Thank you.” She said to him. “I feel ten feet tall with them painted like this.”

He chuckled in her ear. “You’ll get used to it.”

She glanced around to the guys and they all pulled their eyes away from her or turned their attention back to their own drinks. As if realizing that they were intruding on something private. She was about to say it was okay when Happy came up to Chibs. His face set in stone and a piece
of paper in his hand.

Chibs straightened up as Happy came towards him. She felt him tense up next to her, but remained seated, waiting for Happy to initiate whatever it was he wanted to say. But Happy just silently handed over the sheet of paper.

Taking the paper, Chibs took his time to read whatever was on the paper.

She looked from Chibs to Happy. Happy shifted on his feet as the silence dragged out.

“Good. You’re clean. Can’t say that about Laurenn, now can we?” Chibs finally grilled Happy.

Happy frowned even more if that was even possible.

“Can we?” Chibs reiterated when Happy didn’t answer his question fast enough.

“No.”

“If it wasn’t for our Seer, that gash could have spread the disease to our brothers.” Happy shot her a look, she studiously kept her attention on her nails. Letting Chibs deal with Happy.

“Because of your miserly ways you can’t put on a fresh rubber with each fuck.” Happy shifted his eyes back to Chibs when he started up again. “Stupid. Just plain stupid. We can’t afford to be stupid from now on. I hope you learned your lesson from all this. I don’t want to have another conversation like this. Ye’ understand me?”

“Yes.” Chibs handed Happy back the paper.

“Good. Here, ask next time.” Chibs grabbed the box of condoms from his jacket and tossed them to Happy. Happy jerking in time to catch the box. Happy grinned and tucked the box away in his own pocket.

The guys all grinned now that the dressing down was over.

Tig had gotten up and went into church, only to come back out. “Guys, church. Let’s go.”

Everyone got up and started heading into church. Dumping their cell phones into the cigar box Tig manned.

She frowned at her freshly painted nails and glanced at her boots. She didn’t want to mess up the nail polish, they weren't dry yet. Chibs stood up next to her and huffed a laugh as he caught her quandary.

“Come on, mo leanabh.” Holding his hands out to her. Which she grabbed carefully and let him lift her up onto her feet. Her toes flared up so she had to hobble on her heels and the balls of her feet.

Jax laughed as he passed her.

“Ass.” She muttered after him, Jax just laughed harder to her insult.

Chibs chuckling next to her as he dropped his cell into the box.

Tig rolling his eyes at the production. “You, two are killing me.” He griped. Waiting for her and Chibs to get into the room so he could close the doors.

“Shush, you. I don’t want to muss these up.”
“God.”

“No...Seer.” She wisecracked at Tig.

“Hurry up!” Clay yelled.

Shaking her head at impatience, immature men, she hobnobbed into church. Carefully settling into Chibs lap as she kept careful watch over her toes and fingers.

The guys all grinned in amusement to her antics, as Tig finally shut the doors and sat down himself with an eye roll.

Clay shot her an annoyed glance, his eyes lingering on her tattoos. Rolling his eyes at her, “What is this a beauty parlor? That shit stinks.” He complained.

Looking up at him sharply, “What? Don’t you like the color?” She thrust a hand towards him. “And I’m surprised you can smell this at all...with all the cigars you smoke.”

Clay glared at her, but it was Happy that drew their attention.

Happy had leaned over and peered down at her hand closest to him. “I like it. It’s like blood.” He declared with a head nod.

“Er...thanks.” She said back to Happy for his observation.

Bobby and Piney both started laughing. Jax slapped a hand to his head at Happy’s declaration, barely keeping from laughing himself. Chibs hugged her, his breathing labored as he tried to keep from laughing, too. Juice and Kozik shared amused looks to Opie. Tig sighed heavily next to them. Clay clearly not amused by the way this meeting was starting.

“Jesus Christ, can we get to business here?” Clay griped.

She blinked, wondering how Clay’s bad mood was her fault.

They guys all managed to calm down and turn their attention back to Clay. He laid out the route for the ride to Tucson. Indicating that they’d be taking some side roads.

Miles was to drive the truck and Clay divied up the rest of them to ride ahead and behind. Protect the truck from the front and back. But not to ride so close to the truck to draw attention to it. Everyone nodding that they had taken care of approvals with their PO’s and their tickets to the bike show already reserved as proof for their trip.

“So, that’s the plan, rest up for the long ride. We’ll be riding through with only stops for refueling. No pit stops for potty breaks.” He said pointedly at her.

Chibs growled in her ear at Clay’s dig.

“Fine.” She said easily. Tossing aside Clay’s accusation that she’d be a detriment to the run.

“Fuck, Clay, she’ll be fine. We aren’t going to the east coast, it’s just fucking Tucson.” Tig defended easily.

Clay seethed, “This run is important, I will not let anything get in the way of completing this mission.”

“Will your hands withstand the ride?” Piney volleyed to Clay.
“My hands are fine.” Clay bit out. His anger now directed to Piney for bringing up his weakness.

“He’s got a point, I’ll stop by ma’s. She’ll show me how to give you the shots if need be.” Jax agreed, putting action into place.

Clay’s suggestion that she’d be the weak link in the run, now turned back on Clay himself. She had to bite her lip to keep from grinning too much that might set off Clay even worse.

Clay turned his ire onto Jax. “My hands are fine.” He repeated.

Jax shrugged, “Doesn’t hurt to be prepared.” Jax swung his eyes to her, “You see anything going on with this trip that we should know about?”

The guys all directed their attention back to her. Clay’s eyes narrowed on her, waiting for her to screw up.

She shrugged. “Nothing you guys can’t handle.”

“What does that mean?” Opie asked.

She looked to him, “Not everything will fall in line, no matter how much you plan and prepare. It never does. Like I said, it’s nothing you can’t handle.” She inspected her nails once more and carefully, ran a pinkie across one of the nails, finding the polish to be dry.

“But the exchange will happen, right?” Juice asked.

“Yep.”

“Of course it will. Everything has been planned and prepared for this. Galindo is waiting for their shipment.” Clay said emphatically. As if his words would carry the action into being.

Everyone shared a wary look, but Clay banged the gavel to the table, ending the meeting before anything else happened that wrested control out of his hands.

The guys all got up and walked out of the room to get back to work and getting ready for the ride tomorrow. Clay still seated, staring down at the map, flexing his hands.

She got up and went to put her socks and boots back on. Chibs and Jax chatting as they took up their phones.

Jax clapping a hand to Chibs shoulder as he took off.

“Come on, m ‘anam. We’re going to get you some more practice shooting.”

“Okay.” She sighed, seeing that he was determined to get her used to handling a gun whether she liked it or not.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
My baby = mo leanabh
Chapter 82

Chapter Summary

Una Venta...

Chapter Notes

Sorry for delay in updating. Been busy with work and hopefully a new job by the end of the year. Requires me to do some projects in my spare time. Not sure how this is all going to work out, but we'll see.

Going to break this whole part up into smaller sections and get those up in a, hopefully, timely fashion. fingers crossed.

I know Opie isn't in this episode...I brought him along.

Let me know what you think. Tried to keep the dialogue as true to the canon and characters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Early the next morning, they arrived at the clubhouse lot. She was walking around flexing and swinging her arms around, still trying to get used to the new shoulder harness Chibs had gotten her. He was all excited yesterday when they got home after their afternoon of shooting. Finding a box sitting up against their front door from FedEx.

She frowned at the leather contraption as he shook it out of the box. She could shoot okay, well enough to not shoot her foot off or anything. But still, she didn’t like the idea of carrying a gun.

“Had to special order this, given your narrow frame.” He explained, as he helped her into it and shortened up some of the straps to fit her better.

“I just...don’t like the idea of carrying a gun like this.” She scowled.

He moved in front of her, his eyes catching hers at her comment. “You’d rather a hip holster?”

“No. Just carrying at all.”

He frowned at her. “Look, I get it. For the most part, we’re safe here when we’re home. But we’re going on a run. Meeting other charters, dealing with a cartel and the Mayans. You’re a member and you need to be armed. I’ll do my best so you don’t have to pull the gun. But they need to see you wearing it. Every man on this run will be weaponed up.” He explained.

“But, I told you that things were going to go fine.” She tried reasoning once more.

“I know ye’ did. But you yourself said that you might be wrong. That you hoped to be wrong. If things don’t shape up the way you saw them when you read Tig and Jackie, we need to be
prepared.”

She sighed in frustration. “Fine.”

He swooped down and kissed her. “Thank ye’. Now,” he set her gun into the holster, “practice pulling and putting it back in the holster.” He instructed.

Getting used to feeling the weight and how to disengage the gun into and out of the holster without catching it against her breast or jacket. Chibs teaching her to use her thumb to flip the safety on as she pulled the gun out of the holster and into into her shooting stance, so she’d be able to shoot faster.

As they got dressed in the morning, he tucked a knife down into her boot. “Hey...I’m already wearing the gun.” She protested.

“This is in case they take the gun off ye’. You’ll have this hidden away.” He caught her wary eyes, “Trust me.”

Sighing in defeat, they managed to leave the house before he figured out how to strap a bazooka to her backpack.

Her head pounding, she went back to Chibs, their hands linking up as he finished talking with Jax and Bobby.

Lyla was with Opie, a camera in hand. Opie giving her a hug and kiss, she laughed and pushed him back, snapping a candid picture of him.

“Hey, Lyla, take our picture.” She prompted to the blonde.

The guys all clumped together for a group shot, the lot of them laughing as Jax and Opie both tried to hold up rabbit ears behind the others. Chibs laughing behind her, his hands gripping around her arms, her hands resting at his in front of her. Lyla griping at Opie and Jax to be serious for a minute. But it was a lost cause and she, finally took a couple of shots with a grin.

Lyla wandering over, fiddling at her camera. She leaned over a little to look what had her attention. She had a digital camera that showed the shots she just took.

“Cool. Can I get a copy of that?” She asked.

“Yeah. Let me run them through Photoshop first. They’ll be done by the time you get back.”

“Thanks, that’d awesome.”

“Be careful. Okay?” Lyla asked, biting at her lip.

“Not to worry. Everything will be fine.” She assured Lyla.

Lyla gave her a small smile. “Thanks.” She said before heading back to Opie for one final kiss.

Chibs pulled her off towards his bike, rechecking her shoulder rig. She pressed a hand to his cheek. He sighed and swayed into her touch. “It’ll be fine.” She reassured.

“When we get there, just stay right next to me. Don’t draw attention to yourself. Let me take care of you, aye?”

“I know, I’ll stay quiet. Let you guys do your thing. I’m just a tourist, checking out the sights and
the pretty bikes.” She joked, referring to the bike convention they were using as cover.

Chibs huffed at her humor and kissed her again, holding each other for another moment.

The worry in his eyes making her hold him tight. “It’ll be fine. Be fun going on a road trip like before.” She said. The two of them relaxing amidst the hectic buzz of the rest of the guys saying goodbye to their loved ones and doing their own final checks as well.

He pressed a kiss to her palm before grabbing her up for a proper kiss before handing her her helmet. He mounted onto the bike where she settled behind him. Checking that the knife and gun was still secured.

Clay already on his bike where Gemma was giving him a kiss. Turning to Jax for a reassuring goodbye and promise to be careful. She saw Jax stiffen up, refusing to hug or kiss his mother back. Gemma stood there, hands on her hips, glaring at her son. Giving up after another long second.

Gemma moving out of the way as Clay and Jax fired up their bikes. Bobby and Chibs followed suit. Glancing at Jax, his face set, he apparently hadn’t talked things out with Gemma since the weekend when Gemma found out Maureen and Trinity spent the weekend at his house. Well, she did say to him to treat his mother like a rebellious teenager. Thought he’d save that tactic for Gemma’s worse behavior.

She didn’t think on it more, as Clay lead them out of the lot and onto the road to meet up with the truck and the other guys at the rendezvous point. Their parade of bikes rumbled through the main drag of the town. People turned to watch as they passed. She settled herself for a long ride. Chibs putting his ipod on so they could listen to the music as they rode through the changing landscape.

They made a couple of stops to refuel as they pushed through the desert landscape. Catching Jax and Clay huddled together, Clay’s face tight in pain. Chibs saw her interest, “Shite, his hands must be getting worse.” He said as they watched the two of them disappear into the men’s room.

Sighing, “Stubborn. We’re only halfway there.” Wondering just how much Jax was enjoying stabbing Clay with that needle.

Chibs handed her a bottle water as they finished their packed lunch. “Do you know any of the Arizona guys?” She asked.

“No, not really. They never really made a name for themselves, it’s pretty small. I’m kept busy with the Irish and making runs up north to Tacoma.”

Jax and Clay came out of the men’s room, Jax tucking away a leather pouch inside his jacket. Clay headed right to his bike. “Let’s go.” He barked.

The guys broke away from their huddled groups and returned to their bikes, Clay leading them off again.

It was dark when they pulled into a secluded gas station on the outskirts of Tucson. The patchy, halide lighting of the gas station casting deep shadows as they pulled to a stop. Figures stepping towards them out of the dark and away from the light in a rambling walk. Perfect, she thought, their run to sell illegal weapons and muling illegal coke starting off with a meeting in the dark like this. A horror writer couldn’t have written a more moodier intro than this one happening right now.

Juice, one of the first to greet the motley crew of men in mostly denim kuttes. With one started, the
rest followed in a massive round of hugs and greetings. Clay and Armando, the two presidents, making the meeting official.

Chibs made the rounds while she hung back. The Samtaz guys flicking quick looks towards her but returned them to whoever they were hugging and saying hello to. Chibs walking back to her, slinging his arm around her shoulders.

Huff was next to greet Clay, a solid handshake between the two.

“Trouble with the grip?” Huff questioned Clay.

“No. Perfect.” Clay lied.

“Didn’t realize you were riding with a sweetbutt in tow.” Huff said swarmingly.

The guys all looked back towards her and back to Huff and the Samtaz crew. “This is Nancy. Our Seer. A voted member into Redwood Original.” Jax informed them.

“We sent notices out about her to all the charters, didn’t you get yours?” Bobby asked.

“We got it.” Armando said in his gravelly voice.

“Thought you were fucking high as a kite. Didn’t think you would lose your dicks and put a woman at the table and a reaper on her back.” Huff half-laughed at his own insulting joke.

Chibs straightened up next to her, he’d pulled his weapon, letting it settle along his leg but still in plain view. His body at full attention as he sent Huff a scathing glare. Waiting to see if Huff or anyone was going to insult her or them any further.

She yawned, not letting the verbal assault affect her. They had bigger fish to fry than some testosterone moron who would regret making an ass of himself. Clay glared at her. Jax and Tig rolled their eyes only to turn back to Armando and Huff.

Bobby pressed into Armando and Huff. “She is a member. A threat to her is a threat to us. And if you don’t stop pressing on this, Chibs is going to shoot you in the ass.”

“You can’t be serious.” Huff huffed in surprise at their defense of her and the warning of what Chibs would do.

“Very. She has powers. Her and Chibs. Do not try and get between them or even think about touching her. You’ll fucking regret it.” Jax said seriously, his tone shutting down the conversation.

The Samtaz guys shot them another curious look but Bobby piped up, expressing condolences about Lil Paul. The mention of their fallen brother had the Samtaz guys attention. Clay apologized for not being able to make it for the funeral. Huff and Armando vocal that the loss of their brother tore them up.

She bumped into Chibs side, his eyes turned to her. She gave him a smile and a cocked brow. “You can put the gun away.” She reminded him.

He frowned and looked down at his hand with the gun as if forgetting he’d ever pulled his weapon. Swiftly reholstering it before giving her a kiss.

After a moment, Clay turned their attention to their business at hand. Meeting with Romeo tomorrow at the expo. Armando reassuring Clay that Samtaz is ready to protect and serve.
Jax questioning that things were safe overnight at the gas station.

Huff quickly saying that there wouldn’t be any cops or scumbags. But of course, a woman’s voice rose up out of the darkness by one of the trucks. A man throwing punches at another man who was caught up by a third. Everyone’s attention turning to the commotion. The disagreement seemed to be about some sort of payment issue.

Clay asking what was going on. Armando sending one of his guys to handle it. Tig jumping into the fray to assist. The woman jumped on Tig’s back yelling at them to let her man go ending up biting at Tig’s ear. Tig managed to shake the woman off with Juice and Opie’s help.

“Skank!” Tig yelled, his hand going to his ear as he rejoined them with a glare.

The woman and her boyfriend walking off, Bobby picking up a packet off the ground that the woman had dropped. Bobby quickly taking a taste of the substance, announcing it was crank.

The news of the drug sent a ripple of alarm through the guys.

Jax glanced her way. She just grinned at him. She watched him heave a breath and turn back to Armando.

Clay getting into Armando’s face at the news. “You dealing here?” Clay questioned.

“It ain’t a risk. We own the spot.” Huff defended easily. Too easily.


“Hey, hey, easy.” Armando stepped between Jax and Huff.

“What!” Jax barked at Armando.

“Coke, crank...you mule...we sell. Same shit.” Armando informed them.

“Shut it down.” Clay ordered to Armando, turning away, fully expecting his order to be followed.

“Sorry, Esai.”

Clay, turning at Armando’s apologetic tone.

“Not your club...not your call.” Armando explained.

The guys all stared at Samtaz in disbelief that this was going on. Their little run, their under-the-radar run, wasn’t off to a very good start and Samtaz was refusing to make it easier for them. Gosh, golly. Whatever will they do? She mused, watching everyone’s reaction.

“Lets go.” Armando told his guys, Samtaz rambled back off into the dark to their bikes.

After a moment, a couple of Samtaz guys stayed behind at their bikes while the rest of their club rode off. These apparently were their truck’s babysitters for the night.

Clay twisted around and stalked to his bike. The rest of them following suit except for Miles, who hopped back up into the truck to bunk down for the night.

They ended up at a ratty motel. Juice and Opie quickly checking them in and handing out room
keys. She and Chibs grabbed their stuff and disappeared into their room for the night.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs breathed in the dark. She curled up at his side.

“It’ll be okay.”

“Somehow, I don’t know if I believe you or not, m’anam.” He admitted.

She huffed a laugh, wrapping her arm around his waist. “This is nothing compared to what’s coming. Try and enjoy it for the entertainment it is.” She suggested.

“Entertainment?” He twisted closer to her, their legs twining around each others. “This is serious business.” He reminded her.

“Entertainment. Big picture, grand scheme of things. You’ll see. Get some sleep.” She hushed at him.

His body tightened a little before relaxing again when she heard him give up the fight and fall asleep with a grunted breath.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 83

Chapter Summary

Una Venta, part dos...

Chapter Notes

Meant for this chapter to cover the entire episode, but there is a lot going on here and I'm adding stuff, making things fit into the overall story...so here's just another part of the una venta canon episode. Hopefully, this all makes sense.

Hope you like it, let me know what you think. Thanks!

She stretched as she woke, the curtains at the window weren’t closed all the way and the sun’s rays fell across her face. Grabbing Chibs wrist that had his watch, twisting it to see the time. “God.” She sighed, dropping his hand down.

Chibs grunted and rolled towards her.

“Hey, gotta wake up.” She jostled him.

“Fuck.”

“Nope, don’t have time for that.” She said, getting out of bed.

He huffed, sending her a knowing grin. “Come on...I’ll be quick.” He drawled. “It'll be like I was never there.”

She snorted. “We both know that’s not true.”

He collapsed back into the bed, with a groan of defeat. Burying his face into her pillow.

Watching him pout, she shut the curtain closed better against the morning light so he could get some extra minutes of rest. Then moving to the tiny bathroom to get ready for the day. Working quickly, her head was cracking and sliding from the pain giving her hair a final comb through.

Going back into the room, Chibs was up, rubbing at his face and finger combing his hair.

“Damn, you’re dressed.” He grumbled.

“Yes. That does tend to happen.” She laughed, as he pulled her back into the bed. Their touch cooling off their pain. They sank into each other’s arms for a long moment. Only to pull back and look each other in the eyes. He was more awake now.

He captured her lips into a kiss, their tongues chasing the other. He twisted them around and she laughed as he had her flat on her back. “Ohhmmph, we’re going to be late.” She warned around his
“Fuck ‘em. I don’t care.” He declared. His hands swooping her t-shirt up so he could kiss and nuzzle her breasts. Her laugh turning into a gasp as her nerves zinged. Her back arched under his talented lips and hands. His beard scratching at her sensitive skin. His dark eyes looking up at her as his hands moved to her jeans. Fingers fighting to undo her jeans, he swore looking down to accomplish his task.

She ran a hand through his hair, he glanced back up at her triumphantly as her jeans opened up and his hands buried themselves at her hips, pushing the denim and silk out of his way. Kissing at her navel as he pushed his way down her body. Her legs twisting, trying to wrap around him, to hold him close to her, but her jeans got caught up around her knees. Hissing in frustration, kicking at her legs to free them of her jeans and panties.

His lips and tongue teased at her navel making her gasp, kicking harder at her jeans. He broke away from kissing her, to yanking at her jeans. Her foot coming free finally. He shifted, her legs wrapping around him.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck…” He swore, reaching for his jeans. His fingers shaky, he grabbed a condom and swiftly putting it on as he pressed into her.

“God. Yes.” She gasped, grabbing at his sides. Her nails dragging at him. He surged up inside her and over her. Covering over her, all her senses were him. And she loved it. Loved him, curling up into him. His lips finding her neck. Teeth biting down over her hammering pulse. His hips hammering into hers sending shock waves through her. His hands ripped hers from around his sides and slammed them down into the mattress at her head, fingers weaving tight.

His cell phone started ringing. It took a moment for her to register the sound. Looking over at the nightstand just out of reach where it rang again. Chibs growled dangerously in her ear.

“Babe...the phone…”

“Fuck the phone.” He twisted his hips and it pushed her over the edge, clenching down as her skin melted off. Vaguely hearing Chibs swearing as he found his release. His grip tight around her as he jerked against her. His climax dragging hers out or she was dragging his out. She couldn’t tell.

The phone gave up ringing at least. Chibs collapsed over her, his breath ragged in her ear. He slid off to her side bonelessly. “See...told ye’. Like I was never there.”

She snorted trying to catch her breath. “You are so bad.” She managed to say.

“I’m just that good.” He countered with a wink.

A heavy banging came at their door. The two of them stared at it.

“Chibs!” Opie yelled from the other side of the door. Another rapid bang on the door and they heard Juice and Tig calling for them.

“Oh my God.” She pushed at him in a sudden rush of panic. Yanking her shirt down and grabbing at her panties and jeans. “This is your fault, go deal with them.” She ordered as the banging and yelling continued.

“Jesus Christ. You’re more dressed than I am.” He countered. She eyed him noting his prone body still recovering from their sexathon. He hadn’t even disposed of the condom yet.
Rolling her eyes at him, she hopped out of bed, her knees weak still. Her fingers fastening her jeans and running through her hair as she reached the door. Glancing back at him, he’d pulled the sheet over his hips at least. His phone started ringing again.

She yanked the door open and ducked to miss Opie’s large fist moving to bang on the door again. “Oh, sorry.” Opie grimaced realizing he nearly hit her.

She saw Tig turn his phone off. Chibs phone stopped ringing behind her. Juice behind the two of them, hands tucked in his jean pockets. The all three of them peered through the opening and saw Chibs naked in bed.

“We interrupting?” Tig asked with a wide grin.

“What?!” She hissed at them. The men reared back at her harsh question. “What could be so important that the three of you felt the need to bang on our door at the crack of dawn?”

They took another look at the two of them, knowing smirks spread across their faces.

Throwing her hands up in the air, she went to put her boots on. Tig, Opie and Juice took a few steps into their room gamely. By their not so sly looks, they quickly figured out what they were doing when they interrupted.

“Thought you two wanted to join us to get some breakfast before we had to meet up at Samtaz.” Opie informed.

She glared at Chibs who still just laid in bed all comfy and scrumptious looking. All she wanted to do was climb back in there with him but they had guests. “Oh for God’s sake, get dressed.” She grabbed her socks and boots, putting them on continuing to work out her anger and embarrassment at being caught. “I told you we didn’t have time. But nooo...you...unbelievable.” Frustrated at her own sputtering.

Chibs got up naked, ignoring the brothers taking in his post-coital state, tossing the used condom in the direction of the trash can, and kissed her, halting her rant.

She tried to resist his pull, but it was no use, her body stretching and reaching for him. He broke the kiss, leaning his forehead to hers. Their eyes locking.

“You’re right. I am unbelievable.” He quirked a grin at her, turning towards the bathroom to clean up with an easy laugh.

Tig and Juice gave a gasping laugh. Opie snorting, adding to the Greek chorus.

She stared after him stupidly, soon as the bathroom door shut, she slapped a hand to her forehead.

She heard Tig laughing. “Told you.” To Opie and Juice. The three of them were still in their room. And by that comment she knew their invasion was Tig’s idea. She’d have to think of something diabolical to play on Tig to get back at him.

Glaring at them, she put on her shoulder holster, jacket and kutte. Straightening up the room and packing their stuff back into their duffel. Riffling through Chibs jacket for a joint. She sat down and lit the joint, waiting for Chibs to finish up.

“You going to share that?” Tig asked.

“No. Get your own.” Taking a drag.
“Ooo...cranky today aren’t you.” Tig teased, leaning against the wall while Opie and Juice were just inside the open doorway.

“Tig...maybe you shouldn’t…” Juice warned.

She rolled her eyes at them. Her anger before abating as she calmed down under the power of the weed. “So did the three of you get some sleep last night? We’ve got a busy day and night ahead of us.”

“More sleep than you and Chibs apparently.” Tig snarked.

“Careful.” She breathed, a remnant of her anger flaring at Tig’s comment. “You clean off your ear? You need to be careful about infections.” She took another pull on the joint.

Tig shifted and looked sharply at her. “That’s like...the third time you referred to my health. What do you know that I don’t?” He waved his arms back and forth as he spoke.

“I know many...many things that you don’t. And we can’t afford anyone to come down with a cold or infection right now.” She waved off his question.

“Jesus Christ.” Tig muttered at her vague answer.

Her headache flared and her eyes drifted back to the bathroom where she heard Chibs swearing and bumping into a wall in there.

“You...uh...you said that we would be having problems on this run.” Opie stumbled. “Did you know about Samtaz dealing?”

“Yes.”

“You could have warned us.” Tig complained.

“Samtaz’s dealing isn’t an issue. Keep your eye on the bigger issues, boys.” She looked annoyingly at the three of them. “And if I had told everyone about the dealing, you think Clay would have believed me?” Raising her brows at them.

The three of them shot each other a look that said no to her question.

Shrugging at them, “We had to come down either way for the sale...no point in telling you details. Besides it’s entertaining for me...watching Clay try and figure his way around all this.”

“Entertaining?” Opie asked astonishingly.

“I’m psychic...I have to develop a sense of humor about all this or I’d lose my freaking mind.”

Chibs barreled out of the bathroom, buckling his belt as he scooped up his shoulder rig. “You got everything?” He asked her, looking around and tossing their toiletries into the duffel.

“Yep.” Handing him the last of the joint.

He finished dressing and took her hand as they all trooped out of the room and down to their bikes. Riding down the road only to pull into a McDonalds for egg mcmuffins and coffee.

The guys all looked more alert as they ate their food. She had snagged a local paper and perused the headlines after eating her breakfast.
“Somebody check on Miles? Bring him some food?” She asked before they left the restaurant.

“Bennie said he’d check on him and their guys from the overnight watch.” Opie informed.

“Okay.”

They didn’t waste time hanging around, Tig checking his watch, announced they needed to get moving. Jax and Clay were already there with Bobby.

“Nice of you to join us.” Clay mocked as they headed towards them.

“Jesus, Clay.” Bobby growled.

“There’s plenty of time.” Tig informed after glancing at his watch.

Clay gave them a hard look, his eyes landing on her. “You...don’t speak when we’re in there.” He ordered with a point of his finger.

“Clay! She’s a goddamn member. And you don’t ever talk to her like that again.” Chibs growled, stepping in front of her.

“Hey. We have a shit ton to do today and I don’t need her complicating shit any more than it already is.” Clay ordered.

“Well, we aren’t going to get anything done while we’re all standing here.” Jax said, prompting Clay to move into the clubhouse. The rest of the guys took the hint and walked inside. Clay shooting her another warning look before entering the Samtaz clubhouse.

She shrugged and gave him a smile. “I’m fine. It’s fine.” She reassured him.

He leaned down and gave her a kiss before guiding her into the clubhouse. She blinked in the dim lighting. Chibs moved to greet the Samtaz guys again as they all settled around a conference table.

She took her time looking around. Studying the wall of members, current and former. Noting the one hung upside down and the other next to it with a black cloth running diagonally across the photo. Little Paul. The frames outlined with rattlesnake skins. Rattlesnake skins were decorated everywhere. She touched one, the skin fragile and bone dry. Quickly pulling her hand back before it broke apart.

The clubhouse overall was much smaller than theirs. She moved towards Chibs and paused admiring the mural painted on the wall. The back of a Son, the reaper on full display, riding on a Harley through the desert landscape. It was beautiful work. She wondered who painted it.

Armando and Clay sitting down on either end of the table. Their VP’s and Sgt’s taking the seats next to their respective presidents.

She joined Chibs, their hands linking as he made to sit in the chair next to Tig.

“No gashes are allowed at our table.” Huff complained angrily. His voice halting Chibs and her, looking at Huff.

Silence fell over the table. She glanced at Clay, this would be the moment that he defends her position in the club. But he only sighed and rubbed at his jaw.

It was Bobby who spoke up. “We informed you last night and when she was voted in. She is our Seer. She sits in on all of our meetings, attends church, and advises us on issues. Thus, she is here
now."

“And you talk as if you are President here. But you aren’t. Unless there’s been a leadership change
in the last few seconds, I suggest you shut the fuck up. Or I’ll let Chibs cut your tongue out for
calling her a gash.” Jax added.

Chibs stood frozen, staring down Huff. Huff glanced around the table for support, eventually
looking at Armando. Armando not giving much away except his displeasure at his VP for speaking
out of turn. “Shut up Huff. You aren’t in charge around here yet.”

“You going to let this happen?” Huff challenged his President.

“Yeah, I am. They trust her to be here. She's wearing a kutte. And I won’t risk this deal because
you insulted Chibs woman. Our mother charter’s Seer. Now shut the fuck up or turn in your kutte
and get the fuck out. Don’t even think of coming back.” Armando leveled to his VP.

Huff took another look around the table, seeking anyone who would support him. But everyone
was closed off and let him flounder on his own. He leaned back in his chair and visibly relaxed.

“Chibs, Seer, take a seat.” Jax said after a moment.

Chibs stared down at Huff a bit longer, Huff didn’t realize the danger he had put himself in, but the
continued stare from Chibs was starting to get to him. Huff shifted in his chair, his eyes shifted
from Chibs to around the table and back to Chibs.

She squeezed his hand, he turned and looked to her, his eyes a deep well of black. She pressed on
his arm and he frowned, finally, taking a seat and pulled her into his lap. She gripped his hand
tight, pulling him back from whatever dark corner he was in to the here and now. Tig and Jax
glanced at them nervously, waiting to see what else might happen.

She yawned and shifted deeper into his lap, forcing Chibs to relax. He huffed gently and gave her a
quick kiss to her cheek. His eyes not as alien as before, more himself.

Glancing around the table, she looked to Clay. Noting that he hadn’t spoken a word of support for
her being here in the room. She felt Samcro men look to Clay, too. The unspoken reprimand from
them towards their President for his failure in supporting one of their own. But they were cognizant
even to know not to bring it up in front of Samtaz. Samtaz guys were shifting attention between
Armando and Huff.

Clay shifted in his chair and everyone’s attention shifted to him.

“Look, I’m not telling you how to run your charter. But the club has precedence.” Clay directed to
Armando.

“The club is all in with cartel. That sends a message to the charters.” Huff answered for Armando.
Clay glared down the table. “We don’t deal. That’s always been the message.” He barks at Huff.

Armando jumps in, not liking the rising tension of the brewing fight between Clay and Huff.
“That’s bullshit, Clay. You can’t draw that line.” She felt Chibs agreement reaction to Armando’s
position.

And by the careful looks among the Redwoods, they all felt the same as Chibs, but knew better
than to fight Clay over the whole cartel deal in front of the Samtaz guys. Bobby, in particular,
looked really unhappy with how things were shaping up.

“We just voted this shit in. How long you been dealing?” Jax took over the discussion from Clay.

“Voted it in four months ago, been up and running for about three. This town’s drying up. We’re just trying to keep this charter alive, man.” Armando explained the tight position he was in.

“We never would have brought you in if we knew you were cooking.” Jax replied, getting annoyed himself.

“Look you don’t want to use us, fine. But we’re the closest charter to the border. Anybody else is a two day ride.” Huff interjected.

“Yeah, and we’re paying Samtaz a good fee for running protection down here.” Clay angrily countered. Clearly, not liking the idea that the charter was defending their drug business mixing with their cartel sales. Or having to try and figure out another route to another charter and possibly pissing off Romeo for the change in route.

“Samcro’s the only charter getting rich off the cartel.” Huff said belligerently. Which was the real sticking point by the sound of things. It all boiled down to money.

Armando was the most reasonable of the Samtaz charter she decided. Although, he was getting pissed at his VP for being an ass and speaking out of turn. Threatening a possible money stream for the club.

She didn’t like Huff or Benny. Huff was too defensive, wanting to show off his dick size to all. Benny was too quiet, not rocking the boat with the issues going on. Looked like he wanted to hide under the table until the fireworks were done and he could see who was left standing and say he was with them.

An uncomfortable silence fell over the table. Armando and Clay staring each other down across their respective ends of the table. Armando glanced her way. “If, your Seer truly has a voice at the table, I’d like to know what her opinion is.” He pressed.

Everyone looked to her at that request. Well, Clay glared at her, daring for her to contradict what he wants. Chibs gave her hand a gentle squeeze of support.

“I’m not listening to some gash.” Huff interrupted again.

Chibs growled in her ear at Huff’s insult. Taking a deep breath, squeezing his hand to help ground him and not go on some knife happy spree with the idiot. She knew Huff wouldn’t be a problem in the end. Let him bluster and say what he wanted, it wasn’t helping his cause one iota.

Ignoring Huff, she looked Armando in the eyes. “You have a point with the crank business if your charter is struggling to make ends meet. You are getting paid for your protection service on this cartel deal. An agreement, you and Clay both decided a certain mutual monetary compensation for that service. And which your club voted in that agreement, or we wouldn’t be here right now...our truck on your lot.” The guys shifted as she spoke, glancing towards Clay. She ignored him, too. Samtaz looking pleased with her opening remarks.

“But, you failed to disclose your crank business, the added risk it poses for their shipments. And, yes, you are the closest charter to the border. But not the only charter. By your failure in disclosing your crank business, Samcro has the right to change the route of these shipments if Samtaz doesn’t keep their local crank business contained. Keep your crank and clients contained.”
Armando and a few of this other guys nodded with her reasoning. Bobby, Opie, Juice and Jax looked at her in surprise.

“What? You expect us to keep tabs on these fucking, junky lowlifes?” Huff argued.

“Yes, I do.” She bit back, staring down Huff, who was rolling his eyes at her.

Narrowing her eyes at him. “What do you think happens when drugs run rampant and out of control in a town or city. Crime increases, people start moving out to safer places to raise their families, property values collapse. Businesses shutter and leave. Something you are already having problems with. It’ll get to the point that the cops will be forced to crack down on the drug problem going on in order to save the town at all. And they know it. You that’s dealing, you’ll be the first place they stop. Samcro cannot take that risk if that happens. They will not. Yeah, it’ll be harder for them to set up another route, but they’ll do it. Because compared to the cartel, the local cops are the least of your problems. Keep tight control over your business and customers. Don’t get creative with the drug mixes just to make an extra few bucks. A life is not worth the extra dollars you’d get off them. In fact, help them get clean if they are on the edge of losing it completely. You helped create the problem, be part of fixing it. Set aside a portion of your profits to deal with rehab issues.”

Armando was blinking at her at the very idea of that. Huff and Benny eyed each other. Huff seems to finally gotten the clue to quit interrupting with his trite opinions and comments.

She turned to face Clay, not done with her opinion on the whole matter.

“Samtaz has the democratic right to run their charter as they see fit. Just as you run Samcro in your vision. If you want them to cease their crank business, you will have to offer them something in return. Or, you can go to another charter and redo the routes. There is no free lunch in this deal. On any party’s side.”

Jax and Bobby looked like they wanted to swallow their tongues. Armando regarded her with a heavy look, thinking deep thoughts. Huff and Benny looked pissed and nervous. Clay was just plain pissed, flexing his hands unconsciously. The idea of having to fork over more money to Samtaz wasn’t something he wanted to do. Not when he could pocket that money for himself.

She took heart that neither charter was at each other’s throats still. She tried to balance out the issue with all of them. Chibs ran a hand down her spine, silently supporting her.

Tig checked his watch, “Sorry guys, Romeo is waiting. We gotta go.” His reminder to their entire purpose to this trip had Samcro up and moving.

“Aye. We’ll handle this shite later, boys.” Chibs said, helping her up off his lap.

The men were streaming out of the clubhouse, but she paused abruptly at the wall of mug shots. Pointing at the upside down photo right in front of Jax. Stopping him in his tracks, her pointed finger had him looking closer at the photos.

Jax grabbed Benny who was trying to sidle out the door.

“Hey, Benny, when did Reggie walk? Dude had eighteen years.”

“Not long after Little Paul was killed. Little Paul sponsored him. It hit him hard.”

Jax looked to Chibs and back at the wall. “He got out before the crank vote?”

“Yeah, ‘bout five months ago.” Benny shrugged.
“Close vote?” Jax pressed.

“It was. Now, everyone’s buying into it.”

“You?”

“Got four kids, mano. Ain’t got no choice.” Jax blinked and Benny took the opportunity to escape.

“Close vote. With Little Paul and Reggie out, might have swayed the table.” Jax said.

“Aye.” Chibs agreed.

She just smiled at them for figuring this out.

Jax caught it. “What?”

“Nothing. We’ll be late.” She reminded him with an innocent look. Jax sighed and shook his head.

“I’m thinking you didn’t tell me all the details about this trip.” He complained.

“Where’s the fun and learning in telling you everything?” She said moving out the door.

She halted abruptly as Clay swung in front of her. Jax and Chibs right behind her. Chibs grabbing hold of her arms to steady her. Clay glaring at her behind his shades, finger in her face.

“You do not ever talk at another charter’s table. Barely ever at our own. Especially about this deal. You are lucky you’re even on this run. Should have made you stay home. Let Gemma teach you how to be an old lady. One who keeps her mouth shut and out of club business.” He fairly spit in her face.

“Clay! Armando asked her a question. She answered it. It wasn’t anything earth shattering to what we’re already talking about. Back off on her.” Jax interjected, stepping in front of Clay. Chibs helping her step back out of the way.

“It’s okay, he’s nervous. We’re all nervous.” She breathed, giving Clay an out.

“Don’t tell me how I feel!” Clay spit.

“Fine.” She shrugged, giving up on helping him. “We going to stand here all day?” Reminding him of their all important meeting with Romeo.

Clay sent her another glare but turned and strode to his bike.

She sighed as Jax turned back to her. “Go, tell him about Reggie. Give him a project to try and kill their crank business.” She suggested to Jax.

Jax rolled his head, breathing hard. “Jesus Christ. Will that work?”

“Maybe.” She shrugged noncommittally.

“Okay.” Jax breathed and turned back towards Clay and the rest of the guys.

“Will it work?” Chibs asked her, taking her hand.

“No. But it’ll give them the illusion of actually trying to fix things. Clay could have re-negotiated the deal, but he’s unwilling to give away more of the profits to keep Samtaz out of the crank
Chibs sighed as they watched Clay take off on his bike. Tig, Bobby, Happy, Juice, and Opie following Clay. Jax only a few seconds behind them, tore out of the lot to catch up with the pack. She and Chibs took their time getting situated on their bike, Chibs opening up the Dyna to catch up.

She holding on tight as they rode to the expo center.
Chapter 84

Chapter Summary

Una Venta, part tres...

Chapter Notes

Well, you wanted a longer chapter...here you go. The rest of Una Venta. Had some breaks from work that I could pound this out. Sorry for any rough edits or transitions.

Again, did my best to remain true to the canon and the characters with adding some fun moments.

Seriously, let me know what you think. Take your time with this, there is a lot here. I'm particularly proud of the pet shop scene. I'd like to know if that and other scenes are working.

Thanks so much for reading and commenting. It's been almost a year since I started posting this story up. Holy cow, my mind is blown by that thought. I wonder if I can hit maybe 100 chapters by 11/30 or a certain word count by then. hmm...must write more...write faster...

Thanks again!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bikes filled a large parking lot and, she suspected, also inside the adjoining building. There were scantily-clad women in bikinis sprawled over the sparkly bikes, which half-blinded her from all the shiny chrome and colorful paint jobs.

Chibs helped her off and she glued herself to him as the throng of people surged around them. And in her half-blind state, she decided was a blessing so she didn’t have to watch the guys go idiot over the barely dressed women and the ostentatious bikes.

“Are we going to actually have a chance to check out the bikes?” She asked.

“Maybe, depends on how Romeo wants to play out the meet. Why they catch your fancy?” He shot her an amused grin.

“Just curious. I don’t think I’ve seen so much chrome in my life. And why in hell would anyone put...what is that? Road flares? On their bikes?” She asked, her eyes caught by one of the more flamboyant bike, sparks flying high into the sky as the bike was ridden around the lot. Drawing a lot of attention.

“Nobody really rides these. They’re for show. A lot of benjamin’s are spent on these bikes.”

“Oh. Just don’t get why anyone would spend so much money on these if they aren’t going to ride
them. Seems like a waste.” She shrugged. Chibs merely gave her a ‘put upon’ face that she was missing the entire point of the work and money that went into the bikes.

Juice jogged back from inside the building, the guys looking around for Romeo amid the crowd. Samtaz hanging back waiting for whatever orders come down from Clay. Bobby pulled out his pocket watch, frowning at the time.

“Romeo does not seem like the kind of guy who runs late.” Bobby said, tucking his watch away.

“Relax, he’ll be here.” Jax reassured. Giving Clay a chin nod to step away further from Samtaz’s hearing.

“What’s going on man?” Clay questioned Jax for the private chat.

“I’ve been thinking about crank move. Armando said it passed four months ago. That’s right after Little Paul was killed and Reggie quit.” Jax said.

“You think that has something with this drug move?” Clay pondered.

“Little Paul never would’ve signed off on crank.” Jax argued his case.

“And Reggie was a lifer, him walking away? Doesn’t make sense.” Chibs added to Jax’s opinion.

“I know.” Jax agreed.

“What’re you thinking?” Clay questioned Jax on exactly he was getting at.

“Close vote, two no’s easily sways the other way.” Jax said. The men glanced towards the Samtaz guys.

“Someone’s clearing the opposition?” Tig questioned.


“Let’s go find Reggie. We gotta shut this crank thing down, send a message to other charters, we don’t deal.” Clay agreed with Jax’s idea.

Tig bobbed his head, looking off a little bit away. “Cartel’s here.” He announced. Clay the the guys turned to where Tig was looking.

“Every business needs shipping and selling. Can’t separate the two.” Bobby said tightly, gaining Clay’s attention.

“I got a wife that says shit without saying shit. Say your piece, Sad Elvis.” Clay retorted, getting into Bobby’s face. It was a move to shut Bobby down, but he held his ground, glaring up at Clay.

“Armando’s right. Muling, dealing same goddamn thing.” Bobby spit at Clay.

Tig and Chibs moved to get between the two of them.

“Not the place, boys.” Tig eased.

“Same thing.” Bobby reiterated again, as Clay, Jax and Armando moved towards the Hummer. While the rest of them stayed with Bobby. She saw Huff moving towards the Hummer as well.

Clay and his group didn’t stay at the tan Hummer long, just a few moments when they were
walking towards them again. The Hummer driving off. Clay didn’t look happy with Samtaz.

“We got a tail. Sooner we lose them, the better the mexicans feel safe.” Jax informed them.

“Huff, call Fiero take them down on Vespa Trail. You guys...follow us.” Armando instructed.

“You sure your grip can handle this?” Tig questioned Clay.

Clay growled in frustrations. “Get on your bike.” He ordered Tig.

Everyone piled onto their bikes.

“Hang on, mo ghaol.” Chibs said worriedly.

“It’ll be fine.” She reassured, but gripped tight around him as he rocked the bike upright and fired it up.

Clay and Armando leading their pack. Tig riding next to her and Chibs. Jax ahead of them, Bobby in front of Tig. The rest trailed behind them down a two-lane highway.

Armando throttled his bike forward, his bike leaping ahead of the pack. Armando raised his hand up, but he was too far away to see what it meant. It didn’t matter because Clay sped up to catch up with Armando. She caught Jax shaking his head and start to speed up, too. Soon all of them were riding faster. Chibs kicked the bike into higher gear and their bike surged forward to keep up with the pack. She gasped, grabbing tighter onto Chibs from the force of the bike under her.

Armando led them into a deserted gas station. They watched as Armando, Huff and one of the other Samtaz guys back an old Ford truck onto the highway. Huff and another guy unchained large, green, metal barrels, letting them roll into the road. The barrels spilling their contents. A grease of some sort.

Armando running back to his bike, “You ready boys?”

Everyone watching what Samtaz was doing, revving their bikes for whatever next was coming.

Huff pulled out his gun and shot at the barrels.

The first couple of shots didn’t do anything, but the third lit the grease on fire. Barrels exploded high up into the sky at their improvised bomb. Everyone ducked from the explosions and heat of the fire that ensued.

“That’s how we do it in Mexizoa, Mr. Crow.” A not so smart looking Samtaz guy said gleefully.

“Fucking assholes.” Chibs muttered, his hand pressing against hers at his waist.

“Not very low-key, is it?” She asked.

“God damn it.” He swore. Following everyone back out onto the road. The grease still burning behind them.

They followed Samtaz from the gas station and back to the clubhouse. Samtaz started partying, jubilant over their success in losing the tail. She and the rest of the guys stared at them grimly. These were the guys that they were trusting with a massive amount of illegal guns.

She caught Tig and Juice on their phones. Juice shutting his phone and leaned into Clay, whispering in his ear. Clay got up abruptly and told Armando that they were going to go back to
the expo until Luis called back.

Clay declined Armando’s offer of an escort.

What do ex-club members do when they leave the club? Apparently own and run a pet store. She amused herself considering what kind of shops the guys might end up running. Bobby, she could see opening a bakery. Happy, a cleaning service. Opie, wood shop. She mulled her choices for Jax as Chibs led her inside the store.

She stuck by Chibs as a scruffy, red-haired man stepped out from the back. His fear ratcheted up as he saw who had come into the shop. Dropping a bag of dog food, quickly putting on a worn-out flannel shirt with the sleeves ripped off. His club tattoos inked out stood stark contrast to his pale skin.

A slim, brown haired woman came out when she heard the commotion. Reggie ushered the woman to the back. That it’s okay. He called her Bunny, and given the name of the pet shop, this was her shop. At least in name.

Chibs moved to the end of the counter, gently pushing her between him and the wall. He looking into the back of the store, ready to block Reggie if he tried to run. Juice stood staring out the front door, preventing anyone from interrupting their visit with Reggie. Jax fiddled with a glass paperweight.

“Never pegged you an animal lover, Reg.” Clay grinned.

“What do you want?” Reggie asked in a panic.


“I’m out. In good standing. Inks all black.” Reggie thrust his bare arms out for them to see.

“Why’d you walk away?” Bobby asked, leaning his elbows to the table, his eyes staring up at Reggie over his sunglasses.

“None of your business. Now get out of here.” Reggie replied.

“Come on, man.” Jax drawled, still trying to ease Reggie into talking to them. But Reggie knew what the game was and clammed up.

She took a step to the side just before Jax firmly took hold of the paperweight and stepped back from the counter, throwing the paperweight at one of the aquariums. Glass exploded everywhere. Chibs pressed himself over her to protect her from any shards hitting her.

Watching Reggie, she saw him thinking. His eyes glancing down a fraction and she leaned into Chibs ear, ”He’s going to grab a gun.”

Chibs didn't hesitate as he pressed his own gun at Reggie’s head. “No. No. No!” Ripping the gun away from Reggie.

She saw Chibs shoulders tighten a little, and slipped a hand under his shirt, letting him know everything was okay. Feeling him calm down, he took a step back and re-holstered his gun once more, now that Reggie wasn’t going to do anything more stupid.

Jax pressed his lips in a tight line, the charm angle not working, time for something more honest
“Weeks after Little Paul was killed, Samtaz passed crank vote. That have anything to do with why you patched out?” Jax pressed.

Reggie goes stone-faced under the question. Still refusing to talk to them. Admirable, given he’s not even part of the club anymore. The threat that Huff and Benny are holding over him must still weigh on his mind.

Jax looked to Clay as Reggie kept up his silent act.

“Hey Tig, you in the mood for some stew?” Clay questioned easily.

Tig perked up. “Yeah, yeah.” Grabbing up one of the bunnies in a cage. Giving moaning noises as he dug his knife out. “Hmmm Hasenfeffer...mmm.”

“All right!” Reggie quickly spoke up to stop Tig from killing the bunny.

“Why’d you quit?” Jax questioned Reggie.

“Huff found out I was banging Little Paul’s old lady.” Reggie admitted.

“Helen?” Tig questioned in surprise, as he put away his knife. “Jesus, man.” Still holding onto the bunny.

“So what happened?” Clay frowned at Reggie, one to keep talking and another that she hoped that Clay didn’t like the idea of Helen stepping out on Little Paul. Hmmm, something he should know about, given what he and Gemma did to JT. She wondered if Clay realized or recognized the similarities.

“Huff kept it quiet. Tell me he didn’t want to ruin Little Paul’s marriage.” Reggie started up again.

“Saving it...for leverage.” Clay figured out.

"Little Paul and I got word there was a cookhouse out on Copperhead. Shook down the skinheads running it. Found out Huff and Benny set it up. Used clubs weight...to get it done. And nobody at the table had any idea that it was happening. And then we get call from Huff and Benny saying that Little Paul was gunned down by Mexican bangers. No other witnesses.” Reggie filled in.

“And when you threatened to out them. Huff played the leverage.” Jax put together.

“Yeah, Huff was going to tell the gang I was banging Helen and I’d be drummed out. Helen would get shunned. No compensation...nobody to look out for her. I didn’t want it to ruin her life too. I walked away.” Reggie finished.

“Well once you and Little Paul were gone, Huff voted it in legit.” Bobby said heavily.

She glanced over at Juice, he grabbed at his phone which started ringing.

“I don’t want this getting back to the club.” Reggie panicked.

“I can’t make that promise. I can promise we’ll take care of Helen.” Clay promised.

“Yo, Luis called. Romeo wants to meet.” Juice moved towards Clay with his message.

“Get us a twenty on the skinhead.” Clay ordered, as he passed by Tig. Who was still petting the
Juice, Bobby, and Opie followed Clay out the door. The rest of them started for the door, too. She paused looking to Reggie who was staring down at the mess of the aquarium. Or the potential mess his life was taking.

“Sorry about the aquarium.” She put a hundred dollar bill on the counter for the damages. “You’re going to have to speak with Samtaz about what happened. But you’ll be fine.”

“Who are you?” Reggie asked.

“I’m the Seer.”

“Yeah, okay, whatever.” Reggie said, her tattoos nor title making a blip to Reggie's attention.

Chibs took her hand and started lead her out of the pet shop, stepping carefully over the broken glass.

They joined Jax, looking at Tig who hadn’t moved. Still petting the rabbit in his hands. “It’s so soft and fluffy.” He said with a soft grin.

“Put the bunny back, Lenny.” She said with an amused smirk.

It took a moment for Jax and Chibs to get her reference, snorting at her joke. Tig looked from them to her with a confused frown.

“Lenny? Who’s Lenny?” Tig asked in confusion.

“Seriously?” She stared at him in disbelief. “I’m getting you a library card.” Walking out the door, shaking her head.

“Guys, what’s she talking about?” Tig asked the giggling men behind her.

“Its from ‘Of Mice and Men’.” Jax said to Tig as they stumbled out of the shop.

“And if you can get Tig to read a book, any book, I’ll pay you a hundred bucks.” Jax challenged her, with a grin and point of his finger. Chibs laughing harder at Jax’s bet.

She gave a confused and growing annoyed Tig a considering look. “Two hundred, and you’re on.”

“Two hundred?” Jax balked at her counter offer.

His abrupt question had the rest of the guys halting and looking at them. Wondering what they were missing. Chibs filling them in. Bobby and Opie starting to laugh.

“Hey, I just paid a hundred bucks to Reggie over the aquarium you destroyed.”

“I didn’t tell you to pay Reggie back for that.” Jax argued with her.

She glared at Jax for being a dick about the aquarium. The two of them ignoring Tig who was twisting his head between the two of them. Clearly not liking he was being played and not sure who to blame.

“Okay, two hundred.” Jax agreed. “Two hundred if you can get Tig to read an entire book.”

“Oh, Jesus.” Bobby laughed, heading for his bike.
“Wait, what?! Chibs, what the fuck just happen?” Tig asked.

“Tiggy, you’re in for an education.” Chibs slapped Tig on the shoulder with an amused grin. Tig groaning.

“Any book?” She confirmed with Jax.

“Sure, any book.” Jax shrugged with a smirk. “Not any of those graphic novels or comic books, though.” He clarified quickly with a wag of his finger at her.

She rolled her eyes, “I know what a book is.”

Jax smirked at her. “Well, I highly doubt Tig here knows what a book is. So you'll have your work cut out for you.”

“Hey! Asshole!” Tig yelled at Jax for the insult.

Which sent the guys back into another laughing fit.

“You’re on.” She confirmed the bet with a nod. She moved to the bike and grabbed her helmet, the guys moving to their own bikes where Clay was waiting for them with an annoyed look.

“Hang on! I didn’t agree to this!” Tig retorted angrily.

“Don’t worry Tig. I’ve seen you read the Harley manual. If you can read that, you can read the book I have in mind.” She said, swinging onto the back of Chibs bike.

Chibs laughing at the whole thing. Jax sauntering off to his own bike as if it were a lock. Tig threw his hands up in the air and stormed to his bike. Sending everyone the finger as they teased him.

Once Tig and Jax scattered to their own bikes, “What book are you going to have Tig read?” Chibs asked her.

“JT’s.” Chibs looked at her in surprise. “It should be required reading for everyone in the club.”

She hugged him from behind. He caught one of her hands, giving her fingers a kiss before he started his bike to follow the pack. She tucked her hands inside his shirt as they drove off to the meeting with Romeo and Luis.

Tig and Opie splitting off to head into Copperhead to track down Samtaz’s drug lab.

They rode about twenty minutes across town and pulled over to the side of a deserted highway. The tan hummer pulled up near them on the shoulder. Two of Romeo's men stepped out and situated themselves to watch both directions of the road. Romeo and Luis stepping out and met Clay halfway, hands shaking between them. The rest of them trailed behind Jax and Clay. Eyes watchful and ears listening to the conversation between Clay and Romeo.

“Sorry about this morning. Won’t happen again.” Clay apologized to Romeo.

“Who was it?” He asked.

“Local law. Harassing our charter down here. We got it handled.” Clay dismissed.

“Good.” Romeo nodded.
“From now on we’ll just be sending down four guys with the truck...lower profile. Tucson charter will run protection once we’re here.” Jax assured.

“We hear from our friends from Belfast?” Romeo questioned Clay. Chibs straightened up at the mention of the Kings.

“I talked to the Kings. They’re working on that big ticket order for you. Ah...they’re going to want a face-to-face before that sale can happen.” Clay warned.

“Jesus Christ. What order?” Chibs asked softly.

“WMD’s.” She replied back.

“Fucking asshole. Clay never brought this up in church.”

“No, he didn’t.” She breathed next to him. “But Romeo’s fighting a war. He needs the weapons.” She reminded him.

“Jesus Christ.” He swore again, rubbing at his forehead with his free hand.

Luis tilted his head towards them, his dark eyes landing on Chibs and sliding to her.

“I’m always available.” Romeo informed Clay. He didn’t want any delays in getting his big guns.

“Something your man know that we don’t?” Luis asked.

Everyone looked in their direction. Clay leveling a ‘shut the fuck up’ look towards them. Chibs glaring back at Clay.

“Didn’t know you let women into your ranks.” Romeo commented curiously.

“This is Chibs, he...used to be part of the Army. And Nancy, she’s our Seer...and Chibs old lady.” Jax said smoothly.

“Seer?” Romeo questioned.

“You mean psychic?” Luis grinned, entertained by the notion.


Romeo and Luis looked to each other, amused by the situation. Well, it was better than them all pissed off for the screw up from this morning.

Romeo took a careful look at her, his eyes lingering on her tattoos. She bet he was a killer at the poker tables. Giving nothing away.

“Romeo...we’ve got things handled.” Clay tried to draw everyone back to the point of the meeting. But Romeo ignored Clay.

She and Chibs stepped forward to meet him part of the way. Luis trailing Romeo as Jax, Clay and the rest of their guys watched.

“Good to meet you.” Chibs said, shaking Romeo’s hand.

She crossed her arms, tucking her hands under her elbows to signal she didn’t want to shake Romeo’s hand.
“Likewise. You know the Kings?”

“Aye.”

“And will the Kings give us a hard time getting us what we need?”

Chibs shifted on his feet, but she answered the question, taking the nebulous and dangerous question from the drug cartel off his shoulders.

“Yes.” She answered truthfully.

Romeo and everyone looked to her. “Oh?” Romeo raised a brow at her.

“Jesus Christ.” She heard Clay swearing.

Ignoring Clay she kept her attention on Romeo and Luis. “This is the first time the Kings will be selling heavy weaponry to the Sons. There’s bound to be issues. They need assurances that the weapons will only be used south of the border. And, well, they’re old and set in their ways. Sorry, for that. But not to worry, it’ll all work out. Jax will make sure of it.” She said brightly.

Romeo blinked at her, glancing behind him to Jax. Clay glaring at her for not mentioning his name. Jax throwing her a ‘what the fuck’ look soon as Romeo and Luis looked back towards her.

“And how do you know that will happen? You know the Kings yourself?” Romeo asked.

She quirked a grin. “No, I don’t know them. Like I don’t know you. But, I know of you. I know of them. I’ve seen what lies ahead. And you’ll get your weapons. You’ll win your war. The path to get there, is not so clear or straight as you might plan or imagine. Just know, the Sons are working hard to make this relationship work. We’re being honest with you. Just as we expect honesty from you in turn.”

Romeo shot another look to his second.

“How do you know of us?” Luis asked.

“I read Tig and Clay’s wife, Gemma.” She covered, leaving her reading of Jax out of this. “The members and relations of the club is very tightly knit.” She shrugged.

“But we don’t know them.” Luis said confused.

“Don’t you.” She said lowly, staring down Romeo and Luis.

There was another uncomfortable moment. The guys glancing between each other as she held her ground with Romeo and Luis.

“You can trust us. Just as we can trust you.” She said. “And with the weapons we can get for you...you’ll win your war. So all’s good.” She said brightly again. Releasing Romeo and Luis from her...she didn’t know what to call what she was doing...thrall, she guessed.

Romeo and Luis shared another look, turning back to Clay and Jax to conclude their meeting. She amused herself watching Clay having to forcibly shift his features around from anger at her to the affable partner for Romeo and Luis.

“We’re all set. Location for the exchange. South Tucson, auto equipment repair yard. Ten o’clock.” Luis handed over a paper with the address.
“Great. See you then.” Clay smiled tightly. Shit, she was in it now.

“See you.” Romeo nodded to Clay, sliding another look at her. Jerking back around he waved to his men. “Vamanos.” He said to his men and they all drifted back to their cars and left.

“What the fuck was that?” Bobby asked.

“That’s what I’d like to know.” Clay leveled at her.

“Not about the trust shit. What the fuck is Romeo talking about with this big ticket order?” Bobby pressed to Clay.

Clay frowned at Bobby. But the interest with the rest of the guys, pressed Clay to answer. “They want bigger guns, is all. It’s not a problem, the Irish opened their warehouse to us. They have what Romeo wants.”

“That may be so, but you didn’t tell us about it. We didn’t vote on it!” Bobby yelled.

“We voted in the guns. And what did I tell you about talking?” Clay moved in front of her like a raging storm.

“Romeo is not a man you can lie to. You haven’t secured the weapons that they want. The Irish could easily pull the plug on this whole thing.” She pointed out calmly.

The flare of anger was the only clue she had before Clay’s fist flew at her face. She jerked back, feeling the power of the strike as it streamed just millimeters where her face used to be.

Clay off-balance with his punch, Chibs moved and used Clay’s balance against him and pushed him down to the ground. The guys moving closer to surround the three of them. Chibs pulling his knife and climbing on top of Clay.

“Shit! Clay! Fuck! Chibs!” The men chorused in shock.

Bobby moving to her side, checking her. “You okay?” He asked.

“Yeah, he missed me. Shit, that was close.” She breathed shakily.

Clay glaring up at her, this fight wasn’t over in his mind. Chibs grabbed Clay by his shirt and kutte.

“Damn...you gotta step in there.” Bobby glanced down at Chibs and Clay. "Calm them down." Looking back to her. "Clay for better or worse is President. You can’t challenge him like that. Not in front of all of us.” Bobby advised.

She sighed, realizing he was right. At least for now. Clay had his pride and he needed that bravado to deal with everyone to control his power at the head of the table.

“Chibs.” She called as she moved towards him. He had pressed the tip of his knife against Clay’s cheek, pointing towards his eye, Clay’s lashes fluttering around the sharp edge of the knife.

Chibs wasn’t saying anything, just holding Clay and holding the knife. Clay frozen under Chibs and the knife. Clay body tight and ready to unleash the pent up violence he was capable of with just a wrong word or move. Shit.

“Chibs, I’m okay. He didn’t hit me.” She said again, moving so he could see her from the corner of his eye. Happy moving out of the way for her. She crouched down and put her hand to his wrist with the knife. Remembering she had to do this once before, with Clay, again. Stupid man, he
doesn’t seem to learn.

“It’s okay. I’m okay.”

“He tried to hit you.” Chibs growled from deep within himself.

“But I moved out of the way, he missed. I’m fine. Ease off on the knife okay?”

Chibs relaxed enough that she could pull his arm away from Clay’s face. But she knew that if he wanted to, Chibs could easily rip his arm out of her hold.

“Get the fuck off me!” Clay yelled at Chibs.

Chibs tightened his hold on Clay.

“Clay! The fuck!” Jax yelled. “Let her fucking help you.”

“Come on, babe. Let him up. It’s okay.” She reasoned with Chibs.

Chibs let go of Clay with a quick release, rolling back up onto his feet that had her stumbling to rise with him. His arms automatically wrapping around her. She rubbed his back, soothing his nerves.

Clay rolling to his side and with Jax’s helping hand, stood up much more slowly than Chibs had.

She looked at Clay, Bobby was right, his pride had been wounded and needed to be pampered to save face. “I told everyone before we left that things weren’t going to go as planned. This anger you have towards me...it’s yourself that you’re angry at. I’m been trying to help you, help this club navigate this quagmire.”

“She’s right. She pointed me to Reggie.” Jax jumped in.

“And you should have told us about the big guns at church.” Bobby added.

“We already voted on the guns.” Clay spit.

“Our usual stock of guns. That’s what we voted. Not whatever military grade shit Romeo wants. We get caught with that shit on top of the coke and our priors, we’d never see the light of day again.” Chibs argued back. "Jesus fucking Christ."

“Look, the sale tonight will go through. That’s what we’re here for.” She reminded them. “We can’t screw around with Romeo. The shit going on with Samtaz, we all know we need to clean house there. To us, it’s just a sale. To Romeo, it’s a war he’s fighting. Every war depends on their supply lines. Every battle is won or lost by how strong their supply lines are. And they have to win. We’re in bed with them, it falls on us to make sure it works. We can’t walk away from it. Not now. That includes winning the Kings over that they can trust us. Samtaz blowing up a grease truck to lose a fucking tail, does not inspire trust.”

“We have to get Huff and Benny out.” Bobby nodded. “Fighting amongst ourselves, doesn’t inspire trust to anyone.”

“Clay, I’m sorry for Romeo and Luis’s interest in Chibs and I. It was bound to happen sooner or later. I was just trying to help, that’s all.” She handed Clay the proverbial olive branch.

Everyone fell silent, waiting to see Clay’s reaction to all this would be.

Jax and the guys all stared at Clay, Clay wavering and shifting on his feet as he weighed his
options. Continue to resist and risk having the club turn on him, or accept it and move on and make the biggest sale he and this club will have ever made in their history so far.

Clay’s face and body relaxed, and it signaled his acceptance, everyone else relaxed.

“Call Reggie. Have him meet us over at Samtaz. Gotta get that crank shut down.” Clay ordered Chibs, a backhanded punishment for attacking him.

Everyone drifted towards the bikes, Chibs pulling out his phone, with a roll of his eyes.

She put on her helmet as he talked to Reggie. Promising that he’d be safe. He looking to her as he made the promise to Reggie, she nodded confirming it.

Bobby hanging up his phone, too. “Armando’s calling church. They’ll be there by the time we get there.” He told Clay and Jax.

“Reggie’s on his way.” Chibs confirmed as he hung up as well.

“Good. Let’s kill this crank down, once and for all.” Clay said as he strode off to his bike.

She had to fight to keep from rolling her eyes. Jax looking to her and she shook her head at him, answering his unspoken question.

“What the hell is this all about Clay? We should be gearing up for tonight.” Armando questioned.

The entire Samtaz club was in attendance for church requested by Samcro. Samcro stood while the Samtaz members sat in their designated seats around the table. She and Chibs stood back on the outskirts, giving Clay room to address Samtaz with the truth they’ve learned through the day. And to give some breathing room between them and Clay given the fight on the side of the road.

Their heads turned when Tig marched in with a pasty-pale, soft-looking guy. He had thinning, longish red hair. Opie trailing into the building after them.

“Meet Achy.” Tig brings Achy closer to the action at the table. “Skinhead meth cook. About five months ago, Little Paul and Reggie found out Achy here was cooking for Huff and Benny.”

Clay’s announcement had Samtaz sitting up in their chairs and attention going to Achy and their own VP and Sgt.

“What?” Huff questioned surprisingly.

“He told his crew that it was a Samtaz drug operation. Ain’t that right, Achy?” Clay threatened to Achy, daring him to contradict the fact. Achy wisely nodded.

“This is bullshit. We took a vote.” Huff contradicted, seeing his world starting to crumble around him under the questioning looks his brothers were sending him.

“Yeah, after you killed Little Paul and blackmailed Reggie out of the club.” Jax clarified.

“Come on, man.” Huff weaseled.

“You know what you’re doing here?” Armando stared down at Clay over their accusations regarding his club. His trusted VP and Sgt potentially undermining his authority as President.

“I’m accusing the VP and the Sgt using the MC to their own ends. And then, when they got
caught. They killed a member and blackmailed another.” Clay stated.

“This is crazy, man. This is guy’s a goddamn tweaker!” Benny’s silence breaking.

The door opened and Reggie nervously steps inside. Chibs snags Reggie on the shoulder and moves him up next to where Achy still stood. “Yeah, but this guys not.”

“Reg has the whole story.” Jax said.

“It’s your charter, man. Listen to the facts. Make your decision. But, if you find out that your club got into crank on a lie. You need to vote it again.” Clay reasoned.

“I’m not listening to this shit.” Huff declared arrogantly, standing up.

“Sit down, Huff.” Armando ordered sternly.

“You gonna listen to his bullshit?” Huff dismissively pointed to Clay, questioning his President that they'd give Samcro any credence over his own VP.

Armando angrily stands up, confronting Huff. “I said sit down.”

Huff breaths hard, recognizing he’s in some deep shit. And it isn’t looking good for him. Not with Reggie ready to spill the beans and Benny can’t be of any help since he’s in the same boat.

Huff lunges towards Reggie, “You little bitch…”

Chibs moves in front of Reggie to protect him from Huff, but Clay grabs Huff’s nuts. Huff doubles over with a pained squeal.

“You having trouble with the grip?” Clay questions a red-faced Huff, now red-faced and groans anew with another flex of Clay’s grip. Another moment and Clay releases Huff. Huff crumpling to the floor curling around his groin.

“Handle your business. Well be at the truckstop.” Jax said regretfully to Armando. Samcro walking out of the clubhouse, leaving Armando to clean up the mess of his club.

The moon rose over them, the night sky darkening by the minute. Clay looking pleased as they waited. Fully expecting Samtaz to kill their crank business. She and Chibs leaned against their bike as they waited for Samtaz to show. She caught sight of Happy and Bobby talking to Tig and Opie from the corner of her eye. Jax joining them, nodding and talking to them. By Tig and Opie’s concerned looks shot their way and look over to Clay, they were finding out about their scuffle with Clay.

“You okay?” She asked him around a bite of a banana.

“Yeah. Shite. I don’t know what comes over me like that. Even before, back in Belfast, I never lost control like that.” He sighed, tossing the skin of his banana off towards a grassy area of the parking lot.

“Just as I grow stronger in my abilities, I think you are, too.” She said. “Sorry.”

He snorted. “Don’t be sorry. You aren’t doing it on purpose. I know that. But if Clay keeps screwing around like this, he may very well lose an eye.”

She gave him a rueful look. “Just keep looking to the humor of the situation. Look at Clay, he’s
practically preening. Fully expecting Samtaz to quit their crank. I can’t wait to see his expression when it doesn’t go his way.”

Chibs snorted. “You’ve been hanging around the boys too long, got a sick sense of humor growing on ye’.”

Shrugging, “It was bound to happen. Who knows, maybe I’m rubbing off on them?” She gave him wide eyes at the thought of that.

Her idea sending Chibs into a gale of laughter. She smiled up at him, happy that he was relaxed and not as stressed out as before.

Tig wandered over to them, “Hey. Heard what happened. You okay?” He questioned the two of them.

“Yes, we’re good.” She answered for the both of them. Chibs still trying to get hold of himself.

Opie and Bobby joined them next. “So, you think they’ll kill the crank?” Bobby asked.

“Clay’s sure of it.” Tig said.

“Yeah, with what Reggie told us…” Opie chimed in.

“Want to bet on it?” She asked.

The guys looked at her question. “Fifty bucks they don’t.” She laid out her terms.

Bobby, Opie, and Tig shared a look, glancing at Clay who boomed out a laugh at whatever Juice was talking about.

“I’ll take you up on that.” Bobby pulled out his rolled up wad of cash and thumbed a fifty out.

Tig and Opie watched the proceedings. “I don’t know.” Opie said carefully.

“Come on. With the proof we presented to Armando...it’s a lock.” Bobby said confidently.

“But she’s psychic.” Opie considered.

“I could be wrong. Clay does have compelling evidence for Samtaz to consider.” She said breezily.

She had to nudge Chibs with an elbow to keep him from giving anything away. She was making bank here.

“Okay, I’m in.” Tig said, fishing his wallet out. Opie nodding, pulling out a fifty, too. She pulling her wallet out and pulled out three fifties.

Chibs took the collective cash to hold for them. They didn’t have long to wait when a pickup truck pulled in, Samtaz following on their bikes. Huff and Benny yanked out of the flatbed of the truck and dumped. Their kutes stripped of them, beaten and groaning from their injuries.

“Sorry, man.” Jax offered to Armando.

Armando pulled out a flask. “Lost a third of my goddamn club.”

“Take another vote on the crank?” Bobby asked intently. Tig and Opie leaning in to hear Armando’s answer.
“Yeah, passed. Sorry.” Armando answered with a grimace, taking a drink from his flask.

“Are you shitting me?” Clay turned a shocked look to Armando.

“Guys got a taste of the money, Clay. It was unanimous. We’ll arrange another depot for the truck. And we’ll make damn sure that the crank don’t get in the way. You got my word.” Armando explained and promised.

“Shit.” Clay swayed on his feet, trying to come up with something to change things his way. But he...they did everything they could. Clay turned and took Armando’s hand, giving it a shake.

Bobby, Opie and Tig looked over at her. Chibs handing her the money from their bet. She deftly tucked the cash away. Bobby shaking his head. Opie slapping a commiserating hand to Tig’s shoulder who swore when they lost the bet with her.

“You’d think they’d know better than to bet against you.” Chibs snickered next to her.

“Hey, don’t be killing my action here.” She retorted with a laugh.

“Jesus.” Chibs snorted, getting onto the bike so she could get on herself. “Graim thu, m ‘anam. Graim thu.”

“We better get moving.” Jax said.

“Love you, too.” She said as they grabbed their helmets. “You should try and say goodbye to Armando if you get a chance.” She suggested, watching Armando gather everyone up. He was a good man.

“Why?” Chibs asked her.

“Odds are...he doesn’t have long to live.” She answered Chibs, he looking off to Armando.

“Come on.” Armando directed everyone to follow them for the meet with a nod.

“Shite.” Chibs muttered mounting the bike.

Bobby still stunned by the turn of events, glaring at Clay.

“Not a goddamn word.” Clay growled at Bobby.

Miles climbed back into the truck and followed Clay and Jax off the lot. She and Chibs joining the rest of the guys to the auto repair location on the other side of town.

They pull into the location for the meet, looking nervously around at all the heavily armed men surrounding the perimeter and even inside. If things went south, there’d be no way they’d survive it.

“That’s some well guarded salsa, man.” Clay cracked, his eyes taking in all the men packing weaponry.

“Wait til you taste it.” Romeo joked back. The two of them referencing Romeo’s choice of truck to haul their cash, coke, and guns.

“Chibs. Come on Juice.” Tig nodded, the three of them moved to their truck and opened it up, cracking open the wood crates stamped with auto parts, revealing the weapons.
Luis ordered a few of his men to help unload the guns. Chibs coming back to her, their hands linking up and their headaches eased off. Jax and the guys were still nervously looking around.

“You always travel this thick? Or expecting heat from the competition?” Clay questioned Romeo.

“Just a precaution.” Romeo assured.

“Should we be taking that precaution?” Jax asked.

“Lobos Sonora doesn’t know about our deal. If they did, they would never risk reprisal up north.” Romeo explained.

She had to bite her lip hard. Jesus Christ, they had no idea that the Lobos were already in Northern California. She considered telling them, running her boot across the loose dirt in thought. Given the stress of this sale and the fuckup over Samtaz...no. No sense in mucking shit up even more right now. Especially with Clay still raw over the fight from this afternoon. Damn it. She looked to Jax to see if he caught it. But he only looked concerned with tonight, not seeing the bigger picture on this. Fuck.

“They’d hit us down here. And we’re prepared.” Luis added.

“That you are.” Clay agreed.

Luis brought out a duffel filled with cash. “Seven hundred thousand...balance for this order, half down for the next.” Romeo tallied.

A crate was brought out next, setting it down in front of them. Opening it up, and pushing the packing material out of the way, revealed the coke, wrapped carefully in plastic and tape.

“Thirty kilos of uncut, Colombian cocaine.” Romeo announced.

“You have a safe ride gentlemen.” Luis said with a smirk.

“We’ll be up a few days to check on the operation. Buenas norte.” Romeo told them. Their business done, Romeo and Luis leave.

The guys all stared down at the coke. Hesitating to even take hold of one of the bricks, much less the idea of muling all of them back up north. A club that actively shut down anything to do with drugs is now muling for a cartel, a new chapter in their history books. The ramifications weren’t lost on anyone.

“Come on, let’s load it up.” Clay ordered harshly. A quick look to their President, the man who put this deal in motion. Only time will tell if it was a wise choice or not. And she knew, just as Chibs and Jax knew, that it wasn’t. But it was the only choice, for now she silently promised.

With Clay’s order, the guys grabbed up the bricks and tucked them into one of their crates.

She watched Clay, satisfaction that the deal was done. Seven hundred thousand in cash. Yes, this was a day to mark down on his calendar. Jax nodding next to him. Bobby takes hold of one of the bricks, only to toss it back into the pile. Disgust in his eyes as he turned away. Not wanting to even handle the coke.

Once all the bricks were sealed back into the crate, they mounted their bikes and ride off the lot. Foregoing another night in Tucson, they press through the night to get back to Charming as soon as possible. Not stopping except for fuel. Nobody was joking or having fun on this run back home.
Until this load of coke was safely locked up in their warehouse and delivered to the Mayans, everyone was on high alert.

She huffed thinking that all the guys thought their problems were over once they got home. But the insanity was only just starting. They needed to check with Tara to see how things went while they were conducting business in Tucson. Hoping that Tara managed to keep things together. But, she settled, the ensuing chaos will only present more opportunities to fix things. They just needed to be ready to jump on them as they crop up. Please, God, if you're up there...let it all work out, she prayed. Gripping tighter around Chibs.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My love = mo ghaol
I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 85

Chapter Summary

Brick, part 1

Chapter Notes

Going to be slammed with work this and next week. I’ll do my best to keep updating. Fingers crossed.

And I’m completely obsessed with the opening theme song to Versailles show that I finally started watching on Netflix. M83 - Outro. Freaking good bit of music, can’t get it out of my head.

Anyway, thanks.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

When they pulled in at the warehouse, she saw that Marcus and his men were waiting for them. Getting off the bike, she stretched her arms and legs out from the long ride home. Chibs stretching next to her. Dust rising up from under the tires of the truck.

She giggled as he wrapped his arms around her, swaying together, “Gotcha.” He growled in her ear before pressing a kiss to the curve of her neck. Making her hum at his touch. They watched Marcus and his VP greet Jax and Clay.

Jax rolled his arms smiling easily, Marcus holding his hand out to him. “Jax.”

“How’re you doing?” Jax greeted Marcus’s VP. Clay and Marcus hugging.

“ Heard it was a good trip.” Marcus said.

Clay nodding, “Good as it gets, bro.”

“Cut and bag won’t be up and running until tomorrow.” Marcus informed.

Clay shrugged. “Alright. I guess we’ll babysit until then.”

Marcus nods, “I’ll set up the pickup.”

They watch as Marcus walks towards his bike. Noticing that several of Marcus’s guys weren’t moving and didn’t look like they had any intention of leaving.

“Hey amigo! You forgetting something?” Jax questions Marcus.

“They’re just here to help.” Marcus said, turning around.
“Thanks,” Jax pulling out a cigarette, “we can handle it.” He reassures Marcus.

Marcus walks back towards Jax. “Once that shipment hits Northern Cali...keeping it safe lands on me.”

“One guy.” Clay negotiates.

“Rafi, stick around.” Marcus agrees and orders to the rest of his men. “Let’s go.”

Jax lights his cigarette.

Glancing towards Juice, noticing he was answering his phone. She debated if she should step in or not. It could work out without her intervention. And Clay still looked mad at her. She can’t be responsible for lessons that the guys needed to learn. God, she hated these moments.

“Miles, lock those crates in the gun room. No one gets in.” Jax orders.

“Alright.” Miles nods to the order.

“Phil and Ratboy on the front and back.” Jax adds to the guard duty.

“Alright, everybody get some sleep. Be at clubhouse by noon.” Clay orders the rest of them.

The guys move back to their bikes, she grimaced a little that they had to get back on so soon. Juice passed her by, hanging up his phone and riding out with purpose.

Chibs rides straight through town to get home. They grabbed up their stuff from the saddlebags and dumped them to the floor.

“Three hours til we have to be at the clubhouse.” She moaned.

“Shower, bed, food.” Chibs stated. Pulling her with him to the bedroom and right into the shower. Stripping off their dusty, grimy clothes onto the floor as they went.

She collapsed into bed with a sigh, her hair still wet from the cursary shampoo-ing. Chibs setting the alarm on the clock so that they wouldn’t be late for church.

It felt like she’d just dropped off when the alarm went off.

“Noooo...” She whined, flipping her pillow over top her head and ears. But it wasn’t enough to stop the strident noise of the alarm. Nor the frustrated sound of Chibs hitting at the alarm failed to make it stop.

“God damn it!” Chibs swore, sitting up and grabbing the clock, finally hitting the off button.

“Oh thank Christ.” She mumbled. She burrowed further into the blankets, ignoring the fact that she had to get up and get dressed.

“Come on, m ‘anam.” Chibs entreated. His voice thick with sleep and accent.

Her body sunk into the mattress further at the sound of his voice. “Ugh. Tired.”

“I know. But we got church in an hour. We need food and get moving.” He reasoned. He was already at the closet and pulling on a fresh pair of jeans. Tossing some clothes towards her.
“Uhmph.” She grabbed the clothes and sat up, rubbing at her eyes and face, trying to wake up. Her head was starting to pound, too. God damn it. Fine, she gave up fighting the responsibilities that awaited them. Standing up and pulling on the clothes Chibs had tossed her way.

They managed to get to the kitchen where they ate some cereal. She was still too tired and didn’t want to risk smoking a joint just to eat. Liable to faceplant down in her bowl.

“Why did Jax send Marcus’s guys away from the warehouse? Figure more men watching over the coke would be a good thing?” She asked.

“It’s our warehouse. We don’t be wanting outsiders spending too much time on our land. We don’t want witnesses to whatever might go on there.” He explained.

“Oh.”

“Why? You think it was a mistake?” He asked.

She stood up with a shrug and grabbed their bowls. “I just thought more people watching over the coke, the better, is all.” She said and went to the sink to rinse the bowls out.

"Aye, and more people that we don't know. No telling who they'd tell what was going on up there. Or what idiot idea they'd get in their heads." He explained further, his eyes looking at his watch.

“You all set?” He asked, pulling on his jacket and kutte.

“Yeah.” Grabbing her bag with her laptop, shrugging her jacket and kutte on, they left the house and rode to the clubhouse.

Walking into the clubhouse, she noticed the doors to church still sported the plywood sheets. Pinney was in his spot at the bar, Bobby drinking coffee next to him. The two of them talking.

“There she is.” Bobby announced excitedly when he caught sight of them. “Won fifty bucks off me, Tig, and Ope over Samtaz crank vote.”

She rolled her eyes at Bobby for his faux irritation at losing the bet.

“What crank vote?” Pinney asked, confused.

She tilted her head to Bobby to answer the question. “Rolled into the truck-stop, found out Samtaz has been running a crank business the last four...five months.”

“Jesus Christ.” Pinney swore, his hands balling up in anger. “You serious?”

“We tried to kill it.” Bobby shrugged. “Found out that Huff and Benny killed Little Paul and blackmailed Reggie out of the club.”

“Blackmailed? With what?”

“Reggie was sleeping with Little Paul’s old lady, Huff found out. Used it to get rid of Reggie. Soon as those two were out, the club voted the crank legit. Our Seer, pointed us to Reggie who told us what happened. Forced Samtaz to revote the crank. Huff and Benny were drummed out.”

“And the revote?”

“Passed.” Chibs answered.
“Tried to get Armando and Clay to renegotiate the deal, Samtaz wasn’t going for it. In the end, sadly, money tends to win out.” She shrugged.

“Armando promised to keep their crank out of our deal.” Bobby impressed on Piney.

Piney glared at Bobby, not with him personally, but with the whole situation seemed. And she didn’t blame him. Chibs and Bobby got into a conversation while a croweater slid a cup of coffee to Chibs. She waved off the offer for herself.

With Chibs keeping Bobby occupied she looked over Piney. “You okay?” Noticing he looked pale, yet. And had a large bruise across the top of his hand.

“I’m fine.” He grumbled at her.

She eyed the liquor bottle next to his glass of orange juice. “Go easy on that. Please.”

“Doc said I’m fine. Don’t be worrying over me.”

“Okay.” She nodded with a sigh. “No...I can’t help it. I’m going to worry.” She shook her head in frustration.

Piney focused on her, his eyes softened. “You’re a good girl.” Piney said gruffly over her concern for him.

Their attention turned to the door, Tig coming in with Juice.

Bobby eyes dancing in amusement at the sight of Tig. “Hey, Seer...you figured out how you’re going to get Tig to read a book yet?

Rolling her eyes at Bobby trying to stir shit up. Chibs chuckled, amused by Bobby’s attempt to torture Tig over her bet with Jax.

Tig scowled and threw a finger at Bobby as he kept walking. “Not going to happen.” Tig threw over his shoulder.

“I have my ways.” She answered mysteriously with a grin. Bobby and Chibs laughing at her answer.

“You certainly do, m ‘anam.” Chibs grinned as he pulled her into his arms again.

“What bet?” Piney asked, confused.

“You fill him in.” She told Bobby as Chibs led her to the sofa.

Curling up next to him as he pulled the paper from the coffee table, his arm slung around her shoulders. He offered the business section to her, but she shook her cooling head.

“You alright?” He asked her as she pushed her face into his side, closing her eyes.

“Tired. Worried about Piney.”

She felt Chibs turn his head towards Piney at the bar. “He seems to be okay.”

“He was hospitalized while we were in Tucson.”

“Shite.”
She glanced up at his worried eyes, “Things are going to start moving. A lot of bullshit we have to contend with. A lot of lessons that need to be learned.”

He sighed heavily. “Yeah, okay. We’ll get through it.”

Opie came in and stopped to talk to his dad. Watching as Opie took the liquor bottle away. Piney glaring at his son for trying to handle him.

Tig came out of church, “Chapel, boys.” He announced.

Chibs and they guys dropped their phones into the cigar box, settling in their chairs. She tucking her bag off in a corner, hoping that this meeting wouldn’t take long. She wanted to get some trading in before the markets closed.

“Otto reached out. Our sheriff has a new lead on Luann’s murder.” Jax said, looking freshly showered.

“They found cum in her panties. DNA came back a match.” Clay added.

Jax nodded. “They didn’t give a name. But has to someone who’s been through the system.”

Juice leaned forward, looking to Jax and Clay. “Georgie Caruso?”

“Always been my guess.” Jax nodded to Juice’s assessment.

“Should’ve handled this Luann shit when it first happened. Old ladies, got a way of coming back and biting you in the ass.” Clay complained.

“Yeah...because Luann asked to get killed.” She drawled sharply to Clay’s derisiveness.

Clay glared at her hard for her comment, but she didn’t take it back. Chibs hand tight around her waist as she glared back at Clay.

Jax jumped in, pulling Clay’s focus back to the point of the conversation. “Look, If Roosevelt does have proof...he’s going to go after Caruso. We’ve got to get to him first.”

“I want it to happen before Otto gets out of the infirmary and loses visitation. I want a brother look him in the eye, tell him its been handled. He deserves that.” Clay ordered harshly.

Juice leaned forward again. “Ope, you think Lyla would help us find Georgie?” She turned her attention to Juice. He was nervous, taking such an active interest in this whole discussion. She glanced around the table to see if anyone else seemed to pick up on it. But they all just looked to Opie for his answer.

“Yeah...maybe.” Opie shrugged. “She’s on a shoot today.” He told them.

They guys chuckled at the idea of porn stars and filming.

“Beautiful thing, girls in love.” Chibs joked. The guys grinning and watching her for her reaction. Rolling her eyes at them. Chibs gave her a kiss.

“Before we all sail off on ‘I Love Lesbos’. Good job, well done.” Clay stood up and grabbed up a duffel full of cash, walking around the table, smacking the cash in front of each man.

“Okay fellas, that’s it.” Clay announced. The guys hadn’t gotten up from their seats though when Clay finished handing round the cash.
“Clay.” Jax voiced sternly. Confused, she looked around the table. They were staring at Clay, too. What the hell was going on?

Clay sighed and rolled his eyes at Jax, then dropped a smaller stack of cash in front of her.

Leaving the rest of the cash with Bobby. “Put that in the safe until Kozik gets back.”

“What’s this?” She asked, frowning at the money. Holding up the bound stack of hundred dollar bills. A quick guesstimate, they’d given her ten thousand dollars. Jesus Christ.

“Your cut.” Clay explained shortly, as if she were a simpleton.

“I told you, I don’t want your money.” She said confused, looking at Clay and Jax.

“Seer, we all talked about it. It was you that pointed us to Reggie about Samtaz’s crank business.” Bobby said.

“And you laid groundwork with Romeo and Luis. That goodwill you extended to them, that potentially eases the way for us going forward. You deserve to be paid like the rest of us.” Jax said. The guys all nodding at her.

God, they were trying to be nice about this.

“Look,” She set the money back down on the table. “I appreciate the sentiment. I didn’t do all that much. And besides its a conflict of interest. My abilities aren’t to be bought. I don’t need this money.”

She leaned back and crossed her arms, her foot wriggling as the guys stared at her as if she’d grown a second head.

“M ‘anam.” Chibs cajoled in her ear. “Just take the money and say thank you.” He advised.

“No. I don’t want it. I said from the very beginning, no vote, no cut.” She argued.

Tig dropped a hand to the table, “Jesus Christ. Stubborn as ever.” He muttered.

“It’s yours. You earned it.” Bobby said on top of Tig's mutterings.

“Or are you planning on sponging off of Chibs here forever?” Clay sneered.

She took a moment to breath under Clay’s insult. She heard Chibs hiss in her ear, his body going tense. Grabbing at his hand to keep him in the chair and give him a chance to calm down. But if Clay kept up this bullshit insulting her at every turn, she’d let Chibs strike out at him.

“Clay! What the fuck?” Jax admonished.

The guys shared Jax’s sentiment by the looks on their faces. Piney looked like he wanted to climb over the table and go after Clay, himself. But she had a better idea.

Eyeing the cash, she fished Chibs lighter from his pocket. He jerked at her sudden move.

“I meant what I said, I will not let my ability be bought.” She looked at the guys. “I am a Seer. I have visions, prophetic dreams, commune with the dead. I read people, know who they are better than they know themselves. I speak the truth of what I see. If I take this money, it sets a precedent, how can any of you trust me if you pay me?”
She grabbed the cash in question and flicked the lighter on, setting the flame to a corner of the stack.

“Oh my God.” Tig groaned.

"Holy shit." Bobby breathed as his eyes widened in surprise as the flames grew. Jax hiding his lips with a hand, by the brightness of his blue eyes, he was laughing. Opie tilted his head, watching the proceedings, his brows rising towards his hairline. Juice’s eyes bugged out, mouth dropped open. Piney gasped a laugh. Clay looked like he wanted to swallow his tongue or hit her for being stupid about burning perfectly good money. But it was money that they were willing to give to her and not for themselves. So, she could do what she wanted with it.

Chibs gasped in her ear, his hands tight around her.

Her eyes looking to each man at the table, seeing that she had their complete attention. Her eyes landing on Clay as she held onto the flaming cash.

“Money is nothing, its only paper. The people at this table and this club, they are what matter. Without them, you have nothing. You are nothing. What will this club do with all this cash? What will your legacy be, Clay? Will it be as a president who gave back? To further the future of this club? This town?” She looked to the others. “What will this club’s legacy be?” Turning her attention back to Clay. “Tick tock, time’s running out.”

Ignoring the questioning looks from the others, she swore she could see Clay’s suspicion, no...his fear over her ratchet up. Good.

The heat of the burning money licked at her fingers as she held Clay’s eyes a moment longer. A silent challenge to see how long she could hold onto the burning cash before it burned her fingers. Twisting the flaming cash she took another serious sweep of the men around the table, taking her time that she had their absolute attention. Gently tossing the pile of flames down on the heavily, carved table in Clay’s direction. His eyes tracking her toss, his body tensing to get out of the way if she actually threw the fire at him. Smirking at him when he flinched. It was childish, but she made her point to Clay...to everyone.

Twisting around, she kissed Chibs and walked out of the stone-silent room.

Grabbing up her bag she went behind the bar and pulled out a soda. Sitting down at a table, she pulled her laptop out and powered it up. Popping the tab on the soda she waited for her programs to open. Absently, checking her fingers and they looked okay.

Soon as her platforms were up, she scanned her positions and made a few adjustments as needed. Taking some trades off and putting more on. Opening up a financial news site, she read the headlines while keeping an eye on the action in the markets and how its affecting her trades.

God, she breathed, a small part of her relaxed that she was back in tune with her trading. Shaking her aching head, she knew most people would stress out with the kind of trading she does...and size. But for her, it was calming and exhilarating at the same time, like she was in control over her future. For so long, she didn’t let herself imagine such a thing. Made it easier to survive.

She mulled over the plans the guys had discussed regarding Georgie. Thinking about what she might be able to do to help Otto. It was clear that Clay was going to let Otto hang. She tapped an email to Alison with some instructions. Opening up her Amazon account and made her purchases. Alison emailed back already when she logged out of her Amazon. Replying to have her set up a meeting with the person she recommended that might be able to help.
Gemma strode into the clubhouse and she groaned, hiding behind her laptop. But her luck wasn’t with her as Gemma looked from the plywood church doors to sidle up to where she was set up.

“They finally wise up and kick you out of church?” Gemma asked snarkingly. Her hand resting on her hip, her heavily made-up eyes raked over her.

“No, sorry to disappoint. They’re almost done in there.” She said absently, her attention on her screen.

“What is it that you’re doing on that laptop?” Gemma questioned.

Huh, an actual question that didn’t insinuate she was trying to undermine the club or Jax. A breakthrough, perhaps she pondered. Deciding to test this hypothesis out, she eyed Gemma curiously. “I’m reading the latest news from Asia and Europe, trying to predict if the EU is going to kick Greece out and how it might affect the US markets. And if the Fed might finally start raising interest rates. Why?” She asked. “Do you have any insights on the economic state of the United States and Europe?”

Gemma shifted uncertainly under her response to her question, her lips tightened into a thin line, her eyes hardening. “Think you’re so smart. But you know nothing of what it takes to be a real member of this club. A real old lady.” Gemma declared with a snort.

“So...you don’t have an opinion about the world economy.” She asked again, ignoring Gemma’s attempt to draw her into a fight. Disappointed that her hypothesis was proven false.

Gemma glared at her, but turned around and strode out of the clubhouse.

“Guess not.” She sighed to herself, turning back to her trading.

He looked back with a hard glare to Clay after Nancy walked out of church. “What the fuck is your bloody problem?” He demanded.

Tig dousing the flaming cash with his bottle of water.

“Just looking out for you, brother.” Clay said backtracking his accusation. But the snide grin on Clay’s face pissed him off.

“Bullshit, I don’t question Gemma sponging off you, do I? You ever accuse mo bhanrigh of anything like that again and we’ll be going a few rounds in the ring. And I could care less about your half-dead hands, ye’ greedy bastard.” He growled as he got up and strode out to find his firebug. He couldn’t stop his amused grin as he hit the plywood doors.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
My Queen = mo bhanrigh
Chapter 86

Chapter Summary

Brick, part 2

Chapter Notes

Gah...I'm doing the best I can to smooth out the transitions. Forgive me if this is choppy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

She jumped in her chair when Chibs pulled her up, sitting and pulling her into his lap. “You never fail to surprise me, m ‘anam.”

He looked deeply into her eyes, giving her another kiss. Breaking for air, their foreheads resting against each others. “I love you.” He grinned, chuckling. “My firebug.” His eyes crinkling in amusement.

Rolling her eyes at him. “Seriously? Firebug? I’m not an arsonist.”

“After that display in there…” He hugged her closer, taking her hand in his. “Your hand okay?” His dark eyes checking her fingers carefully.

She laced her fingers with his forcibly. “Yes. It’s fine.” She assured him, giving him another kiss.

They swayed in the chair as they lost themselves in each other. The guys were leaving church, sending her and Chibs a mixture of confused disbelief to outright humor.

“So, you’re not angry?” She asked.

“No. I know why you didn’t want the money. I would’ve liked it though. Got a mortgage to pay after all.” He teased.

Grimacing slightly. “Err, well...no, you don’t. Not anymore.”

His eyes sharpened on her. “What?”

“I paid it off.”

“You what?” He questioned again, as if he’d misheard her.

Shrugging sheepishly. “You didn’t owe that much on it anyway.”

“Why did you do that?” He asked. ”And don’t talk like that, it wasn't no small amount left on it. I know how much yet I needed to pay off on it.” He corrected.
She shrugged, scratching at her cheek. “Just thought with all you’ve done for me, that I’m living there, I ought to help pay for my keep.”

“Gods.” He growled. “Ye’...I don’t expect ye’ to...” He floundered as he rubbed at his forehead.

“I know.” Cupping his jaw and cheek with her hand to get his attention. “You remember what the balance was at the lawyers for the trust?”

“Aye.” He said hesitantly.

Pointing to a number on her screen, she watched him blink and lean closer to look again. The mental math running in his eyes.

“I paid off the mortgage from the gains I’ve made in my trading and I still have a profit.” He didn't say anything, still staring at the numbers on the screen. "If it makes you feel better, think of it as having a really good weekend at a casino. Though I wouldn’t call my trading gambling, there’s a lot of statistical probability calculations...” She rambled.

“You did this?” He asked astonishingly, looking between her and the screen. “This is more than a good weekend at a casino.” He pointed out.

“Well, yes. I told you I’d been practicing. And it’s only money. Or didn’t you listen to my little speech in church?” She shut off her laptop, packing it away as she caught sight of Piney and Clay headed separately out the door.

She and Chibs watched Clay slam out of the clubhouse.

He sighed, his eyes turning back to hers. “I heard it. Pushing at Clay a bit hard, weren’t ye’?”

She shook her head. “No. I told you, things are going to start moving. We have to keep on top of the bigger picture here. Paying off the mortgage is one thing that you don’t have to worry about anymore. And besides, now you can send money to Fiona for Kerrianne’s college expenses if you want. I thought about just wiring some of the money to Fiona, but I really don’t know what college costs in Ireland. And it’s probably overstepping in how your and Fiona’s plans were for her.” She rambled.

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.” He swore, not realizing before what she’d been doing. “We really need to talk about this.” He said.

“Yeah. We do.” She agreed with a knowing grin, seeing him realize that he was in for a lesson on money instead of the other way round.

“Fuck.” He reeled back. “I’ve never thought I’d be in this position. I have no idea what to do.” He admitted.

“I know. But it doesn’t have to happen right away, I need to keep trading. We’re going to need this money. And whatever I can make in the markets.”

“What do ye’ mean?” His eyes sharpened on her again.

“You need to trust me. But it’s to help the club, this town.”

He shifted, “Ye’ shouldn’t be spending your money on...”

“Chibs! We’ve gotta go.” Juice yelled to them through the door.
He looked like he wanted to argue with her some more, but the pressure to get back to club business took over.

“Don’t worry, I’ve thought about this for awhile now.”

“Fuck. Come on.” He gave up as he took her hand and they went to join the rest of the guys to go find Georgie.

He took her hand and walked her out of the clubhouse, meeting up with the guys at the line of bikes. Clay’s bike gone already.

“Where’s Clay?” He asked Jax.

“Went to see Unser about a truck for the next run.”

Shaking her head in frustration. Truck, right. Glancing over at the garage office, she wasn’t surprised to see Gemma exit and take off in her SUV. Clay, Gemma, Wayne...fuck. She hoped that her warning to Wayne stuck with him.

Huffing, she put on her helmet and got on the back of the bike. Holding tight around Chibs as the pack of them rode off to talk to Lyla and with her help, track down Georgie.

They pulled in at the parking lot of a warehouse business district of Charming. The guys seemed to know their way around the studio. Jax, Opie, and Bobby went off to a small room with Lyla.

The place was a beehive of activity between performers, directors, and technical personnel who all had a job to do. It was interesting to watch. The tech people looking bored while the porn stars rehearsed a scene. She winced at the acting. God, it was so fake. Yet, she knew it was a very lucrative business.

Jax, Bobby and Lyla came back out and went to a tall, brown-haired man who seemed to be in charge. Opie still in Lyla’s closet of a dressing room. She wondered if she should go grab him but tuned into the conversation going on between Dondo and the guys.

“Georgie contacted me few weeks ago said he wanted to use my bestseller, Saffron Sorority Girls. Said he wanted to make a new run at his new dolls.”

“Wait...wait, dolls?” Tig questioned. She smirked knowingly at Tig’s freaked out question.

“Life-size sex dolls. Look and feel like the real thing. It’s a huge market.” Dondo explained.

“Well, I’m going to need you to call him back, Dondo. Tell him sorority girl one has had a change of heart.” Jax ordered.

“And why would I do that?” Dondo questioned.

“For Luann.” Lyla answered.

Dondo shifted, blinking from Lyla to Jax. “You telling me Georgie had something to do with Luann’s murder?”

“That’s what we’re trying to find out.” Jax filled in.

“We need you to get him here. Let us have a...private chat.” Bobby pressed.
Dondo rocked back a little on his feet. “I know what that means. You’re going to whack him.”

The guys all laughed throatily to Dondo’s guess. Like they were in some mob movie. She took another look at the various sets, figuring they could easily turn one of them into a mob-style set.

“We don’t whack people, Dondo.” Jax said laughingly.

“Well that’s too bad. Because I’m not going to hook you up unless you crush that hyper, douchebag’s skull.” Dondo said heatedly.

The guys looked surprisedly at Dondo. Didn’t expect him to hate Georgie like they did.

“I loved Luanne. She mentored me. She taught me that I was more than just a big cock.” Dondo explained his reasoning for his request. “I want Georgie dead.” He stated to make sure the guys knew he was serious.

“Set it up.” Bobby said.

Dondo sighed, but pulled out his phone. Spieling to Georgie about coming over to talk again about the sex dolls idea. Dondo hung up the phone and told them that he’s on his way.

Jax nodded, clapping a thankful hand to Dondo’s upper arm.

Jax devised a plan of setting the guys in various places, asking Lyla to sit in a chair that was in sight of the front entrance where Georgie would arrive. The guys then able to surround Georgie, blocking off any attempts to escape.

Bobby joined her and Chibs as they went off behind one of the sets. Jax and Opie of in another area. Tig and Juice down another hallway.

She yawned as they settled back and wait for Georgie’s arrival.

Bobby eyed her, amused by something.

“What?”

He shrugged, “Quite the performance in church.”

Rolling her eyes. “Well, I was inspired.”

Chibs hugged her close as Bobby barked a laugh. “Yeah, but did you have to burn that cash? Never seen anything like it in my life. And what was with that tick tock shit?”

“Got your attention.” She said simply.

“And the tick tock?” Bobby pressed, brows raised in question.

She leveled him a heavy gaze. “Time. Time is running out.” Pulling out of Chibs arms she approached Bobby, holding his quizzical brown eyes. “Do not lie to him. When you see him. Don’t lie to him.”

“What?” He backed up a step under her directive.

“You heard me.”

Chibs pulled her back. Bobby looking at her confused but they heard Dondo greet Georgie and the
sound of the men walking into the studio.

Chibs set her behind him as he and Bobby moved as one towards Dondo and Georgie.

“This is a smart business, Dondo. You package in videos with the dolls. Tie in personal appearances. Huge dough.”

As she turned around the corner, she saw Ima on Georgie’s arm.

Georgie eyes flare in fear at the sight of the guys surrounding him. Dondo sidles out of the way as the circle tightens.

“Son of a bitch.” Georgie swears, realizing he’d been set up.

“Georgie, we need to talk.” Chibs pulls his gun at the ready.

At the sight of Chibs’ gun, Lyla decides to pull hers out, waving it around at the guys. “I didn’t do anything.”

It was trained reaction as Chibs aimed at Lyla and her wavering gun.

Georgie ripped the gun from Lyla. The gun going off in the struggle, the shot going down into the floor. Georgie making a run for it down a corridor, shooting another shot to keep the guys back. Opie yelling at Lyla to get out. Tig pushing Lyla out of the way.

“Shit!” Jax yells as he runs after Georgie, leading the charge.

She follows behind the guys, Jax has Georgie in his grip.

“Let me at him.” Bobby punches Georgie before Chibs and Tig pull him back off of Georgie. Bobby fighting to attack Georgie again.

“Chill out!” Jax and Tig yelled at Bobby.

The guys managed to wrestle Georgie into a sex bondage chair.

“Well, that was exciting.” She said dryly.

“Jesus.” Jax swore with a shake of his head. Tig calling Clay.

“You okay?” Chibs asked her.

“Yeah. Fine.”

Jax and Bobby took point on questioning Georgie about Luann. Georgie sticking with his story he had nothing to do with her murder.

Tig picking up various bondage props...implements, giving Georgie considering looks if the tools would be effective or not to make Georgie tell the truth. Georgie denying any wrongdoing.

The guys, frustrated, stuffed a ball gag in Georgie’s mouth to shut him up.

“We could have our Seer read him.” Tig suggested.

“No.” Chibs negated the suggestion automatically.
Rolling her eyes, she stared at Georgie in disgust. “He’s a soft, little man that only looks out for himself. I don’t think you need me to break him. And besides, why ruin Clay’s fun with him?”

A round of considering looks and they decided that waiting for Clay was the better option, thankfully. The guys went to sit down again, waiting for Clay to show up.

She wandered around the studio, taking a closer look at some of the stuff lying around. Listening to Chibs talk to a stressed out Juice.

“Problems?” Chibs asked Juice.

Juice hanging up his phone. “Little crisis at Clear Passages.”

“Smokers or shitters?”

“Both.” Juice shrugged with a stressed grin.

Chibs checked on Georgie behind him.

“Go, I got this.” Giving Juice a slap on the back.

“Thanks, man.” Juice says with a relieved smile.

“Yes, by all means, go.” She added, ignoring Chibs concerned look at her tone.

Juice staring at her, his eyes bugging out, looking trapped. Like a child who’d stolen a cookie.

“The shop…”

“Yes, the shop. Twenty percent owner, can’t possibly function without you. Better hurry. Wouldn’t want them to be kept waiting.” She shooed at him.

Juice clenched his jaw and jogged out.

“M ‘anam? What the hell was that about?”

Shaking her head. “Nothing.”

Chibs took her into his arms, his whiskey eyes catching hers. “You sure you’re okay?”

“Working on fixing the future is tiring and frustrating.” She sighed, pulling him closer. His hands running down her back soothingly.

“Soon as we’re done here, we’ll go home and get some rest. Okay?”

“Yeah. Sounds good.” She agreed, holding Chibs close to her. Reveling in his warm heat, his musky scent filling her senses.

“Georgie, we missed you.” Clay greeted Georgie with a wide grin and open arms as if this were a party.

“He ain’t giving it up on Luann.” Jax told Clay. Clay pulling the ball gag out of Georgie’s mouth.

“Jesus Christ, Clay. Can you talk some sense into these psychos?” Georgie begged.
“Hey, these are my rational guys. I get Happy down here, ball gag takes on a whole new meaning.” Clay joked.

“I didn’t kill Luann.” Georgie pled his case.

“Yes, you did.” Clay corrected.

“Let’s do it.” Jax heaved up from his chair, wrapping a red rope around Georgie’s neck.


“Wow. These sex dolls must be selling..like sex dolls.” Clay laughed.


Bobby pulls his gun, pressing the barrel against Georgie’s head. “I got this.”

“No!” Georgie fought.

“Hold it.” Clay orders Bobby, staring down at Georgie. “These Asians. They looking for any other investments?”

“All the time.”

“He telling the truth?” Clay questioned to Dondo.


Clay tossed his head back in thought. Stepping away, Bobby and Jax catching his slight nod for a conversation away from Georgie and Dondo.

“What the hell we doing here?” Bobby bewilderingly questioned.

“I think maybe we can use Georgie.” Clay said thoughtfully.


“Yeah, Gemma found out there’s a ticking clock on Charming Heights. Hale’s still looking for investors. Georgie can front load his guys, make Hale think they’re his salvation.” Clay outlined.

“And then we pull them out at last minute.” Jax finished.

“And all we gotta do is convince city council to stomp on Hale’s dream.”

“What the hell do we tell Otto?” Bobby breathed.

“What the hell do you tell Otto.” Clay leaned into Bobby.

“Tell him the truth. Club need Georgie alive for a minute. Soon as we shut down Hale, we cut Georgie’s heart out.” Jax backed up Clay’s order.

“What’s going on guys?” Dondo questioned.

“All right.” Bobby agreed with a vexed frown, glancing at her.
“Hold onto that big dick of yours, Dondo. We’ll keep you posted.” Jax said. Clay leaving Jax and Bobby to handle Georgie and setting up the Asians with Hale.

Chibs was leading her to the bike to go home. Opie was behind them with Ima, Ima talking her way in getting a ride to the clubhouse, hanging onto Opie still. The sound of Ima’s voice set her skin crawling.

She let go of Chibs hand as they got to their bike.

She swung around moving in front of Opie, looking up at him as he came to a sudden stop. Glaring up at him. Ima gave her an annoyed look, snapping at her gum.

“What?” He asked.

“Don’t.” She warned.

Opie’s brow furrowed at her. “Don’t what?”

“You know what.” Sliding a hard look at Ima.

Opie seemed to figure out what she was warning him about, he grinned in amusement. “I got it covered, Seer.”

“The hell you do. Are you really ready to cross that line? What of your promises? Your oaths?”

Opie glared at her. “Yeah? What of hers?”

“It only means that the two of you need to talk. You have a choice. Choose wisely. This one...is not the wise choice.”

“Hey! Stay out of it, you freak.” Ima snapped.

She rolled her eyes, pressing her hands to her temples in frustration and pain. Chibs coming for her, her helmet in his hand.

“What’s going on?” Chibs asked, his eyes going from her to Opie and back.

“Nothing. I’m giving Ima a ride to the clubhouse.” Opie said.

“Aye. See you in the morning.”

Opie nodded and pulled Ima further down to his bike. Ima tossed a smirk at her, as she clung to Opie’s waist from the back of his bike. Opie pulling out with a roar. God damn it, she swore to herself, taking the helmet from Chibs.

“Hey.” Chibs grabbed her elbow getting her attention from putting her helmet on. “Really, what was that?” He questioned.

“That was Opie about to make a colossal mistake.”

He shifted on his feet, looking after Opie but he was long gone, turning his eyes back to her. “What mistake?”

“Opie and Lyla...Ima. Domestic problems. We’ll know soon enough if he manages to think with his brain instead of his hurt feelings.”
He tossed his head up towards the sky, figuring out what she was saying. “Are you serious?”

She didn’t bother to answer his question, going to their bike. Chibs swearing following after her. The two of them leaving the studio for home.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
At Chibs warning look to hold off on anger a little longer, she took his hand and did her best to shake off her annoyance at Opie, Bobby, and Juice as they entered the grocery store. The two of them quickly filling their cart as they cruised the aisles.

Chibs kissed her in front of the ice cream freezers, leaving her to get some beer while she debated the ice cream selections. After what felt like a millennia, she grabbed a pint of french vanilla and a mint-chocolate chip, unable to decide between the two.

Turning around, “Fu...dge!” She fell back into the cool glass door of the freezer as she saw the Sheriff was standing right freaking behind her, tucking his sunglasses in his shirt pocket.

The Sheriff smiled at her, knowing he’d surprised her and amused by her reaction. Ass.

“Sorry, I didn’t see you there.” She apologized politely.

“Apparently.” He frowned at her. His eyes lingering on her kutte and going up to her face, looking at her scar and landing on her triskele. He was so close to her, she felt her eyes cross. God damn it. She blinked and focused on the bridge of his nose.

“Can I help you?” She prompted after a long stretch of his silent inventory of her.

“You can tell me your name, honey.” He ordered with a smirk. His dark eyes moving from her triskele and back to her kutte. The Seer patch in particular.

She stiffened at the easy way he called her honey. She hated it when strangers assumed that it was okay to call her pet nicknames.

“Why do you want to know?” She asked him as she dropped her ice cream into her cart, moving so the cart was between her and the Sheriff. There were a few people stopping and watching what was going on. Her eyes searching out for Chibs, her head starting to pound.

“You’re new around here. I like to know the names of new faces here in my quadrant. Especially anyone new in the gang.”

“Club.” She corrected him.

Roosevelt gave her a smarmy grin at her. “Not according to every city, county, state, and federal
agency. The Sons of Anarchy is a gang. And wearing gang colors or any clothing associated with a
gang is against their release from prison.”

“But only for the people who are actually on parole. I am not on parole, so thus I can wear what I
like. And others may call the club a gang, they don’t know what they’re talking about.”

“Wow, you have it down good. You haven’t even told me your name.”

“Well, it’s not honey.” She smirked at him. And, she thought, she didn’t see any harm in telling
him her name. He’d find out anyway. ”Nancy Fraser.”

Roosevelt straightened up, looking at her anew again. “Well, Nancy Fraser, you, by chance, from
Illinois?” He asked.

The oddity of his question perked her curiosity. How did a local sheriff know she was from Illinois.
Unless Juice told him. Her anger flaring up inside her at the thought of Juice ratting to this
buffoon.

“Yes, what the hell is this about?” She demanded.

Roosevelt nodded to himself, his hands going to his thick belt. One hand resting against his gun.
Watching him, she didn’t think he was aware of his physical stance. But the message was clear
regardless, he meant business. What the hell was going on?

“There is a BOLO out on you from Chicago. The Feds are looking for you.”

She blinked in surprise. “Really? Why?”

“Well, come with me and we’ll figure that out.” He held his hand out to her to escort her from the
store.

Her eyes flicking towards where Chibs had run off to. Pressing a hand to her temple where her
headache was driving a spike through her skull. What the hell was taking him so long? Were they
fermenting the beer or what?

The crowd of onlookers had grown larger as she and the Sheriff had their standoff. She shifted
again, keeping the cart between her and the ‘oh so helpful’ hand of the Sheriff.

He frowned harder at her defensive move.

“Am I being arrested?” She asked for clarification and loud enough for the crowd to hear her.

Roosevelt drew his hand back, his eyes glancing at the crowd. He didn’t seem to like her
questioning him. Used to being followed when he gave an order, she suspected.

“No. But I think if you came with me, we can determine why the Feds are looking for you.” His
eyes taking in her tattoos and she could see the wheels turning in his head that she had to have done
something nefarious in Chicago. By the gasps and whispers going on in the crowd, they were
thinking it, too.

“No, I won’t leave with you.” She said clearly.

“Ma’am…”

She narrowed her eyes at him. “I know my rights. If I’m not being arrested then no, I won’t go with
you.”
She sighed in relief as she caught sight of Chibs over the Sheriff’s shoulder. She sent him a plea for help and his pace quickened as he saw Roosevelt questioning her. Roosevelt looking behind him and back to her.

“Those are some interesting tattoos. Are you being held against your will? With the club?” He asked carefully, changing his tack from suspicion to concern of her well-being.

“Jesus Christ. No. I am here and with Chibs of my own free will.”

“What’s going on?” Chibs asked as he dropped the beer into the cart, his hand going to her waist automatically. The two of them shivering as their headaches eased off.

“The Sheriff here was telling me that the Feds in Chicago are looking for me. Wants me to go with him to find out why.”

“Really.” Chibs eyes turned sharply on Roosevelt as his voice dropped dangerously.

“It’s probably just a misunderstanding, it shouldn’t take long to…” Roosevelt tried to explain away.

“For the fourth time, no. If you aren’t arresting me for a crime, then I will not go with you. You can call the Feds in Chicago and let them know I’m here. Let them do their own work.”

“Local police are always called up to help with Federal agencies when they need help.” Roosevelt informed her as to why he was trying to get her into the police station himself.

“If the Feds really want to talk to me, they can find me at the garage. But I suspect I know why they want to talk to me. I won’t meet them unless they get off their asses and fly out here to Charming themselves. I will not go to Chicago or Illinois ever again.”

“And why is that?” Eli asked.

She fisted her hands against the handle of the cart, her breathing speeding up and felt a cold sweat break out at the thought of going back to Naperville. No, never again.

Glaring at Roosevelt, “Because my father and step-mother were trying to kill me. That’s why.”

Chibs pulled her into his arms to solidify his hold on her, sensing her panic. He rumbled Gaelic soothingly in her ear. His voice calming her as she took a couple of deep breaths.

Roosevelt flashed a look at her and Chibs. “Are you sure you aren’t being held against your will?” He asked suspiciously.

She felt Chibs stiffened at the question.

“How dare you.” She glared angrily at Roosevelt. “Chibs saved my life. He got me out of that hellhole. So stop whatever idiotic thought you have running in your thick head about Chibs and me. Chibs is mine as much as I’m his. I’m the Seer of the club. He is my anchor. For the last time, I am here with Chibs of my own free will. And unless you have a warrant for my arrest for an actual crime, then leave me alone.”

“Seer? What the hell are you talking about? Did he...the club make you get that tattoo?” Roosevelt asked in a rush.

The crowd of onlookers had grown. She looked at Roosevelt and had an idea. Relaxing her body
and forced herself to smile at him.

“I’m sorry, we haven’t been introduced properly.” She said lightly, sticking her hand out for Roosevelt to shake. “Nancy Fraser and you are?” She played it up for their audience. Chibs tightening his grip at her waist.

Eli glanced at the people staring at them but took her hand. “Sheriff Eli Roosevelt.”

She quickly wrapped her free hand over his, holding onto him as she read him. Fury raced through her, seeing what he was doing with the ADA...with Juice. The pure enjoyment Eli has in screwing over Juice. Fury at Juice for falling for this bullshit.

“You, Sheriff Elijah Noah Roosevelt, are no longer in Oakland running the gang task force.” Her voice carried as she stepped forward into Eli’s personal space, forcing him to backup a step. Chibs staying with her, making sure he didn’t lose his hold on her.

Staring up at Eli’s questioning eyes. “You forget your oath when you came here to Charming. To serve and protect. That was your oath when you took office. Do the job that which you were sworn to do. You serve the people of this town, not just one man, not just one agency. You are a fool, running fool’s errands.” She warned.

She had Eli backed up against the freezers behind him. She could see the question in his eyes at how she managed to back him up like that.

“I’m of legal age. I’m here of my own free will. I’m a member of the Sons of Anarchy Motorcycle Club. I’m the Seer, to see into the past, the present, and the future...into the divine.” Eli paled under her gaze.

“Call Chicago, tell them I’m here. If they want to talk to me, they will have to come here.” She let go of Eli’s hand, stepping back from him. The onlookers silent as they all saw how shaken up Eli was.

“Now then, our ice cream is melting.” She smiled at Eli, grabbing the cart and leading her way through the crowd, rapidly moving out of her and Chibs’ way.

Quickly dumping their items on the conveyor belt, Chibs handing over the cash to pay for their groceries.

The cashier and bag boy looking at her nervously, but did their jobs. Packing their groceries into the saddlebags of the bike, they were off.
Stomping into the kitchen with her bag and one of the grocery bags, her mind going a million miles an hours in her anger. But underneath that anger, she was panicking. She felt it, the fear, welling up from deep inside her. And she hated it. She hated feeling this. She thought she’d put it behind her, but here it was again. The fear, the loss of control over her own life and future.

Chibs silently putting the groceries away as she stared out the window to the backyard. It was dark out, the moon a pale sliver over the top of the treeline. But she felt him looking at her, worrying over her. And she hated that, too. She felt like she couldn’t breathe.

He finished and leaned a hip against the counter, right next to her. Her hands clenched around the edge of the cool granite countertop. “Talk to me, m’ anam.” He said quietly.

“I…” She gasped. “I’m scared. I…” She said brokenly, half her mind horrified by the sound of her own voice, and the fact that she was crying. “I’m angry, so fucking angry and scared. I hate it. I hate this.”

He took her into his arms, forcibly moving her arms up around his shoulders, his hands coming around her waist and running up and down her back trying to soothe her.

And she was bawling all over him. Insensible with fear and anger warring inside her. “I don’t… I…” She stumbled trying to make sense of it all.

“It’s okay. It’ll be okay,” He murmured in her ear. And she didn’t know if she could trust that sentiment. “I won’t let nothing happen to ye’.” He continued until her upset subsided a little.

His eyes catching hers, his thumbs wiping away her tears. “Come on, let’s get ye’ in a bath. You’ll feel better after a bath.”

Maneuvering her down the hallway and into the master bath, helping her undress as the tub filled. Bubbles foamed from the added aromatic oils and salts he added to the water. She stared down at the bubbles numbly, unable to look anywhere else, not even herself in the mirror.

“Come on.” He helped her into the bath, steadying her.
She sat hunched over. Pressing her cheek down on the tops of her knees, arms locked around her bent legs as Chibs climbed in behind her. His hands gently massaging her shoulders and neck.

Slowly, by increments, she was able to unclench herself. Relaxing back into the warm heat and heady scent of the bath. Of Chibs and his strong hands molding the tension from her tight neck and shoulders. She sighed and turned her face towards him. Resting against his solid frame.

“Talk to me.” He tried again, as he cradled her close.

“I feel like I’m being hunted. Thought I was done with Naperville.” She gave a hysterical cry. “How foolish of me. To think I got away scot-free. I should have known better.”

His arms tightened around her. “They can’t hurt you here. I won’t let it happen. The club won’t let it happen. We’ll go on walkabout if we have to.” His words rattled around her. His breath wafting against her ear. And she wanted to believe it. Believe him.

But the very idea of running away made her cringe. Running because of her shitty father and stepmother’s problems. Whatever scheme they concocted that had the Fed’s looking for her...she felt a stab of anger, and it was making her bleed all over everything. Everything she and Chibs were working towards. A safe home, a life together...a fulfilling life. And here she was, having to make the choice to give it up, to run to keep out of their reach. And worse, Chibs would be dragged into it. God. They'd have to leave the club behind. Leave Jax and Tara to their own devices.

“No.”

“Mo bhanrigh…”

“No.” She emphatically repeated. ”This is our home. I won’t let anyone chase us off. To run...like we were guilty of something. They are the ones that fucked up. Let them wallow in it.”

“We’ll call Alison in the morning. Find out what this is all about. Could be nothing.”

She nodded, wiping at her errant tears. Feeling somewhat better now that she had a plan. Until they knew more, there was little she could do. But having a plan helped gain control over herself.

“Yeah. Okay. I need to talk with her anyway.”

“Really? Why?” He questioned quietly while he pulled out a joint from a decorative box on the tiled edge of the tub, lighting and passing it to her.

She took a breath in, letting the smoke of the joint haze around her. “I’ve been thinking about the Rico, doing some research on it.”

“You could have asked me. I would’ve answered your questions. Not the first time we’ve run into a Rico investigation.” He reminded her.

“I know. Just my process. I like doing research.” She took another hit off the joint, passing it back to him.

“So, why are we meeting Alison? We’ve put her off the club shite.”

“I’m hiring a lawyer for Otto. Alison tracked the guy down for me.”

“Huh? Why? He’s done.” His brow creased in his confusion.

“No, he’s not. The AUSA, Potter…Lincoln Potter...”
“Shite, you know who it is?” He looked intently at her.

“Yeah, not much. Roosevelt is working with him. Potter’s a strange one, at least Roosevelt thinks so. Fuck, Gemma met him.” She jerked when the connection hit.

“What? She did?”

“Yeah, but he didn’t introduce himself as Lincoln Potter. Said his name was Nick Stackhouse. Told her about the eminent domain on Hale’s pet project while we were in Tucson.”

“Jesus Christ. Gemma telling Clay, then Clay telling the club in church. This shite with Georgie. Fuck. And Clay...God damn it. She really is at the table.”

Shrugging, “Well, I did warn you. Gemma can’t help herself. How the information is all connected and flows from person to person.”

Chibs sighed frustratingly.

“Potter’s the man behind the curtain pulling the strings to make his case.” Chibs frustrated sigh turned into a grunt of disgust. “Anyway, Otto will flip on Bobby because he lied to him about taking care of Georgie. With Otto giving up Bobby, it’s the past crime for the Rico. Otto desperately needs a lawyer.”

“Can’t Alison or Rosen represent Otto? Why someone new?” He asked, handing her the joint back.

“They can’t get to Otto, their association with the club, there’s no way it’ll happen. And they haven’t been very effective in defending Otto in the past. I’d rather someone new to come in and rattle the cages. Maybe get Otto off death row, even.” She considered taking a hit off the joint.

“I don’t see that happening. Clay told us that there was video of Otto offing the guy.”

Breathing out the smoke, her brows rising. “So? How good was the quality of the tape in question? Otto is nearly completely blind. How did a blind man get hold of a murder weapon? How did a blind man track down his victim? How did a blind man subdue a fully-able man and kill him? Who helped him? Who gave him the murder weapon? Was he forced to murder the man they put in front of him? What might have happened to Otto if he didn’t do the job? Where were the guards? The prison, itself, is as much at fault in all this.”

Chibs stared at her, his jaw dropping a little as she gave her recitation of questions. Questions that should have been used to defend Otto in the first place. “Holy fuck. I fucking love you.” He breathed.

She smirked at him. “You better.”

He snickered, giving her a quick kiss. “Jesus Christ, ye’ have a diabolical mind. To tie that shitty prison as responsible for that murder…” He shook his head, amused by the whole idea that her questions roused. “…that I’d love to see.”

“The point is...” She gave him a stern look. "...is that Otto never got a chance to tell his side of the story. He never had a lawyer that would stick up for him.”

“When they told us of the video, we all assumed there was nothing we could do.”

“Exactly. Stuck with, most likely, an overworked public defender that barely paid Otto any attention. The club wouldn’t pay for a real legal defense for him. Why waste club money on a case
that can't be won? Once again, Otto being used by the club. Now, this, with Luann, Georgie, and Bobby. Otto trapped in that prison, left to trust Bobby and the club to do what he can't. How would you feel if it were you in his shoes?"

"Fuck, it's why you told Bobby not to lie to him earlier." He took the joint back from her.

"If we can get a lawyer for Otto, then Potter will have to deal with him rather than directly with Otto. Otto where the only way he can strike out and hurt the club, hurt Bobby…"

"Is to flip on Bobby. The past crimes sealed for the Rico. Fuck." He leaned a little further back into the curve of the tub, thinking what she was planning. "Have you told Jax this?"

"No. He's got enough on his plate. I don’t know if it’ll work or not. And the timing... Besides, it's sometimes best to keep people in the dark.” She mentally sighed as she decided to keep what else she hasn't divulged from reading Roosevelt.

"What do you mean?"

"All the things I’ve told you and Jax. The amount of information we have to hide from everyone…"

"Aye, easier to sell an honest reaction than some act.” He concluded.

Again, she thought about telling him about Juice. But held back, it was too late to stop Juice tonight. The brick is stolen. Making a mental note to tell Miles to stop cutting through the woods. Wondering if Miles would listen to that warning. Wondering if like Piney, Miles would have to be sacrificed to push Juice to do the right thing. Fuck. The missing brick was a lesson, she knew. Not just for Juice, but for the entire club, Sons and Mayans. They had to learn the consequences of dealing with the cartel. The Rico wasn't the only thing she'd been researching. The violence and brutality of the cartels was a harsh lesson. You do not want to be on the wrong side with them. And part of her, a small part, was blindingly furious at Juice for even getting caught up in all this. He should know better. He's been in the club long enough to know better. Idiot.

"Are we telling them eventually? About you paying for the lawyer?" He asked, pulling her out of her thoughts. Even Chibs needed to be kept in the dark about some things.

"No. I’d rather Otto not know himself."

"I’m confused.”

"You're high." She grinned at him. He rolled his eyes at her for deflecting. “The club still doesn’t know about the trust. I’d rather keep it secret for as long as possible.”

"I was only saying that for your safety.”

"I know. And I agree with you. But if Otto knew I was paying for the lawyer, he might go talking to Bobby or anyone else who manages to get in to see him.”

"What about the lawyer? He’d have to tell Otto he’s being paid.”

"Not necessarily. Depends if we can convince the lawyer to tell Otto he’s taking on his case pro bono. All lawyers are required to do some pro bono work in their careers. But I’ll pay for his services. I want to make sure that I'm getting my money's worth."

"The club will find out if Otto’s case is being taken up.” He warned.

She took the last hit off the joint as she watched him think things through for himself. “Fuck, this might work.”

“Like I said, timing is an issue. It’ll be a couple days yet before the guy Alison found can get to her office for a meeting with us.” She said, stubbing out the joint. She felt she’d been run through a wringer, her bones and muscles disjointed and unsure of how they should work.

“Come on, the water’s cooled off. We’ll catch our death.” Chibs stood up, helping her to her feet and out of the tub. She clutched at his arm as she relearned how to stand.

He grinned down at her, toweling her off as she swayed. “I’m not the only one that’s high.”

Giving him a half-smile at his observation.

She pulled on a t-shirt and brushed her teeth before letting Chibs lead her to bed.

“Anything else you’ve been cooking up in that beautiful head of yours?” He asked tiredly.

She curled up in his arms and at his side. Her face half-smushed on his chest, “If trading...I’m...fund...Heights.” She mumbled before dropping off.

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.” She thought she heard, but she was too tired to check. The darkness overtaking her.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
My Queen = mo bhanrigh
Chapter 89

Chapter Summary

Brick, part 3

Chapter Notes

Sorry for delay in updating. Work, need I say more. It's a bit rough. But I think I'd lose all my hair if I had to play with this some more.

Tried to stay as close to the source material, but it's choppy so I tried to smooth out the transitions to fit both this story and the show. Fingers crossed.

Thanks!

Marcus and his guys were already waiting when she and Chibs arrived. Clay, Jax and the rest of the guys were probably on their way. Juice came stumbling out of the woods as they got off the bike and pulled their helmets off.

Marcus and his men turned at their arrival. Chibs pulling Juice into a hug. She nodding to him.

“Everything okay?” Chibs asked Juice.

“Yeah. I was just taking a piss.” Juice shrugged, his eyes moving erratically from Chibs to her and Marcus.

Chibs checked his watch. “We’re a bit early, but the boys should be here soon. You check in with Rat and Phil?”

“Yeah, it’s all good.” Juice said breathily, avoiding her hard look as he jogged back to Phil and Rat.

Marcus had walked over to join them.

“Chibs.” Marcus held his hand out.

Chibs turned and took the offered hand, giving it a shake.

“Marcus. You been waiting long?”

“No, we just got here a minute ago.”

“Aye. Well, the rest of the guys will be here soon.”

“Good. Appreciate you watching over the cargo a bit longer.”

“No problem.”
Marcus’s dark eyes flicked to her. “I didn’t know the Sons patched in women now.”

Chibs held his hand out to her, she took the couple of steps and took his hand. “This is Nancy, our Seer. And my old lady. Nancy, Marcus Alvarez, President of the Mayan Club.”

“Hi, nice to meet you.” She waved, ignoring Marcus's outstretched hand.

“Seer? That mean psychic?” Marcus questioned with a tilt of his head. His dark eyes glancing to Chibs, checking to see if he was being put on. “Jesus, did you have to tattoo her forehead like that?” Marcus pulling his hand back with his questions.

Chibs shifted on his feet, glancing to her in question.

“He didn’t tattoo me. No one did. But I wanted to thank you for playing dead for a day. While the guys were in Belfast looking for Jax’s son.”

Marcus and his guys sharpened their looks at her. Even Chibs looked confused.

“How did you know that? Chibs tell you?” Marcus asked.

“I was in Belfast.” Chibs shook his head.

“I read Tig. He wasn’t crazy about the idea, Piney either, didn’t think it’d work. But, Kozik swayed them to try and get your help. Course, they probably should have called first. Stupid of those knuckleheads showing up at your house out of the blue like that. How’s your son? He must be what two or three by now? I think. My timing can be a bit confused.”

The men stared at her. Chibs included.

“What?” She asked with a shrug. “You didn’t think Tig would have thought of going to Marcus for help all on his own did you? I mean, it’s Tig.” She leaned a little towards Marcus. “Tig’s not much for ‘thinking first’ like everyone else on the planet. But it all worked out in the end.” She shared.

Chibs groaned next to her, his face turned up at the sky.

“I should have brought a gift for your son.” She said to herself.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs swore next to her.

Marcus’s look of surprise and suspicion turned amused.

“No wonder they put a kutte on you.” Marcus said with a grin. “You’ve got a handful with this one, brother.”

Chibs snorted at Marcus’s comment.

“Hey, I’m easy compared to the boys in the club.” She said affronted, but then realized how her words sounded as Chibs and Marcus stared at her with matching humorous looks. “Damn, that came out wrong.” She corrected with a screwed up face.

The men all laughed good-naturedly.

“My son is fine, thank you for asking. But we’re here on business.”

“Right. Of course.” She glanced towards the warehouse and back to him.
“Everything is okay, yes?” Marcus asked.

“Of course.” Chibs said confidently.

“Sure, everything will work out.” She qualified, lowering the expectation bar just a smidge.

“Rafi said it was all quiet.” Marcus’s VP said.

Hearing the low rumble of Harley’s heading up the dirt road. “Guess we’ll find out.”

Marcus flicked a look towards the bikes pulling in. Clay already frowning. Jax, Tig, and Opie quickly setting their bikes on their kickstands. Soon a swarm of men went to greet Marcus and a few of his crew.

The whole lot of them turned into the warehouse, Juice unlocking the gun room as they walked inside.

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Yawning, she leaned against the wall behind Chibs as Marcus and his guys looked around. Marcus’s Sgt looked to argue her being there, but a hard look from Chibs and the sight of the coke dissuaded him from picking a fight. Opie had opened up the crate and started pulling out the white bricks of coke handing them off to Chibs. Who neatly stacked the bricks on the table in columns of five high and six across.

She and Chibs didn’t have time to talk more about her reading with Roosevelt when they woke up. Chibs just giving her a look that they weren’t done talking, before swooping down for a deep kiss. And they headed out the door to the warehouse. She made sure she had her laptop and JT’s book. It was going to be a long, long day. For everyone.

Clay looking smug and satisfied watching the kilos of coke being laid out. Juice huddled behind Clay and near the door. Watching him, her headache making her even more pissy in her attitude towards him. His position by the door wasn’t lost on her. If she’d stolen a kilo of coke from a Mexican drug cartel...she’d, too, want to be at the nearest exit.

Tig grinning, knocking into Miles as they watched the piles of coke pile up. Jax next to Chibs, watching the count. It was almost a party given how happy everyone seemed to be.

Marcus nods approvingly. “Good work, brother.”

“That’s it?” Chibs asked Opie.

Opie looked back into the crate. “That’s it.” He confirmed.

Chibs growled down at the stacks of bricks. “We’re one brick light.” He announced.

“What are you talking about?” Clay questioned, suddenly his smug look was gone.

“Talking about, there should be thirty kilos here.” Chibs seethed back at Clay.

By the layout of the stacks, it’s easy to see that there’s one kilo missing.

“Twenty-nine.” Marcus counts for himself.

“Yeah.” Chibs unhappily confirms the count.

The guys shifted uneasily and looked from the coke to the men around them. Suspicion perfuming
the air of the gun room. She...she watched Juice. Juice caught her look, quickly turning his eyes away from her.

She yawned again as the predictable finger-pointing and arguments of whose fault it was that a brick of coke managed to go missing within twenty-four hours while under lock and key.

“Then why am I looking at only twenty-nine bricks here.” Marcus started.

“Why don’t you ask your boy here?” Jax asked angrily.

She tilted her head watching the interplay. Jax, she thought, was reaching for anger pretty quickly. It should be Clay taking on that angry tone.

Rafi, understandably, angry for the implication that he was at fault. “Ask yours, asshole.”

“We didn’t take the blow.” Miles emphatically stated.

“Well, somebody did.” Marcus retorted.

Juice stepped forward. “It was all there before ten. I came by after I hit the weed shop and did a walk-through. Ask him.” Juice waved a hand at Rafi’s direction. Stepping back next to the door.

She had to bite her tongue to keep from lashing out at Juice.

“Yeah. He was here at nine-thirty.” Rafi confirmed begrudgingly.

“So you were the last one here.” Marcus said to Juice, following the logic.

She liked Marcus, Marcus can stay, she thought to herself with a slight grin.

Juice snorted at Marcus’s implication. “Yeah, I stuck a kilo of blow down my pants and just walked out. Douchebag.”

She hid her face down in her hand at the insult. Chibs rushed to hold Marcus back from attacking Juice. Miles and Tig pulling their weapons along with some of Marcus’s men. Jax throwing a punch at Rafi in the scuffle. Clay ending the fight by shooting a round up into the ceiling.

“Now killing each other ain’t going to solve anything.” Clay announced authoritatively, when everyone turned at the noise of the gun and bits of the ceiling raining down to the floor.

“Come on. Let’s go.” Tig encouraged to clear out the room so that Clay, Marcus, and Jax could resolve this problem.

“Sorry, bro.” Jax patted on Juice’s back.

Chibs took her hand and led her out along with everyone else. She wanted to kick Juice’s ass.

She breathed and tried to let go of her anger. Chibs holding onto her as their headaches eased off. The guys milled around, dark suspicious looks flared between the Sons and Mayans as they waited for their leaders to decide what to do.

A few minutes later, Marcus comes out, speaking in rapid-fire Spanish. His men hop to and head out on their bikes.

“That didn’t sound good.” Miles said unhelpfully.
She, Chibs, Tig, and Opie shot Miles a scathing look.

Jax storms out of the gunroom, phone in hand, dialing. “Happy, need you at the warehouse. Now.” Snapping the phone shut, he steps outside, digging out a cigarette.

“Shite.” Chibs swore, watching Jax getting ready to have a meltdown.

“Go talk to him.” She gently pushed him towards Jax, as they walked outside the warehouse.

“You okay?” He checked with her before going to Jax.

“Yeah. I’m going to get my stuff.” She reassured him.

With Chibs talking with Jax and sharing a cigarette, she went to their bike and pulled out her bag. She looked around the warehouse where she could settle in somewhat more comfortably. Picking out a spot, she pulled out her laptop and powered it up.

“You shouldn’t be using the internet here. Club business. The cops could be tracing IP addresses.” Juice dared to speak to her.

“You are in charge of all the firewalls, are you not?” She bitingly questioned.

“Yeah.” He said uncertainly at her stern question.

“Well, if you did your job correctly, there shouldn’t be a problem. Is there a problem with the security of the internet here?”

“No. It’s good.”

“Then we don’t have a problem.”

Juice stood frozen in front of her.

“Go away.” She ordered.

Juice took a step away from her.

“Oh, and, you ever insult the President of another club like that again…”

“He was saying…”

“I don’t care what he was insinuating. You do not insult a President like that ever. And you were the last one in that room. It’s a fair question. Was all the coke still there when you did your impromptu walk-through?”

“Yes.” Juice answered timidly.

“Really?” She questioned him. Juice looking like he wished he hadn’t questioned her over her use of the laptop in the first place.

His eyes flicked to the entrance of the warehouse and saw Happy pull in. Juice shifted on his feet and looked at her again.

“I guess we’ll find out one way or another.” She said.

Juice turned and walked away to the other side of the warehouse. As far away from her as he could
get, yet still be in the same zip code.

Tig, Jax, and Clay greeted Happy, pulling him into the gun room for a bit of a chat.

Chibs sat down next to her. His arm looping around her shoulders as she checked her trades. Taking some off and adding new ones.

“Jax okay?” She asked quietly.

“Aye. Just needed a breather.”

“Good. He seems amped up this morning.”

“Well, the loss of one of those bricks isn’t to be taken lightly.”

“No. No, it’s not.”

“You said it’d turn up, right?”

“Yep. I warned Juice not to insult Marcus like that again.”

“Ye’ did?”

“Yes. He was out of line, insulting and disrespectful to Marcus.” She glared off towards where Juice was.

She felt Chibs stare down at her intently. “You...you’re pissed at Juice. Why?”

“You’ll find out why. You don’t need me to tell you the reasons. Damn it.” She jerked her full attention back to her screen.

“What?”

“The markets are moving. Trying to scalp some trades here.”

“You going to tell me what you meant about Charming Heights last night?”

“Yes. I can’t talk about it right now.” She swiftly tapped at her laptop. “And you’re busy here.” She pointed at Bobby who had arrived. Tig and Happy coming out of the gunroom. Happy playing with a heavy hammer. Chibs grunting in agreement next to her.

Phil and Rat were wide-eyed as they watched Tig and Happy grab up Miles and dramatically shut the door behind them.

“Clay, we didn’t take any coke. Shit, me and Rat, we didn’t know what the hell was in there.” Phil begged.

“Wasn’t us. Had to be the Mayan, was off by himself most of the night.” Rat hunched over on himself, arms crossed defensively.

“We’ll get to the truth.” Clay intoned.

Everyone’s attention turned to the loud bangs and Miles screaming in pain from inside the gunroom. The sound of the torture freaked out Phil and Rat. Which is what the guys wanted.

“Jesus Christ.” Phil breathed.
The door swung open again. Happy glaring, again. “Next.” He announced.

“You’re up, Rat.” Jax selected.

“We didn’t take the blow, man.” Rat panicked.

“Tell that to Happy.” Clay said.

“This is bullshit!” Rat stands up. “I’m not going to be taken apart by that psycho.”

“Come on, Clay. He didn’t take it. None of us did. This is crazy.” Phil sounding just as freaked out as Rat. It was heartwarming that the two of them were sticking together like this. They’ll make good members, brothers.

“I’m waiting.” Happy grumbled grouchily.

Her attention shifted to Tig who had answered his phone.

“Maybe there’s a simpler way to do this.” Jax threw the prospects a bone.

Tig snapped his phone shut. “Clay, I’ve...ah..got a thing at TM. My kid just showed up.”

“Which one?” Bobby asked Tig.

“Crazy one.” Tig answered.

She shot Tig a disapproving glare.

“Which one?” Jax smirked at Tig.

“Yeah, I know.” Tig shrugged.

“Oh my god.” She muttered at the interplay.

Chibs chuckling next to her. She turned her eyes back to her laptop, smacking the back of her hand to his chest to get him to stop laughing. But her attempt only made him laugh harder. Catching her hand, giving it a kiss.

Clay nods to Tig, releasing him to go deal with his kid.

“I’m going with him.” Bobby announced, following Tig out. Bobby sliding her a nervous look as he went past her.

“I think we can handle it.” Clay allowed Bobby leaving. “In the gun room. Now!” Clay yelled over his shoulder.

Chibs gave her a kiss before heading into the gunroom with everyone else. A few moments later, Clay walked out alone, his phone pressed to his ear. He wasn’t close enough for her to hear what he was saying and his voice low and grumbly. Especially, when he caught sight of her, giving her an annoyed look before turning away.

Fine, she turned back to her trading.

Clay had just hung up and was heading back to the gunroom when Jax and the guys barreled out. Might as well put a revolving door there, she thought.
“Where you guys going?” Clay asked.

“Domestic problem at the clubhouse.” Opie said in a pissed off tone, stalking to his bike.

“Psycho porn star pulled a gun on Gemma and the girls.” Jax said, following after Opie just as pissed off.

She set her laptop aside and got up as they walked by her.

“Jesus Christ. Are they all right?” Clay asked.

“Gonna find out.” Opie said as he got onto his bike.

“Clay, I think these guys are telling the truth.” Juice jogged after them.

“Yeah. Prospects made it through roulette.” Jax confirmed, getting on his own bike.

“Check in with Alvarez, see if we can get an e-t-a on Romeo.” Clay ordered to Chibs.

“Done.” Chibs nodded. “You...go with them.” He pointed to Miles. “So what? What do you want to do with these guys?”

“Cage match?” Jax shrugged.

“Lovely.” Chibs said, giving her a quick kiss before heading back inside the warehouse.

Opie and Clay took off, Miles following. She rushed to Jax before he could pull out.

“What?” He asked.

“You don’t have to do what Gemma tells you.”

He looked at her confusedly. “I know.”

She glared at him. God, men can be stupid. Listen to me. “You don’t have to be the one to do what she wants. And...fucking tell Miles to not cut through the woods. And tell Opie to fix shit with Lyla.”

“Fuck. I did already.” He raised his hands at her.

Rolling her eyes, “Well, do it again. Go on.” She waved him to go after the guys.

“I’m trying, but you keep yelling at me and blocking my bike.” He smirked at her.

She threw her hands up in the air and stepped to the side. Jax shaking his head at her as he pulled out, picking up speed to catch up to Opie, Clay, and Miles.
Chapter 90

Chapter Summary

Brick, part 4

Chapter Notes

Happy Thanksgiving everyone! I hope that everyone is safe, warm, and has food in their bellies.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The door to the gunroom was shut when she re-entered the warehouse. Seeing that she was alone, the men must be in the gunroom. Doing their ‘cage match’ thing that Jax suggested.

Grabbing her laptop again, she moved to the metal ladder thing that went to nowhere, sitting down on one of the stairs and got back to work. Angrily trading, sending an email to her mentors in the trading world, trying to keep her cool. But her thoughts were on what was going on at the clubhouse to Roosevelt and Juice.

She was tempted to ask her trader friends why men were stupid, but them, being men; had the emotional age of fourteen-year olds as most traders seemed to have as a whole, they’d only send back the most unhelpful advice.

Instead she shot Alison an email, asking her to check out the Feds in Chicago. Detailing her encounter with the sheriff. Alison emailing back that she’d look into it and confirmed that she could come to the office in the morning to meet with the lawyer for Otto. She checked for Chibs but the door was still unhelpfully shut. Responding back to Alison that they’d be there unless something came up, in which they’d call.

While she was emailing Alison, an email from Kerrianne pinged. Saying that her mother and Maureen were regularly meeting to talk and research about her seer powers. Their living room was littered with books and notes about what they’ve found so far. Also begging for help with her trigonometry homework, she quickly jot out a trick to the solution for her. Adding to tell her mother and Maureen a thank you for their hard work. And that they’d call later on when they got a free moment.

Her head was killing her but she felt better after sending her emails, feeling like she’d accomplished something instead of hoping and warning people to watch out for each other.

Chibs, Juice and Happy came walking out of the gunroom. Chibs saw she had moved and swung around to settle in next to her. Putting her hand to his jaw, his eyelids fluttered a little at the small comfort. He leaned in and kissed her. She let herself fall into his heady kiss. Letting the stress of the day, fold away from her for a little bit.

Resting their foreheads against the other. “I hate this shite.” He muttered grimly.
“Do you want me to read them?” She offered.

“No.” He shook his head. “This...it’s not just about finding the brick, although it is that, it’s also proving ground for the prospects. Testing them to see how they react to pressure of interrogation. Every prospect goes through this. They need to prove their loyalty to the club.”

She carded her fingers through his hair, lightly scratching at his scalp. He purred into her, his lips capturing hers again.

“I love you.” She whispered to him as they broke for air.

Chibs pressed another hard kiss to her at her words. He pulled back, studying her a little. “You may not by the end of this.” He admitted.

“Not possible.” She denied quickly. “You are a good man, you may have to do bad things, but you don’t like doing it. And I love you.”

“I don’t deserve you.”

“You do. You want to argue with a seer over it? I’ll win.” She teasingly challenged him, her brow rising.

Chibs huffed at her. “Graim thu, m ‘anam. Graim thu.”

She showed him her emails to Alison and Kerrianne, he grunting his agreement to what she wrote. The both of them ignoring Juice’s pacing. After a bit, she went back to her trades. Most of her positions were set and just needed theta to decay. And that just required waiting. Waiting was always the hardest part.

She got another email from Kerrianne and was helping her with her homework when Chibs and Juice started talking. Half-listening to them and typing responses to Kerrianne’s questions regarding trigonometry, reminding her that it was simply working with triangles. She grinned at Kerrianne’s repeated use of emojis to express her frustration and displeasure for all things math related.

But she tuned back to Chibs and Juice’s conversation when she heard them mention something about rules.

“You ever push back against the rules? Some of them are pretty hardcore.” Juice asked as he ceased his pacing to sit on a stack of wood pallets.

“You were aware of them when you signed up.”

She finished her email exchange with Kerrianne.

“Black thing ever bother you? Fiona and all.” Juice asked.

“Fi was an old lady.”

“Yeah, I know but still.”

“Listen, the rules have been around since day one. Different time. I’m not saying I agree with ‘em all. But ye’ know, you start picking and choosing which ones to follow then...the whole thing just falls apart.”
“Yeah.” Juice’s head dropped despondently.

“But surely rules can be changed. I mean I wasn’t supposed to be voted into the club.” She added, throwing Juice a ray of hope. “And you did say it was a different time when the rules were put into place. Times change.” She shrugged.

“Aye, they do. But its to be taken up by all of the charters to make changes. Clay and the other Presidents of the charters have to meet and discuss it. Such things are done at the Conclaves. And you were voted in because you are the exception to all the rules.” He grinned at her and pulled her into a kiss.

“Silly man.” She breathed with a smile, giving him a playful push away when his phone rang.

“Aye.” He stepped down from the ladder after giving her hand a quick squeeze with his. Walking towards the front of the warehouse, listening to whoever was on the other end.

Juice was up and pacing again, looking between the gunroom and out the front door. Watching him pacing back and forth, her headache ramped up again. Turning off her laptop, she couldn’t concentrate on her trading anymore.

“What’s up with you? You look like you’ve got ants in your pants.”

“Just need to find that brick.” He stressed.

“Yes, well, it has to be around here somewhere. It just didn’t walk off on its own.” She said dryly, seeing Chibs and Happy walking back.

Juice stared up at her, his eyes widened as her words sparked an idea in his head. God help her. Before she could do or say anything, Chibs snapped his phone shut, turning back towards the gunroom.

“Romeo will be here in an hour. We got to end one of these guys now.” Chibs said grimly.

“Are you serious?” Juice asked flabbergasted at the idea.

“Yeah.”

“Jesus Christ. It’s bad enough we scared the shit out of them with the gun love.” Juice said.

Chibs frowned down at Juice. “Only way to calm the cartel. They’re going to want a guilty body. And if we don’t give it to ’em. They’re going to take it a sign of weakness. Then they’re going to want more blood. I don’t have any options.” Chibs explained and stepped towards the gunroom.

“Hold up!” Juice blocked Chibs. “For all we know, Alvarez is playing us. Him vouching his own guy? What does that prove?”

Chibs tries to go for the gunroom once more, but Juice blocks his way again. “Juicy, its out of our hands.” He said exasperatingly by Juice’s continued efforts to keep Chibs from killing Phil or Rat.

“You gotta give Phil and Rat one last chance.” Juice pleaded.

Before anyone could counter his case, Juice bounded off to the gunroom. Chibs and even Happy looking confused...and didn’t like it.

They went to the gunroom, the door open, she could hear Juice talking to Phil and Rat.
“There’s a guy on his way. Expecting all that coke to be here. That missing kilo isn’t just about you. It’s trouble for the whole club. I’m going to give you one last chance. We’re going to step outside. And whoever took the brick. We know it’s gotta be around here. Just put it back. No questions. No repercussions.”

Juice walks back out of the room, grinning that he’s found a solution. Giving her a nod, as if thanking her for the idea. Jesus Christ.

“Fifteen minutes.” She heard Chibs say before he and Happy stepped out of the gunroom, too.

“Even if that brick shows up, them two are out.” Chibs angrily rounds on Juice, pointing towards the gunroom.

Happy nodding to Chibs decision.

“At least, they won’t be dead and we’ll get our blow back.” Juice shrugged pulling on his black hoodie.

“Happy, set up the bikes blocking out an exit strategy.” Chibs ordered unhappily. Happy giving a considering look between Chibs and Juice, only to turn around and head out to do Chibs bidding.

“I gotta take a piss. Clear out, give them the fifteen.” Juice shrugged again, before he runs out of the warehouse.

Chibs staring after Juice at his odd behavior.

She stepped down from the ladder. His hand reaching for hers automatically, as she came towards him and walked outside.

Chibs lit a cigarette next to her, while she stared off in the woods where Juice disappeared. Wondering how exactly Juice would get the brick back in the gunroom. Now is the best time to get it back in there.

There would have to be a distraction to turn everyone’s eyes from what he was doing. God, she hoped that Jax remembered to tell Miles not to cut through the woods. And that Miles listened to him.

Chibs checking his watch as Happy moved the bikes.

“What the fuck is up with that boy?” Chibs asked rhetorically.

He looked back towards the gunroom if there was anything going on with the prospects but it was all quiet. She kept her attention on the woods.

A slight breeze had kicked up and played with her long hair as she bit at her lip.

“You okay?” Chibs asked.

“Yeah. Just...hoping for a change.”

“What...?” Chibs started questioning her only to jerk around at the sound of gunshots going off in the woods.

Chibs and Happy ran out into the woods, yelling for Juice in alarm. She ran after them. Hoping that maybe Miles wasn’t dead. Or maybe it was Juice that was shot instead.
She bit back her horrified cry at the scene before her. Staring down at a very dead Miles, a shimmer or shift of the light hovered over Miles’s inert body. Slowly drifting and dispersing in the slight wind, disappearing into the tree branches above until she couldn’t see or sense the presence anymore.

“What the hell?” Happy questioned, staring down at Miles and Juice.

“Holy shit.” Chibs swore kneeling next to Juice, lifting him up a bit. Checking him for his injuries.

“Came out to take a piss. Found him pulling something out of the leaves. Saw me and freaked out. Tried to kill me. Took one trying to get the gun.” Juice explaining what happened.

It was her turn to pace back and forth, unable to look at Juice, as he huffed and wheezed while everyone bought his stupid story. And she was pissed at herself, too. Maybe she should have forced Juice to admit he stole the brick when it came up missing. But it was too late now.

Happy pulled his gun and shot Miles a couple more times. “Lying bitch.”

“Did you get him?” Chibs asked Happy sarcastically.

“That was completely unnecessary!” She exploded at Happy and Chibs. “God damn it.” She swore.

She crouched down next to Miles. His body still as the clay it was formed from.

“M ‘anam…don’t…” Chibs checked her as she gently closed Mile’s eyes.

“It’s okay. His soul is gone.” She eased Chibs worry for her touching the body.

“How do ye’ know that?” Chibs asked her.

She didn’t get to know Miles much, didn’t have a real conversation with him. What she did know of him came from reading Jax and Tig. He wasn’t the smartest of the bunch, but he was loyal and Juice ruined that.

“I saw it.” She answered Chibs question.

Staring at Juice from across the man he killed, his eyes widened further at her anger. The shock of the fight and stress of the last few hours still riding him, no doubt. But she didn’t care how Juice was feeling at the moment.

The sound of motorcycles drew Chibs and Happy’s attention and back to the matter at hand, the show and tell for Romeo and hand off of all thirty kilos of coke to Marcus.

“Fuck, come on.” Chibs manhandled Juice with one arm while holding onto the brick in the other. Happy quickly stepping in to help.

Staring up into the tree branches above her. “I’m sorry. Be at peace.” She apologized mournfully before stumbling out of the woods to find Chibs.

“What the hell happened?” Jax asked.

“Miles. Juicey-boy caught him. Put that in with the stash.” Chibs said handing over the recovered brick.

“Shit. Miles?” Opie questioned.
“He’s very dead.” Happy reported.

“I ought’ta shoot you guys for patching him in. Good work, Juicy.” Clay said, as Juice continued to wheeze like a stuck pig. “Look, uh, Romeo’s going to be here any minute.”

“I’ll clean this up. Pack it away.” Jax jogged into the warehouse. His lips pressed in a tight line.

“Get him in the van.” Chibs ordered Phil and Rat.

“The thief…” Clay pulled Happy close. “…put him deep, no marker. Have Laurel and Hardy do it.”

Happy nodding approvingly and moving to the prospects, yelling at them to find him after they’ve dumped Juice in the van.

“Doesn’t make sense. Miles?” Opie questioned as he moved next to Jax.

“Sometimes the vetting happens a little late. I guess. What could happen now?” Jax side-eyed her as he walked past her.

She made to go for Jax, but the Mayans pulled in, along with Romeo in his tan Hummer. Damn it. She ignored everyone and stomped into the gunroom, rifling a joint from Chibs pocket.

Chibs frowned at her. “You okay?” Questioning her softly.

“Peachy.”

Smoking, half-listening and half-watching the repeat of the morning count of the bricks. Except now all thirty were all accounted for this time. She rolled her eyes at the whole dog and pony show as the power of the joint kicked in.

“Thirty kilos.” Chibs shakes Marcus’s hand for a deal all set.

“That’s good.” Marcus nods approvingly.

“When’s your next shipment?” Romeo questioned.

“Our guys are up north securing it from the Irish. Hauling it down in these oil barrels.” Jax answered.

“White boys are pretty smart.” Romeo joked.

“We get by.” Clay grinned and leaned closer to Romeo. “Can I get a minute?”

That got her attention, watching Clay and Romeo disappear out the gunroom. She didn’t like the private chat Clay requested. She looked to Jax, see if he was going to join them, but he only went to Marcus.

“Looks like you’re a patch short.” Marcus commented.

“No, we’re not. Won’t happen again.” Jax promised.

“I know.” Marcus said knowingly. His eyes caught hers. “Course, I’m wondering why your seer didn’t pick up on the missing brick in the first place.” He challenged her.

Jax looked over to her as she narrowed her eyes at Marcus. She felt Chibs slide a hand to her back. But either it was the joint, the stress of the day, the loss of Miles, her anger at herself, or a
combination of all of it...she felt like she failed. Like Miles’s life meant nothing. Like none of it mattered.

A great, big, cosmic joke on all of them and they were just too stupid and blind to see it. But it mattered. What happened mattered. All of this for some drugs. Drugs that’ll get people hurt by becoming addicts. So Romeo could fund his war. So Marcus and Clay could make their money. How petty it all was.

“You speak excellent Spanish. Your accent, though, I can’t place it.” Marcus said curiously, sliding a wary look to Jax and Chibs. They only shrugged in response.

“Hmm, what?” She asked as she felt Chibs pulling her into his arms. With his tighter contact she felt more inside her own head, not all floaty. “I don’t speak Spanish, I took French in school.”

“You were just speaking Spanish to Marcus.” Chibs corrected.

“I did?” She asked confused.

“What did she say?” Jax asked Marcus.

“That the gods could care less about the coke. That I need to keep my eye on it and my people. And that we’ll be seeing each other again.” Marcus said cautiously. Eyeing her like she was a dangerous person that he’d discredited before.

Jax shrugged. “We already have a meeting set, so its true, we’ll be seeing each other again.”

She frowned as she fought with the floaty feeling. “Yesss, the meeting.” She snorted. “Sounds so inconsequential to what is coming. Tighten your security.” She warned Marcus.

“Why? What’s coming?” Marcus asked alarmingly.

“Tighten the security. There are more players to this game that anyone realizes.”

An uncomfortable silence fell over the room.

“Come on, m’anam.” He said to her. “I’ll get Juice taken care of.” He said to Jax.

Jax nodded. “Tara should be home.” Jax checked his watch.

“Aye. Right. Let’s go.” He prompted her again.

“Yeah. Okay.” She said as he led her from the warehouse. Grabbing her stuff as they went. Chibs ordering Rat to get his bike to the garage as they got into the van. Juice still writhing in pain.

“Still alive back there, Juicy?” Chibs asked in the rear-view mirror. Juice laying in the back, his hand pressing down on his leg.

“Yeah.” Juice replied tightly.

“Okay, hang in there, we’ll get you patched up.” Chibs threw the van into gear and drove down the dusty road.
It was strange riding in the passenger seat, so used to riding with Chibs on the bike. The two of them held hands as they drove to Tara’s house.

Tara’s warm brown eyes widened at the sight of Chibs hauling a bleeding Juice around. Pointing him to her kitchen table. She grabbed up the napkin holder and a newspaper off the table so Chibs would dump Juice across it.

“Where are the boys?” She asked.

“I just put them down.” Tara said pulling on a pair of surgical gloves with a practiced snap.

She sighed, watching Tara work on Juice. Her hands steady with dance-like movements as she worked needle and thread.

Chibs grabbed an apple from the bowl of fruit on Tara’s counter after washing his hands. Cutting up slices, handing them to her to eat.

“Eat.” He prompted. “It’s been a long day.”

Sighing, she took the fruit and nibbled at it. The food helping bringing her back to herself.

She wanted to ask Tara how she was doing but couldn’t with Juice laying in front of her. Instead, she watched the realization hit Juice of what happened out in the woods today. That he killed Miles. Watched the guilt of that take hold. Good. He didn’t deserve to think he got away with murdering an innocent man scot-free.

Tara finished stitching Juice, taped a large, white, gauze bandage to the wound. Telling him to keep it clean and dry. That she’ll come by the clubhouse to check on it later.

Juice nodded, as he hopped awkwardly off the table. Chibs quickly stepped in to walk him back out to the van. Tara taking off her surgical gloves and kitchen apron.

“You doing okay?” She asked Tara.

“Yeah. Been a long day. Wasn’t expecting to be operating on my kitchen table. Now, I really am a mob doctor.” Tara joked dryly.

She gave Tara a grim smile at her attempt to lighten the mood. “Sorry. I hoped that this wouldn’t have happened. I tried…” She breathed deeply to stop the tears that threatened to fall.

Tara paused in her cleaning, checking her. “Maybe I should be asking you if you’re okay.”

She huffed. “Yeah. I’m fine. Sorry. I need to get out there.” She winced as her headache twisted up. “Uhmm…things are going to get complicated.”

Tara grinned ruefully, “This isn’t complicated already?”

“Unfortunately, no. But, it’ll work out. Just…shit…it’s…”

“Complicated?” Tara filled in with a brow raise.

“Yeah.” She replied simply.

“M’ anam, come on. We gotta dump Juice at the clubhouse before we can go home yet.” Chibs popped in, taking her hand.
“Yeah. Okay. Thanks Tara.” She said.

“No problem. Have a good night.” Tara said from the doorway as Chibs led her back to the van.

At the clubhouse, she held the door open so Chibs could drag Juice inside.

As Chibs transferred Juice down to a dorm room, she saw Tig and Bobby with a mass of photos spread out over a table. Holding them up and sharing the memories that they held.

Gemma was talking to Opie who was nursing a beer. He gave her a kiss on the cheek before she left. Bobby went down the same hall that Chibs and Juice disappeared down. Opie sidled past and towards the apartment. She was too tired to yell at Opie for being an ass.

Tig continued to sift through the photos and sipping at his beer. She sat down across from him.

She gave Tig an assessing look. “Dawn okay?” She asked him.

Tig rolled his eyes. “It’s Margaux now...with an x.”

She didn’t find his comment funny, simply waited for an honest answer from Tig. “Yeah, it was good to see her.” He broke. “Probably’ll be back as soon as the money runs out.” He took another sip of his beer.

“Sorry.” She commiserated.

“Why’re you sorry?” Tig’s brows creasing at her.

She shrugged, “Just sad that the only way you can see your kids is when they want something from you. Not to just...come visit you because they miss you.”

“Yeah, well, its mostly my fault. I was never around when they were growing up. It’s okay, I’ll be fine.” He shrugged.

“Yeah, you will.” She resolved, straightening up in her chair. “I have a project for you. Something to get your mind off of your current troubles.”

“What’s that, doll? Scrapbooking?” He snarked.

“Please,” She rolled her eyes at him. “...leave the Martha Stewart-shit to Bobby. Can’t stand that woman. No, this...” Pulling the binder from her bag. “...the book for you to read.”

“Seriously?” Tig goggled at her. “You’re really going to make me do this?” He paused, hoping that she was really joking. “In case you hadn’t noticed, this isn’t some Oprah book club, we’re an outlaw motorcycle club.” He pointed out.

“I think this will capture your attention.” She slid the manuscript towards him so he could get a closer look at the title and author.

Tig’s eyes went dark in surprise. “How? He wrote this?” He choked.

“He did. This book...it’s only one of two copies. This is the only completely readable copy left. And only a handful of people have read it. And now...its your turn.”

“You read this?” He looked at her, the questions in his eyes racing.

“Yes. Don’t lose it. Take your time. When you are ready, come talk to me. Jax doesn’t know that
this is the book I’m having you read.”

“Is this just for that bet!?” Tig demanded angrily.

His reaction gave her hope. This book and what JT wrote wasn’t to be taken lightly.

“No. I could care less about the bet. This book...its more important than some stupid bet.” Tig relaxed back in his chair at her assertion. She watched Tig eye the book, like he was entertaining the idea that he wasn't completely sold on reading it or not. “I could give you another book to read if you prefer.” She challenged, reaching to take the book back.

“Fuck, no!” Tig slammed his hand down over the book before she could take it from him.

Smiling sadly at him around her pounding headache. “Then read it, changes and challenges are coming. It’s time for you to open your eyes. To begin to know the truth. Read it and then come talk to me.”

Tig glanced at her like she was playing some trick. “Why not tell me now? Or when I’ve asked you about shit before?”

“Because you’ll have better questions. And this will answer some of them.”

Chibs came towards her. His eyes on hers and she looking up at him with all the love she held for him. Standing, as he closed in on her, he pulled her into his arms and giving her a deep kiss.

Chibs glanced down at Tig and saw he had the manuscript. Already reading the opening chapter.

“You okay, Tiggy?” He asked with an amused grin.

“Yeah. Just reading. You guys heading home?”

“Aye, been a long day.”

“Okay, see you later.” Tig replied, his eyes still glued to the manuscript.

“Remember what I told you, Tig. Come talk to me when you’re done reading that. And keep it safe from everyone, even from Clay.”

“Yeah, I got it. Get out of here.” He waved distractedly at them to leave him alone with his reading.

Chibs led her outside to his bike. Racing in the dark night towards home. At each stop, his hand dropped to her knee or hand at his waist. Once home, they didn’t wait, simply pulled their clothing off each other and stumbled and swayed into the shower, then into bed. Holding each other tightly, sensing their need for each other from the stressful day.

Lips found each other, hands sliding across heated skin, their soft groan as he found his way home inside her. Her legs and arms holding him in her embrace unwilling to let him go. Each movement, each breath, brought them closer. Hearts racing as their bodies found their release.

And in the soft drift, she wept. Her mind, body, and soul couldn’t stop the tears from falling. He hushed and kissed at her tears. Comforting her when she couldn’t find it in herself to let go.

“What is it? Did I hurt ye’?” He asked.

“No. No. I’m fine.” She quickly reassured him.
“Then what’s got you crying?”

“Miles.” She said simply.

“Ye’ said you saw his soul?”

“Yeah.” She breathed.

“What was it like?” He asked.

“Beautiful. Peaceful.”

Chibs stared down at her in the dark. He looked to say something but didn’t, thankfully.

She traced the line of his jaw with her hand and he fell back, curling her in his arms. Feeling his steady breath against the skin of her neck as he fell asleep. Clutching at his arm that wrapped around her, praying for forgiveness and strength to carry on.

Knowing that there was no stopping what she started, she had to see it through and hoped that Miles’s life wasn’t for naught in the end. She couldn’t save him today, but she would make sure that he wasn’t forgotten. That the truth would come out. She had to do better.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
Because the gods could care less about the cocaine = Porque los dioses les importa acerca de las cocaína
Keep close eye on your product and people. We will see you again. = Mantener estrecha vigilancia sobre su producto y la gente. Nos veremos de nuevo.

Trader lingo:
Theta = is a measure of the rate of decline in the value of an option due to the passage of time. It can also be referred to as an option's time decay. If everything is held constant, the option loses value as time moves closer to the maturity of the option.
Chapter 91

Chapter Summary

Fruit for the Crows, part 1

Chapter Notes

Another big section that I’m going to be chopping up into smaller chunks. Hope everyone is safe and well-provisioned if you are located in the blizzard that’s hitting the US.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chibs was working on a car behind her as she worked her trades. Jax, Clay, Tig and Bobby were off meeting with Marcus over at his cut and bag operation. Alison had called before they left the house and said that she had to push the meeting with Otto’s new attorney for later in the day. Some kind of mix up with the scheduling on a court case the attorney was dealing with at the moment. So here they were at the garage, opening things up for everyone. Just as well she thought as she worked her trades. Chibs, Dog, and Lowell were busy with an influx of repairs.

She was thankful for a soft breeze that kept the air moving in the building. Tucking a few stray hairs behind her ear, she heard Chibs cell phone ring.

His voice low and impatient, as he moved behind her and she reached up to touch his belly. His hands covered in grease. Chibs voice became more clipped and strident, his accent thickening. “Aye, don’t worry Jackie, I’ll go right over.” She looked up at him and he waved a hand to her to wrap up her laptop. “Aye. Keep yourself safe.” Chibs finished and snapped the phone shut.

“What’s wrong?” She asked.

“Tara’s got a death threat. Jackie and the guys got shot at while checking out Alvarez’s shop. Marcus was hit, we gotta go get Tara and the boys.” He explained quickly, cleaning his hands and yelling at Dog to finish his oil change. She moved with Chibs to his bike.

They climbed on and sped out to the quiet street that Jax and Tara lived. Compared to the hushed quiet of their house the night before, it was a cacophony of noise as they got to the front door.

They could hear one of the kids screaming. Even heard Gemma ordering Tara around. Chibs knocked on the door, Gemma quickly opening the door for them, cell phone pressed to her ear. Tara was moving back and forth from room to room, packing items she’ll need for the kids.

“Keys to the car, need to check it.” Chibs ordered Tara, holding his hand out to her.

“Check it?” Tara’s eyes widening.

“Aye, could be rigged up. Just give me the keys.”
Tara handed over the keys with a frightened eye. “Don’t worry, probably nothing there, but just to be safe.” He gave her a kiss to her cheek and headed back out the door.

“Shouldn’t we call the cops?” Tara asked.

“No!” Gemma yelled from the hallway.

She leaned into Tara. “It isn’t necessary. Just play along. Trust me.” She reassured softly. Tara gave her a worried look but nodded and went back to packing.

Seeing that Gemma and Tara were back to their packing, she went outside again to watch Chibs crawl under Tara’s van only to gingerly open the drivers door and pop the hood. His hands swift and sure as he went over the engine. Slamming the hood down he snuck under the dashboard for a quick check there, too.

“What are you looking for?” She asked curiously.

“Extra wires. If the van was rigged, there’d be wires going from the battery to the ignition, even under the van there’d be some sort of explosive packed under there. It’s all good though. No bombs.” He said as he turned the van on. Satisfied that it was safe he shut it off again.

Coming back to her, she hugged him before they headed back into the house.

“Car’s okay.” He handed Tara her keys back.

Tara looked at the keys in her hand nodding in thanks. Gemma came walking from the back of the house, still on the phone.

She winced as Abel screamed. The poor kid was scared out of his head by all the panicked activity and people running around. Chibs took the opportunity to swoop up Abel in his arms. Abel screaming for his daddy. Chibs jiggled and rocked Abel in his arms to distract him. Abel’s screaming toned down a notch but was still calling for his daddy in a plaintive voice. Thomas was in his carrier on the table, wide-eyed but quiet amid the chaos going on around him.

“Bring your bag, too.” Gemma told Tara as she snapped her phone shut.

Tara shot Chibs and her grateful looks as she moved and evaded Gemma to get her medical bag, swearing under her breath as she went.

Gemma handed Chibs a plain, white, copy paper. He read it quickly, handing it to her.

“Where was this?” Chibs asked calmly.

The short message was printed off a printer that anyone would have access to. Anyone could have written this.

“In her car.” Gemma’s strident voice riled up Abel again. Chibs turned some of his attention back to Abel to calm him down.

“What were you doing in Tara’s car?” She questioned Gemma.

Gemma glared at her, snatching the note from her hands. “Getting the car seats. I was taking the boys to my house today. Not that it’s any of your business.”

She rolled her eyes at Gemma’s curt answer. Even under the threat of death, Gemma still found a way to imply she wasn’t part of this crazy family.
Tara meanwhile had everything packed. She grabbed the medical bag from Tara and slung it over her shoulder and went to Thomas’s carrier and quickly gathered him up, while Tara and Gemma fought and grumbled with each other as they each took an armful of bags.

She stared down at Thomas and couldn’t stop her grin. Looking up at her, his clear blue eyes wide on hers, completely at ease and curious about what was going on. She’d never touched a baby, or any child. Worried she’d read them. And it never seemed right to do that to child who couldn’t give consent.

Abel had finally settled down somewhat as Chibs talked to him in gaelic, his low voice and cadence soothing him. Looking to Chibs she wondered if he wanted more children. She’d never thought about having kids before, kind of thought that she’d never live long enough to have any. It was mentioned as a possibility that she and Chibs would be Abel and Thomas’s guardians if something ever happened to Jax and Tara. They’d told them thanks but no thanks at the time. They hadn’t talked about it since. And part of her worried that she might not be able to touch her children with her abilities.

“Mo ghaol...” He called to her. She looked back up at him and saw the worry in his eyes. “We’re ready.” He prompted.

“Right. Okay.” She smiled to him as they stepped out of the house.

Gemma and Tara tossing bags into the bomb-free van. Chibs handing Abel to Tara, who twisted and strapped Abel into his car seat. Only to take her medical bag from her with a quiet thanks, packing it, too with the other bags.

She waited patiently, her attention turned back to Thomas as he blinked up at her. His tiny hands and feet wriggling in the air up to her as if reaching for her to hold onto.

Chibs placing his hand around her waist, she instantly felt more grounded. “I wonder…” She whispered, her index finger reaching to brush a stray section of Thomas’s hair threatening to bat into his eyes.

She jerked abruptly when Gemma grabbed the carrier from her grip, nearly ripping her arm from her shoulder.

“Don’t you dare touch him. He’s my grandchild.” Gemma hissed at her.

She jerked back into Chibs strong frame from the threat in Gemma’s voice. His hand tightening around her.

“Gemma!” Chibs warned harshly.

But, Gemma quickly strapped Thomas into the van. Tara moving to the driver’s seat. Gemma grabbing Tara into a tight hug. “We’ll all just go to the clubhouse together, nothing is going to happen.” She ordered sternly.

Tara shot her and Chibs an aggrieved look as Gemma teeter-tottered off to her SUV. Her boots striking the concrete in sharp clacks.

“It’ll be okay, Tara, love. Clay and Jax will figure this out.” Chibs said.

Tara nodded and climbed into her van. Chibs leading her back to his bike. Gemma impatiently honking at them to hurry up.
“Jesus Christ.” Chibs swore as he fired up the bike, her hands sliding around his waist.

She snorted.

Chibs took up the front, Tara in the middle with Gemma pulling up the back of their motley convoy. Winding their way to the clubhouse.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 92

Chapter Summary

Fruit for the Crows, part 2

Chapter Notes

Clubhouse and tracking down shooters.

Again, tried to remain true to canon, but added in my own little bits.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was another Gemma and Tara battle again unpacking the car and releasing Abel and Thomas from their car seats.

“Good god, is it like this all the time transporting the kids?” She asked, a little afraid of the answer.

“No. Well, maybe.” Chibs shrugged next to her, watching the women wrestle with the bags, arguing over who takes what. “We don’t know how long Tara and the boys will need to be on lockdown, so they packed for a long stay. Hopefully, this will be all resolved by the end of the day and they can all go home.” He took her hand, giving it a supportive squeeze.

She nodded. “It will.”

Their attention turned as bikes and vehicles turned into the lot.

“Where’s Jax? Tara asked Clay as they walked towards the men pulling in.

“He went after the shooter.” Clay answered.

“What shooter?” Gemma questioned.

“Jesus. Get him into the clubhouse.” Tara directed the men dragging Marcus from a truck.

They followed after Tara. Marcus was laid out over the reaper table.

Tara quickly snapped on some surgical gloves and probed Marcus’s shoulder. Marcus hissing and breathing harshly from the pain.

Chibs lit a joint, passing it to Marcus. “Here man. It’ll help.”

Marcus took the joint thankfully, taking a deep draw of the weed as Tara prepared a large hypodermic needle.

The rest of the men filtered out into the bar area, eyes pointed into the makeshift trauma center. Clay rumbled something to Juice and walked into church.
“You have any idea who this was?” Clay asked Marcus.

“Some guy that wanted me dead.” Marcus replied bitingly to Clay’s idiotic question. She grinned at his humor under the situation.

Clay turned back into the bar, dealing with Opie, Gemma, and Juice. It was just her, Tara, Chibs and Marcus in the room at the moment.

Marcus must’ve caught her amused grin. “You predicted this, didn’t you?” He questioned and accused her.

“That you were going to get shot specifically? No.” She told him. “But the level of business everyone is doing now, it’s bound to create a stir.”

“You call this a stir?” Marcus said, eyebrows raising at her classification of the situation.

She leaned into him. “It’s only the start. This is one of those it’ll get worse before it gets better situations. I told you to increase your security.”

“I did. I still got shot.” He complained.

“Yes, but you aren’t dead are you?” She said to Marcus’s mulish expression

“He almost got his wish. Two more inches he would have hit an artery.” Tara confirmed her suggestion that Marcus’s situation could’ve been so much worse.

“Did you get anything off the note?” Tara asked her softly, her eyes checking Clay or anyone else wasn’t in hearing distance.

“I don’t get images off of inanimate objects, and I’m not an expert, but it just seems it was too neatly typed and worded for it to be a drug cartel.” Her eyes flicked to Marcus, who was listening to her and Tara talk. “Cartel’s are a bit more…bloody in their messages. This is closer to home.” She said her eyes moving back to Tara.

Tara shook her head. “Seriously? The letters?” Tara whispered in frustration.

“That’s my guess. Someone’s trying to give you a heads up. My guess is on Unser. He still has a bit of cop in him, yet.” The two of them glanced back in the main bar where Wayne was watching the activity going on.

Tara straightened up and set back to work on Marcus’s shoulder.

She looked back at Marcus’s confused look. “You don’t need to know.” She warned him.

Marcus looked at her, his black eyes hazy from the joint, his mind still working though trying to translate what she and Tara were talking about. Eventually giving up trying to figure it out. “Si, nothing to know, Seer.”

She nodded her thanks. “I told you there are more players in all this. Play along, el padrino.” She cajoled to a confused Marcus as Tara stabbed him with the needle.

“Padrino? What…?” Marcus asked utterly confused now.

“Local, it’ll help a little.” Tara said after the fact. Clay and the guys turned back to what was going on with Marcus so their quick secretive conversation had to end.
“Thanks.” Marcus winced, turning his attention to Tara. “What happened to you? Jax was very concerned.”

She breathed easier that Marcus was playing along like she asked. But knew that he’d be back for answers once things settled down. But until then, he was playing it close.

“Can you...hold this.” Tara ordered to Chibs. Her lips pressed into a thin line as she ignored Marcus’s question. “I have to disinfect.” Chibs stepped in for Tara and kept pressure on the gauze pad at Marcus’s wound. Tara quickly leaving the room and the line of questioning from her patient.

“Found a note in her car. Death threat.” Clay supplies to Marcus.

“Death threat?” Juice breaths softly from the other side of the room.

“Shit.” Marcus swears.

“What?” Clay presses Marcus at his reaction to the news of a death threat.

Marcus takes another toke on the joint. “I heard rumors. Galindo hit squad was hit last week. Found them butchered and burned.”

“So your saying this could be the other cartel. Lobos Sonora?” Tig questioned.

“No.” Clay denied. “This was some turf shit that came over the border. Romeo would have given us the heads up. No?” Clay reconsidered his denial.

“Targeting families is what drug cartels do.” Juice blurs out, just as Tara comes back into the room.

The guys shift uncomfortably that she heard what they were talking about. A drug cartel targeting her and her family because of the club’s business.

She glared at Juice for being a blabbermouth. Tara jerks back into action and moves to Marcus to deal with his shoulder. Chibs shifting out of the way, yet still helping her while digging his phone out.

“Jax.” He announced to everyone at the identity of who was calling.

“Jackie boy, you alright?” Chibs questioned as he flipped the phone open to take the call. Chibs glanced to Tara. “Yeah, She’s right here. Patching up Alvarez.”

He looked down again, listening to Jax.

“Alright. We’re on the way.” Tara waved off Chibs from Marcus. Chibs looked to Tig. “Call Laroy.”

Tig turned away, pulling out his own phone. “Alright.” Chibs said winding down the call.

“Can I...can I talk to him?” Tara asked before Chibs could hang up.

“Gemma.” Chibs handed the phone over.

Gemma takes the phone and holds it to Tara’s ear so she could talk to Jax. She follows Chibs down the hallway to the bathroom to wash Marcus’s blood off his hands.
“Jax okay?” She asked him.

“Aye. He’s tracked the shooters down.”

“Good. Okay.” She nodded as they walked back. She could hear Marcus talking to his men.

“Rafi, Pedro get the crew. Should be with the Sons. Track down those putos.”

“No, you need these guys to hold down your shit. I got a call into Laroy. We’re handled.” Clay countered to Marcus. Chibs heaved a deep breath at how Clay took credit for calling in Laroy’s help when it was Jax and Chibs who did that.

She shot Chibs a helpless grin, recognizing what Clay did.

Chibs leaned down and kissed her temple, his arm wrapping around her waist. Chucky came jogging through the crowd for Clay.

“Sheriff’s here. Looking for Tara.” Chucky announced.

Tara snapped off her gloves and moved through the men to deal with the sheriff. Her eyes sliding to her and Chibs as she passed by them.

Tara led Eli off towards the middle of the parking lot, away from the clubhouse and the garage for whatever it was the sheriff had to say. Clay, Tig, Juice, Gemma, Chibs and her wandered out to watch. She caught sight of Wayne in the doorway of the garage office.

Roosevelt looked in their direction only to turn back to Tara, handing her a card. Tara takes it and gives the sheriff a polite smile before walking away.

As Roosevelt turned one last look at them before getting back to his vehicle, his eyes landed on Juice.

“Mr. Ortiz, your PO called. He wants you to take a piss test.”

“When?” Juice questioned.

“Now. Follow me back.” Roosevelt whipped back, putting on his sunglasses.

“This is bullshit.” Juice seethed.

Yes, it certainly was, she thought.

“Go. The last thing in the world we want is this prick coming back here.” Clay ordered.

Juice huffs and seeing that there isn’t anything he can do to get out of this. He goes off on his bike, following the sheriff’s car.

Clay meandered over to Tara by the large grill.

“Everything okay?” Clay asked under his breath to Tara.

“Yeah. He must’ve caught wind of the threat. I told him it was nothing.” Tara shrugged under Clay’s looming presence.

“Good girl.” Clay nodded approvingly.
Tara escaped back into the clubhouse.

She shot Clay an annoyed look for the way he spoke to Tara, like she was a dog who performed a cute trick.

Soon as Roosevelt left and Tara back in the clubhouse, they moved as one to their bikes. She slipped behind Chibs and held tight as they raced out of the lot and down the myriad of streets, weaving through traffic to get to Jax.

They eased into a rundown apartment complex and settled their bikes next to Jax’s. Jax approaching as they dismounted.

“I saw one of them pull a big ass bag from the car. Probably more weapons.” He pointed towards one of the buildings. “Okay, second floor, end apartment.”

“Where the hell’s Laroy?” Clay questioned.

“I called him he should be here.” Tig shrugged in bewilderment.

“We gotta do this now before they split, or more show up.” Jax shook his head.

“What’re you thinking?” Clay asked.

“Entrance off the balcony round back. I was thinking me, Chibs and Ope. You lot take the front. We’ll call when were ready.” Jax detailed the plan he’d concocted.

“Alright.” Clay agreed. “Hey lets go silent.” Pulling out his cell, turning the ringer off. Tig and Jax doing the same.

“Let’s do this.” Jax said.

The group of them moved towards the apartment. She followed after Chibs. He turned back to her. “No, no, no. You stay here.”

At his denial, the others stopped and looked at what the hold up was.

“But…” She started to argue.

“No. You stay put.” Clay ordered sternly. Tig, Bobby, and Opie all joined Clay in his no’s.

“Seer, this isn’t part of your job.” Jax swayed. “There’s no advising here.”

“How do you know?” She questioned.

“Jesus Christ.” Clay muttered frustratingly. “Deal with this.” He ordered Chibs.

“I’m not a thing to be dealt with.” She hissed dangerously back at Clay.

“I just saw these guys run over one of their own. This isn’t a job for you. Stay here.” Jax pressed.

Chibs half-pulled, half-dragged her back to the bikes. “Here, take this, shoot anyone who isn’t a Son. Stay with the bikes.”

She gripped the gun he pressed into her hands. “But, I want to come with.” She pleaded.

Chibs gripped her shoulders. “It’s too dangerous. Stay here, I’ll be back before you know it.”
“I don’t like this.” She argued.

“I know. But if you came up with me, I’d be more worried about you than what we have to do. I won’t risk you. Stay here, for me.”

She twisted her lips as she looked up in his stern eyes. There wasn’t any wriggle room in his stance.

“Chibs.” Jax called.

He waved a hand to him, still looking down at her.

“Wait here.” He stressed to her.


“Graim thu, m ‘anam.” He pulled her into a deep kiss and a hug, resting their foreheads to each other taking another moment to connect. Giving her a final look before he tore himself away and went with the guys to storm the apartment.

She watched as Chibs, Jax and Opie climbed up a balcony while the rest swung out of her sight, their entry at the front door to the apartment.

Holding her breath as she watched Jax doing a hand count while Chibs grabbing a cement block. At the last of the silent countdown, Chibs tossed the block into the glass patio door and the three of them crashed into the apartment guns drawn. Screams rose from the apartment.

Shifting around, she looked to see if the noise had alerted anyone. But all appeared normal. Or, more likely, the local residents ignored what was going on so that they didn’t get mixed up in whatever drama was playing out.

She breathed as she felt her headache building. It was taking too long. She paced, looking around the parking lot and back up to the apartment.

It was another few minutes, breathing a sigh of relief as she saw the guys coming back out. Chibs looking frustrated.

“What happened?” She asked, running to him. “Are you okay?”

Quickly looking him over in case he was hurt and wasn’t telling her. But she didn’t see anything broken or bleeding. She wrapped him in her arms, she felt his tense muscles as he fought her grip for a moment then relax into her arms.

“I’m fine.” He wrapped his arms around her, too. “I’m fine. It’s okay.” They shivered as their headaches banked back and they relearned to relax that the danger had passed.

“Lobos Sonora, forced the family to help them with the hit at Alvarez’s operation.” Jax said to her.

Chibs pulling her in his arms, his body shaking from adrenaline. They swayed together as they let their touch heal them from their headaches. “What happened? You’re worked up still. Are you sure you’re okay?” She asked him quietly.

“Killed the Lobos. He’d killed a woman, swung his gun for me, and I killed him before he could end me.”

“It’s okay. It wasn’t your fault.”
“I know.” He said angrily looking at Bobby, pushing her behind him. “Oy, Elvis.” He called to Bobby. Bobby turned towards Chibs.

Chibs swung a powerhouse punch at Bobby. Bobby’s eyes widened at the sudden move and his realization that he couldn’t get out of the way of the punch in time. Bobby spinning and twisting as he fell to the ground. The guys all circled around them.

“Shit! Chibs, what the fuck?” Opie questioned.

“Fuck.” Jax swore, quickly checking around the area if they’d drawn any attention.

Chibs ignored the guys, standing over Bobby, who still rocked on the ground, hand pressed to his jaw. Chibs grabbed up Bobby’s shirt, drawing him up slightly. “Fucker! You called clear. It was your quadrant that fucker came out of! And you called it clear, ye’ fat fuck!” Chibs tossed Bobby back.

She glared down at Bobby. Bobby failing again in her estimation. First with Otto, now missing a whole room where his lackadaisical sweep of his part of the apartment put everyone at risk. He was quickly putting himself not just on Chibs shit list, but hers as well.

“It was! I checked the room!” Bobby stupidly argued.

“Boys, boys, not here. We gotta go.” Tig tried to intercede.

“No. Ye’ didn’t.” Chibs wasn’t deterred by Tig’s attempt to get him to back off. “If ye’ did, we would’ve taken that wetback bastard before he killed that woman! We could have taken him prisoner, gotten him to Romeo and Luis to work over. Find out what the fuck the Lobos are doing up here! Ye’ put all of us at risk! Next time, do us a fucking favor, stay home and bake your fucking cookies and get fatter than ye’ already are! Arsehole!”

“Chibs. Enough.” Clay ordered.

Chibs spat down at the ground, giving Bobby and the men a disgusted look. “Aye. Enough. I need to clear my head. Come on, m’ anam.” He held his hand out to her.

She didn’t hesitate to take it. She saw his relief that he hadn’t scared her off with his attack on Bobby or the fact that he’d killed a man not ten minutes ago. She started moving to their bike, Chibs a half-step behind her.

“Hey! I need you brother.” Clay called after Chibs, alarmed that Chibs was taking off and leaving him.

“Clay. Let him go cool off.” Jax said.

They were putting their helmets on, Chibs twisted his head at Clay’s direction. “Aye, I’m sure you can handle shite for the next couple of hours, Pres. Got ye’rself a crack team there.” Chibs snarled as he tilted his bike upright and fired it up. Her arms winding around his waist as they took off out of the apartment complex.

She caught sight of Jax throwing his hands up in the air as Opie and Tig helped Bobby up to his feet.

The first few miles, Chibs rode fast and hard, but he slowed down as he pulled off the highway and took some side streets. She idly swept her thumb around his belly button, watching the landscape slip by. She felt him heave a great sigh and swung the bike into an In-N-Out restaurant. She let him
order and pay for the food, quietly letting him grab a table for the two of them. Silently eating as they watched the people coming and going, the traffic outside.

“What?” He asked, catching her quirked up grin.

“This reminds me of our cross-country trip from Naperville. All we’re missing is Tig.” She shrugged.

He huffed a dark laugh. “God help us if we ever find ourselves with Tig like that again. Christ, what a shit day.”

“It has been quite eventful.” She agreed idly.

He shot her a mild glare for making light of what’s happened.

“What time is it?” She asked him.

He checked his watch. “Little after one.”

“Come on. Let’s try and set things for the better for Otto.” She stood up, clearing up their table.

“Oh, aye?” He looked confused for a moment. “Ah, right. The lawyer you’re hiring. You think this will work?” He turned hopeful eyes to hers.

“It can’t hurt. Come on.”

He nodded and they were back on the bike heading to Alison’s office.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
Godfather = padrino
“Good work. Thank you.” Potter takes the sample.

“Now what?” He asks.

“Now we have leverage. I test this. Tie it to Galindo. See if Juice feels like cooperating.” Potter detailed.

“And if he doesn’t feel like it?”

“We tell the underworld that he’s working for us. He stole from his own club. If that doesn’t motivate him. We move forward on possession charges.” Potter shrugged off the danger.

“And we send him back to Stockton? An unprotected rat?” Eli asked astonishingly.

“That sounds terrifying.” Potter replied as if he hadn't thought of that.

“You love this shit, don’t you?” Eli narrowed his eyes at the scheming.

“I like you Eli, straight shooter. I know this is difficult for you. Tell Juice about the leverage, cut him loose. His fear will multiply exponentially around his brothers.”

He rolled his head, releasing tension from his neck.

“Something else?” Potter asked.

“Yeah. Maybe. Had a run in with a girl, woman, over at the grocery store the other day. She matches the description of a BOLO that came out from Chicago a couple of weeks ago.”

“Really? What’re the odds?” Potter questioned rhetorically. “But what does that have to do with our endeavor here?”

“I don’t know, I haven’t called Chicago yet to let them know that she’s here. I wanted to run it by you first.”

“Why?”

“She claims to be a seer. For the Sons. She’s wearing a kutte.”
“Intriguing.” Potter said absently, staring off into space. “When you talk with Juice, ask him about her. Whatever her involvement is in the club. I can’t imagine that she’s all that deep in the inner workings of the Sons. And we’ve put in too much into our current strategy to shift gears and focus on some mysterious girl that claims to be psychic.”

“Okay. I’ll have to call the Chicago office, let them know she’s here.” He warned with a shrug.

“Do your duty, Sheriff. Let me know if anything develops more about her. Perhaps she could be a way in for us if Juice fails us.” Potter dismissed him.

Sitting down next to Juice in the holding cell, “I don’t know what they want from you. But at this point, you have no choice. You have to cooperate, Juice.”

He looked at Juice. The boy was seriously checked out. “Tell me about this seer.” He questioned, changing tack.


He shrugged nonchalantly. “Ran into her at the store the other day. She’s seriously tatted up. Did the club make her get those? The one on her forehead? A bit extreme even for you guys.”

Juice’s eyes bugged out, his head shaking. “We didn’t. We’d never do that to anyone.”

“Then why? How?”

“She’s the Seer.” Juice said as if that answered his question.

“And what does that mean? I’ve never heard of an outlaw crew running with a woman.”

“Chibs found her. Brought her back. We had to vote her in or he would’ve left.”

“Really? All for some girl? Didn’t think Chibs was the kind of guy who’d quit your club over a girl.”

“For her, he would.”

He frowned at Juice, “So what exactly does she do for the club?”

“Did you touch her?” Juice demanded, ignoring his question.

“Shook her hand. Why?”

“Fuck.” Juice stood up and started pacing the tiny room. “Fuck, I’m fucked.”

“You were fucked the moment you joined your crew.” He couldn’t help but admonish.

Juice shook his head. “You don’t fucking get it! She’s the Seer! She fucking read you!”

“What?” He started to get an inkling that there was more going on with this girl that had a hardcore criminal freaking out over a simple handshake.

“She read you. She knows everything. She knows about this bullshit with the coke! She knows that you’re threatening to out me with the club over my dad...who I barely know! She knows everything about you and your life!”
He scoffed. “You can’t be serious. There’s no such thing as seers or psychics. And if she did know, like you suggest, why hasn’t she outed you? Why keep things a secret?”

Juice came to a sudden stop, his body sagging slightly in abject defeat. “Doesn’t matter.”

He tried to press for more information, but Juice shut down and there wasn’t anything to do but let him go.

Instead, he reached for his phone to call the Chicago office who put out the BOLO. Swallowing down a couple of aspirin with the cold leftover coffee from the morning. The sound of Nancy Fraser’s voice, her words briefly had him pausing while he was dialing the area code for Chicago.

Remembering the moment he swore his oath when he came to Charming to start a new life with Rita. To start a family, God willing. Doubts over Potter’s tactics had him questioning what he was doing. Fool running fool’s errands. That’s what she said to him. It creeped him out, the sound of her voice, the way her eyes stared directly into him. Like she was seeing things that nobody else could see. Was he playing the fool? It was starting to feel like it.

He hated the idea of using race or this latest exploit, arresting Juice on possession...all of it to leverage Juice the way Potter wanted. But Juice wasn’t some wet-behind-the-ears kid...he was a convicted criminal out on parole. On the gang task force, he had to play hard with these guys. It’s what he did back in Oakland to break up the gangs. The gang task force was still working overtime there. He’d still be there if it weren’t for Rita worried about trying for a family where he was putting his life at risk the way he had been.

Part of him missed the job back in Oakland. The thrill and adrenaline in outsmarting the gangs, taking them down. But he knew, if he stayed, he’d end up constantly looking over his shoulder and worry for Rita’s safety. Or worse, dead. She begged him to take this job in Charming. It was a step up on the ladder for his career. A place that was safer than Oakland, even with a gang in town. He knew, he checked the crime rates before deciding to take the job and moving here.

And it didn’t take long before he was buried in Feds and their ploys. Fuck. What the fuck was he doing? Shaking his head of his doubts, his eyes landed on the BOLO. Even without his involvement with Potter, he had a job to do. He finished dialing and waited for someone to pick up his call. Hoping that this was something that would be taken care of easily.
Chapter 94

Chapter Summary

Feast for the Crows, part 4

Chapter Notes

1 year ago today, I started posting this story onto the Archive. I didn't know how it would be received, if it would be hated or loved. If my writing would live up to what I hoped to express in my version of events of the canon.

Writing this has lead me into researching languages, weapons, religion, philosophy, Mexican cartels, the real IRA, druids, and a multitude of other issues that are brought into this story. The more I learned, the more I try to incorporate into the story I'm building.

I'm grateful and humbled by all of you, my readers, who hang in here with me as I write this story. A story that has been haunting me for over four years now. By no means am I done. The story is expanding as I go along. I've got parts that I can't wait to introduce you to.

So, thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

And, if I can say it...Happy Birthday to 'Extreme Ways'!
lol ~nmikyska ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph.” Chibs swore as they walked out of Alison’s office. She smiled, amused at his stunned state.

“I think I’m actually jealous of Otto. Fucking hell. I had no idea there were lawyers like that.” He continued on. “How did you find him?”

“Alison did most of the work. I just told her to find the most bloodthirsty attorney that loved a challenge and the sound of his own voice.” She giggled at his expression.

“Jesus. Just how much is that guy’s retainer?”

“Five hundred thousand.”

He stopped and stared at her. “You said you already wired *double* his retainer. That’s a million fucking dollars that’ll go down the drain if this guy doesn’t come through.”

She swayed in front of him, backing him up against the bike. He sat abruptly when his knees hit the bike. His eyes on hers as his hands gripped her hips, pulling her close. She brushed his hair back and over the curve of his ears.
“It’s a pretty thought that the judicial system is fair and blind to a person’s background or financial backing...but it isn’t. Money makes everything easier. We aren’t just buying Mark, we’re buying his reputation and connections to help our cause. His reputation behind Otto...that sends a message. The state, if they were smart, would simply cut a deal rather than drag this out in front of a judge or jury.”

“But still, he could still lose. It’s a hard case to even get re-opened like he said. That’s a million spent for nothing. On Otto. I mean, I love him, would like to see him get out of there. But the odds are stacked against him.”

“I know. But that would be a goal no doubt to get his parole back on track. See him walk out of there to take back his life once again. Even without Luann. But this, hiring Mark...filing for reviews...attempts to reopen the case, is to shock the system, send a message to Otto that he’s worth the fight, worth the money. Shock to the club who failed him and left him to die in there. And if Mark can tie the prison as liable on top of it...a shock to the prison and the agencies in charge of running the prisons. And let’s not forget that this will help us by stymying the RICO. It’s worth the million bucks. Even if nothing comes of it. It’s worth it and I can afford it. I’ve been doing really good in my trading.”

“How good?” He questioned, his eyebrows rising.

Grinning at him as she gave him a kiss. Resting her forehead to his, eyes locked. “Very good.”

“Fuck me.” He groaned, arms tightening around her. “Christ, we gotta head back to TM.” He whined.

Straightening up, her eyes sweeping over his annoyed face. “You feeling better? Not as angry as before?”

“Aye. I’m better.”

Nodding, she grabbed up her helmet as Chibs swung a leg over the bike. “Good. I didn’t want to have to drop another million to bail you out of jail for murdering Bobby. He’s a good baker.”

Wrapping her arms around his giggling waist, they pulled out into traffic.

Chibs sighed as he caught sight of Bobby with Tig at the picnic table when they pulled into the lot. Chibs may not be as angry as before, but he was still pissed it seemed.

“If you didn’t correct Bobby, I would have.” She said, setting her helmet down.

“I shouldn’t have hit him, though.”

“Yes. You should have. Remember what we’re trying to do here. We’re dealing with a cartel who would have no problem killing us all if we didn’t do what they want. Everyone needs to be more aware of how they act. More aware of what they say to who and when. Wanted to throw something heavy at Juice for blurt out that shit earlier in front of Tara.”

He looked down at her in amusement. “Didn’t realize you had such a violent streak in ye’, m ‘anam.” He teased.

She huffed. “It’s not violent. It’s frustration over why everyone can be so stupid. And from what you’ve told me and what I saw, Bobby did fall down on the job. You could have been killed because of his mistake.”
“But I wasn’t.” He reminded her. “Come on.”

They joined Tig and Bobby. Tig warily eyeing Chibs and Bobby. Bobby standing up at their approach.

Chibs gave Bobby a silent sweep of his dark eyes, lingering a little at Bobby’s jaw.

“How’s the jaw? Still got ye’re teeth?”

“Sore. Yeah, they’re fine.” Bobby replied nervously.

“I’m sorry for hitting ye’. I was pissed.” Chibs apologized.

Bobby gave a short nod after a moment, his shoulders relaxing that Chibs wasn’t going to pick up the fight again. “Well, you were right. I screwed up.”

“Damn right you did. Nearly got him killed.” She couldn't help accusing harshly.

The guys looked at her for her sudden outburst. Chibs raising a brow at her to let him handle this. She raised her hands up, taking a seat at the table.

The guys all looked at each other again, Chibs leaning into Bobby. “We’re in dangerous times now. The club hasn’t ever dealt with a drug cartel much less two of them before. They don’t play by the same rules as we do. They don’t care about anyone but themselves. And they’ll kill anyone standing in their way. As much as Clay likes to talk and make promises that this is a good deal for us, what happened today is a sign that we’re in over our heads here. And we have to step up or we’ll be laid to waste. Especially when the Irish get involved in this shite.”

“You’re not saying re-vote the deal? Are you?” Tig questioned.

“No.” Chibs shook his head. “That ship has sailed under Clay’s leadership. Even Jax’s. We’re in this now. And I’m pissed at the thought that we’re all assuming that this is like any other deal we’ve done before. ‘Cause it’s not. All of us have to step up. Shit that happened today, can’t happen again. I’ve seen it more times before, it’s the stupid mistakes that gets people killed. I won’t put myself or Nancy in that position. You fuck up again…” Chibs broke off his threat towards Bobby. “If you think you can’t do the job, then say so and let someone else take your place. I’d rather we all be whole than hurt or dead because you couldn’t handle the situation.”

Bobby was nodding, eyes widening under Chibs reasoning and underlying threat. “I hear you brother. You’re right. I should have done better. It won’t happen again.”

Chibs nodded and he grabbed Bobby into a backslapping hug. “I love ye’, brother.”

Tig shifted and pulled out his ringing phone as Chibs sat down next to her, Bobby grabbing his seat again. The tension between them eased off. She was still a bit miffed at Bobby, but to keep the peace, she remained silent. Giving Chibs a quick kiss.

“Fuck. Alright, I’ll tell Clay. Keep us posted.” Tig said hanging up.

“What was that?” Bobby asked.

“Samtaz. Armando’s been missing since last night. Charter’s worried.”

“Fuck.” Bobby swore.

The four of them twisted around as Clay pulled in and walked towards the clubhouse. Soon as he
was within hearing distance, Bobby relayed that Samtaz called. “Shit.” Clay swore as he went into the clubhouse.

“We need to bring Juice up to speed.” Bobby nodded towards where Juice was parking his bike.

“Yeah let me see where he’s at.” Chibs got up quickly and joined Juice heading towards the clubhouse.

“How was the piss?” He asked.

“Clean.” Juice replied unhelpfully. Christ, he was like a surly teenager.

“Bobby wants to bounce some stuff off ye’.” He told him.

Juice glancing over to where the rest of them waited. His eyes widening at the sight of her. But brushes past all of them, disappearing into the clubhouse.

“Hey, hey where you going? Juice!” Chibs and Tig yells after Juice.

“Is he okay?” Tig questioning.

“I don’t know. I’ll be right back.”

She nods okay and Chibs goes into the clubhouse. Sighing she laid her head down over her crossed arms on the table. Waiting for Chibs to come back. Her pain cranking up. Damn it. This was exhausting, the back and forth with the pain. In the back of her mind, the pain worried her. There was so much going on, she didn't want to bring it up with Chibs. Be a distraction that they didn't need at the moment.

“You okay?” Bobby asks.

“My head hurts. And Chibs may have reconciled with you, but we are not.” She glares at him.

Tig looks from her to Bobby. “What for?” Tig asks.

Propping her head up with a hand, she stares down Bobby. “How was Otto when you talked to him?”

Bobby slides his eyes from hers. “Fine.”

“Really? You think so?” She followed.

“You told him about the club needing Georgie, right?” Tig asked.

“Yeah.” Bobby blustered.

“Really?” She followed up, not believing a word Bobby said about this. “Seeing Otto all beaten, broken, and nearly blind, told him that you and Luann were hooking up? How it happened? Apologized, even, I bet. Told him that Clay wants to use Georgie for some land deal, right? That’s what you explained to him? And Otto was all okay with it?”

Bobby shrugged. “Yeah.”

“Uh huh.” She scoffed to Bobby’s one word answers. Tig looking between the two of them.
Juice comes out of the clubhouse. The look in his eyes draws her attention to him rather than dragging things out with Bobby.

She was up on her feet and moving towards him, letting Bobby simmer over her leading questions. If he wasn’t worried, he should be. And now here was another one that was running off the rails. What is it with these men? She hadn’t had a chance to question Jax or take Opie to task for screwing up royally with Lyla.

Standing in Juice’s way. “Clay wants me up at the warehouse.” He tried to move around her, but she blocked him again.

“Even in my darkest moments, I had hope. Hope for change. Hope that things would get better. I was prepared, of course. And I know what you’re thinking of doing, it won’t bring back Miles. It won’t solve anything. The guilt will haunt you until you do the right thing.”

“And what is that?” He looked at her. His eyes searching hers for the answer that could get him out of the hole he’s put himself in.

She wanted to strangle him. “You know what it is. It’s why you’re running.”

“I’m not running.”

“Aren’t you?”

She moved out of Juice’s way, holding her hand out towards the vehicles and his access to escape. “Go on. Back to the scene of the crime.”

“You know what they’ll do to me.” He tried to explain.

“No less than what you did to Miles.”

He stared at her for a moment longer, then bolting for the tow truck.

Chibs came up behind her, taking her hand. “You okay? Where's Juice going?” Looking off towards where Juice took off of the lot.

“He’s going up to the warehouse, check on Tacoma. Clay gave him the Men of Mayhem patch.”

“What?” He whipped his head back to her. “I told Clay to take Juice off the cartel shit. His head’s not in the right place.”

“I know.”

“Fucking asshole.” Chibs steamed.

“Chibs...Seer...chapel.” Jax called out to them.

“Come on. Let’s go find out what Clay has to report.” She shook her head and started towards the clubhouse, Chibs stumbling the first couple of steps, but moved easily to her side, grabbing the door to the clubhouse for her.

“Talked to Luis. He’s on his way up here with a few guys.” Clay announced.

“Any word on Armando?” Opie queried. She glanced at him and he seemed to be burying the pain of Lyla walking out on him pretty well. Idiot. She really needed to get Opie over for a crash
“No.” Clay denied. “Could have been picked up by state police. Tucson is into it.”

“Kozik will be down next week with the guns. I gave him the heads up. Told him to keep his eyes open on the ride,” Jax reported.

“Well, we better do better than keep our eyes open. Lobos Sonora knew exactly where to hit the Mayans. Makes us the next target.” Bobby warned.

“If we are, we’ll handle it.” Clay dismissed.

“Like Alvarez handled it?” Bobby questioned Clay’s assertion.

“You know, instead of sitting on your fat ass and complaining about all the shit I’m doing wrong. Why don’t you do something that helps this goddamn club?” Clay argued over Bobby’s dig.

“Yeah? Like calling a vote?” Bobby took up the gauntlet.

“Little late for that.” Clay sneered.

“I’m not talking about the cartel. Officer challenge. Your leadership is compromising this club. I want a vote. New president.” Bobby threw back, his eyes going to Chibs. Their conversation really did take hold in Bobby’s head.

The guys all looked around a little uneasily at Bobby’s proposal.

“Second.” Clay seethed. “Get Juice and Happy back here. Call Kozik and Piney, get their proxies. We’ll vote this shit tonight.” Clay slammed the gavel down and storms out of the room, kicking at the plywood doors as he goes.

“I’ll call Kozik and Piney, you want to handle Happy and Juice?” Tig suggested.

“Aye.” Chibs agrees, digging his phone out as Jax takes off out of the clubhouse. Saying he’s going to check on Tara and the boys and will be back in twenty.

She nursed a coke watching Tig and Chibs work their phones. Bobby drinking a whiskey at the bar.

“Trying to get hold of Juice. He ain’t picking up his cell. And I called the warehouse. He never showed up.” Chibs reported to Clay.

“Shit.” Clay swears.

“I’m heading up there.” Chibs provided a solution to the problem.

“I’m with you.” Tig announced, setting his shot down and standing from the bar.

“Come on.” He slaps Tig on the shoulder. She and Chibs taking each other’s hands as they walk out to track down Juice.

Glancing behind her, she wasn’t sure leaving Bobby and Clay alone in the clubhouse, but figured Jax will show up soon, play referee until everyone else could get back and deal with this leadership challenge.

Chapter End Notes
Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 95

Chapter Summary

Family Recipe, part 1

Chapter Notes

I think if I fuss with this bit any more, I'll yank all my hair out. And...I like my hair, even though it's been three years since I've had it cut and colored. Amazing how fast time runs sometimes. Anyway, sorry for the tangent, here's the next part. Hope you like it, let me know if you do or don't. Enjoy ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She held onto Chibs as they rode next to Tig through the darkening night towards the warehouse. The night ride relaxed her as the traffic wasn’t as thick during the day. Turning off the road and onto the dirt trail leading to the warehouse, she pointed out the tow truck pulled into the side of the road. Chibs and Tig spotting it as well, slowed and pulled over.

“What the hell, man?” Tig said confused.

“Jesus, Juice! There.” Chibs pointed a movement in the woods. Juice pulling his hood up on his hoodie.

“Hey.” Chibs sauntered to Juice.

“Hey.” Juice greeted back, breathily.

“What the hell you doing?” Tig questioned.

“Pissing.”

“You sure piss a lot. You sure you don’t have diabetes or something?” She questioned Juice, tired of hearing his repeated pissing excuse. Shrugging at Tig’s curious look.

“What’s this shit?” Chibs circled around Juice, brushing off the leaves from his hoodie. In the process pulling the hood and neckline back where bruises were forming over Juice’s neck. “You take a spill? What’s that?” Examining the marks on Juice’s neck.

“Oswald, man. Got these stupid security chains all over these back roads.” Juice joked, pushing his hoodie back into place, hiding his bruises.

Tig barks a laugh. “You clotheslined one? Jackass.”

“Yeah.” Juice agrees to Tig’s assessment.

“We gotta go.” Chibs frowned, getting back to the business at hand.
“Whats up?”

“Vote.” Chibs said, moving back to his bike.

“Drugs?” Juice questioned.

“Change of leadership.” Tig said.

By the time everyone was assembled, it was the next morning. Piney apparently refused to hand over his proxy, wanted to be there to cast his vote. Didn’t want to come down from the cabin until the morning, much to Clay’s annoyance. But there wasn’t anything he could do about it. Rules were rules.

She and Chibs crashed in one of the bunk rooms. Opie still camping out in the apartment. The bunk was interesting. Barely bigger than her cot in the basement. She practically slept on top of Chibs. Which he didn’t seem to mind. Especially when he found out she was wearing some of her new lingerie.

“Where’d you get this?” His dark eyes going wide as he took in her black lace panties and bra.

Grinning at him over her shoulder, folding their clothes over a chair in the room. “You like it?”

“Come ‘ere.” He held a hand out to her. “I need a closer inspection of this new ensemble you’ve acquired.”

Throwing him a shy smile, she stepped to him where he sat on the edge of the bunk. His hands wrapping around her hips as his eyes feasted on her.

“It comes with a garter and stockings, too. But I didn’t think those would be very practical.”

“Jesus Christ. You’re killing me here.” He shuddered before sweeping his whiskey eyes to her glittering ones. “Fuck practical. Get the fucking garter and stockings.”

“You sure?” She teased.

He growled and swooped her down onto her back to the bunk, crawling over her. His hands rushed to strip her of her new underwear.

“Hey! Careful, there. It’s expensive.” She warned.

“I don’t care, I’ll buy you new ones.” He shifted and pulled at her bra to free her breasts.

She huffed as he locked his lips and teeth around her nipple, his hand wrapping around her other breast. “You may regret that, once you’ve seen the bill.”

He looked at her like she was crazed, but wasn’t deterred in ridding her of her lingerie. It’s always good for her man to have a project, she mentally noted, as the two of them laughed as they navigated each others bodies on the tiny bunk bed.

“I say next time we crash here, we kick out whoever is in the apartment.” She said, catching her breath and willing her heart to calm down.

He pulled her closer, bending their bodies so they were wedded tightly. “Ye’ don’t like snuggling all tight like this?” He joked, pressing a kiss to her shoulder.
“I doooo.” She sighed, sleep dragging at her. “Just afraid we’ll fall out.”

“I’ll protect ye’.” He promised.

“Hmmm.” She couldn’t form words anymore as she gripped him as tightly as he held her, mentally telling herself to not let go. Floors were harder than they looked was her last thought.

Groaning as her muscles were locked up and sore in places that she didn’t know she had places. She yelped as she realized she was literally half off the bed. Her heart leapt as she worked to get her bearings. Grabbing at Chibs and the edge of the bed before she truly fell off. This sucked.

She tried to twist around, her elbow smashing into Chibs rib cage. He grunted but still slept on. His hands finding her body even in sleep. “Jesus Christ.” She swore, wiping the sleep from her crusty eyes. She was going to kill Opie.

Gathering herself, she figured out how to get up without falling, a plus in her book at this point, and possibly not waking Chibs. Though, if she was up, he should be getting up, too. Okay, she was grouchy. She admitted to herself.

Twisting and sliding a bit she was just about to succeed in her extraction procedure when Chibs woke up and and grabbed her, pulling her back ungracefully onto the bed. Her hip banging into his stomach.

“Fuck. What the hell?” He blinked at her in confusion.

“Gah.” She managed to keep from sitting on him. “Let me up.”

She watched the reality of their surroundings filter in his groggy state. His slow grin and darkening of his eyes.

“Oh no, you don’t. I have to get cleaned up. We’ve got church.” She listed out quickly to waylay his lavicous thoughts. Grabbing her lingerie from the floor, eyeing the garments critically if they were torn. But it looked like they survived Chibs attentions, thankfully.

“A bigger bed would be good, too. Fucking Opie.” He gave in, leaning back and rubbing at his face, finger combing his hair.

She couldn’t help her grin at his observation and who was to blame for their sleeping arrangements. She gave him a quick kiss before trying for the bathroom again, she just managed to get her feet under her when Chibs grabbed her wrist and pulled her back for another kiss.

“Okay, you can go clean up now.” He announced with a satisfied look.

“Really? You sure you’re good with that?”

“Yep.”

Rolling her eyes, she stood up and when he didn’t move, she took another step, and a second. Still, he remained in the bed, watching her. She hit the door to the bathroom in the room and he lunged from the bed.

She shrieked, laughing as he chased her into the bathroom, laughing ‘gotcha’ with her. Crowding into the tiny shower, they washed and she borrowed his travel comb to slick back her clean hair. The bunk rooms were stocked with fresh toothbrushes and other sundries that any guests might
Putting on her clothes, Chibs sighed dramatically, disappointed at her being clothed again. But he grabbed his clothes, too.

Smirking at him, she handed over the comb and a rubber band, putting him to work on braiding her hair. She sighed as his fingers massaged her scalp as he took his time pulling her hair back, making sure it wasn’t too tight. She knew he loved braiding her hair. That at the end of the day, he’d get to unravel it, her hair taking up waves from the weaving and he’d play with the curls between his fingers.

He bound the braid with the rubber band and looked down at her with a soft smile.

“I love you.” She gasped at the sudden force of the emotion hit her. Of course she loved him, loved him before he ever came for her. But sometimes she got kicked in the gut at the strength of her love for him. And it was always when she least expected it.

His hands cupped her face as he leaned down and kissed her. Her hands coming to his shoulders, standing up so he wasn’t crouched over her like a hunchback. His hands falling to her waist and hips, pulling her into his lean frame.

Eyes locked when they pulled back for air. “Graim thu, m’ anam. Graim thu.”

Her breathing hitched as she fought to keep from crying. He must have seen her flummoxed state and gave her another quick kiss before pulling her out to the bar for coffee and something to eat for breakfast.

Sitting her down at a table, a croweater handing over a couple cups of coffee for them without being told. She nodded her thanks to the woman. Chibs pulled out a joint and lit it. Handing it to her as he went to the kitchen to check on what was available.

Catching Jax and Opie leaving the clubhouse with their own coffees. Tig was talking with Juice and Happy at the sofa area.

Chibs came back with a bowl of cereal and two spoons. “It’s all that’s there. Gemma and Chucky are taking over the kitchen for the day.” He explained.

Shrugging she took a few bites of the cereal.

“Alright, there’s a challenge on the table. New president. I don’t think we need the formalities of nomination. You want the chair.” Clay opened the meeting.

“Ain’t got no choice.” Bobby said.

“Ok. Yea or nay, Bobby taking the gavel. Nay.” Clay cast his vote in the negative, unsurprisingly.

“Nay.” Tig said after a beat.

Everyone looked to Chibs for his vote. But things were off, the smell of the spices reeked through the doors into their church. The smell triggering something that had her sitting upright, looking around the room, back to the doors and back.

“What’s Gemma and Chucky cooking?” She asked, interrupting the proceedings.

“Jesus Christ. We’re voting here.” Clay thumped a heavy hand to the table, his blue eyes glaring at
“Chili. For the fundraiser at the Community Gardens.” Jax said over Clay.

She stared at the wall behind Clay.

“Shit! Everyone down!” She yelled, heaving their chair hard so it fell back to the floor with a loud crack. She’d wrapped her hands around the back of Chibs head, pain exploded across her knuckles as the smack of Chibs head caught her hands instead of the hard floor.

Chibs grabbed at her in reaction to the fall.

“What the hell?” Tig questioned, joining Opie in staring down at her and Chibs in confusion.

“Get the fuck down!” She yelled at them again, her head twisting to look at the wall behind Clay.

A long couple of seconds and she began to question if the attack was going to happen and had just made herself look like a complete idiot when bullets came exploding through the wall and windows.

“Fuck!” Chibs yelled as he twisted and pushed her under his body.

The guys all diving for cover and yelling at each other. Tig and Happy scrambled to the gun safe while the others fell over on top of each other as they race-crawled along the floor into the bar and out of the clubhouse to face the attack head on.

It was a cacophony of noise between the guys yelling, the sound of the heavy automatic weapons being fired into their clubhouse, glass breaking, the sound of tires squealing and hand guns going off.

Chibs used his body as a shield, as bullets whizzed overhead. He was yelling above her but she couldn’t make out what he or anyone was saying over the loud noise of the firing weapons and the sudden rush of blood through her ears as her heart raced.

Chibs wouldn’t move, keeping her in place and out of harm’s reach. She clutched at his kutte, knuckles white as her hands locked up in fists, holding him down with her. Afraid that he would be hit in the hail of bullets that ricocheted in the room.

Sound of the guys shooting and another squeal of tires, the noise dropped like a rock.

“You okay?” Chibs asked.

“I think so. I can’t really tell.”

Chibs shifted to get a better look at her but her hands wouldn’t let go.

“Need to let me go, darlin’.” He joked.

“No. I don’t think I can.”

He huffed a laugh, looking down at her.

“Why’re you laughing? We just nearly got killed!”

“But we didn’t. Thanks to your warning.”
“Oh my God.” She complained. “They didn’t even listen to me, just stared at me like I was completely nuts.”

“Aye, nutty as a fruitcake.” He chuckled, giving her a kiss.

Her growl at his laugh turned into a moan as the kiss grew, leaning her head to the side to have better access. Their tongues meeting and teasing each other. He shifted slightly and her legs wrapped around his hips while her hands slid up his chest and around his neck.

They broke for air, gasping and blinking at each other.

“Hi.” He said to her with a grin.

She relearned how to breathe. “Hi back.”

“Better now?” He asked, pulling back more easily now that her hands weren’t locked up in his kutte.

Glass clinked to the floor next to them as he moved. Jesus. “That was mean. Don’t do that again!”

She whacked his chest with a hand. “Ow.” She shook her hands. “God, getting me all hot and bothered while there’s glass and bullets flying everywhere!”

He started laughing at her diatribe as he stood up.

She scrambled to her feet and he quickly took her hands to help. So she didn’t end up cutting herself on the glass. He cut off her grumbling with another soul-searching kiss.

“Graim thu, m ‘anam.”

“Hmm, love you, too.” She admitted. Even angry at him, she couldn’t help but love him. And she was feeling better, now that the immediate danger has passed.

“Come on. Let’s check on the boys.”

“God, the place was just getting fixed up, now it’s a mess again. Stupid cartel.”

“I don’t think the cartel cares about our decorating.” He humored her.

They stepped outside and found Happy and Tig surrounding a man on the ground. She had some small satisfaction seeing the guys all worked up and pissed off that they’d been attacked and that she’d been proven right in her warning. Though they were too wrapped up in the aftermath of the attack to realize that. Ah, well, at least no one was injured except for the man that Happy and Tig held down.

“Check his ink.” Opie suggested.

“Lobos Sonora.” Tig confirmed.

“Shit.” Clay swore.

“This woke up the whole hood, man” Jax warned.

She rolled her eyes at how Jax sounded, like he was some street gangster. She knew he was educated, but you’d never know it by how he spoke sometimes.

“Get this asshole to the res’. Call the gun warehouse, put ‘em on alert.” Clay snapped.
Tig dug his phone out. “I’ll reach out to Alvarez.” Tig added to Clay’s to do list.

“Oh man, Clay!” Chucky yelled. “This is bad. Like bad bad.”

They moved towards Chucky and the black bag that had been left on the ground. Chucky easing the top open so everyone could see inside.

“What is it?” Jax asked.

“Holy shit.” Juice’s eyes bugged out.

“Armando.” Piney reported dourly.

“Let’s hope it was quick.” She said softly.

Chibs hissed and led her away from the bag of heads. Helping Happy dump their prisoner into the back of the van.

“You find out what he knows.” Clay orders Happy with a point of his finger.

“Bueno.” Happy responds with a nod.

“Hey, come on, you’re with me.” Chibs smacks Juice to wake him up.

Chibs slams the van doors closed and took her hand to help her into the van. Taking a seat behind Happy in the driver’s seat, Chibs next to her. Juice was closest to their prisoner.

Looking out the tinted windows of the van, she caught sight a line of cop cars heading down the road towards TM as Happy turned the van out of the lot heading towards the barn.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 96

Chapter Summary

Family Recipe, part 2

Chapter Notes

The interrogation of their Lobos prisoner. Let’s just say that things get messy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The van came to a stop and they heard Happy opening the driver’s door, coming around to the back, and opening the back for them to get out. Juice and Happy manhandling the Lobos between them, dragging him into the barn. Tying him down into a straight-backed chair.

“Check him for weapons.” Chibs ordered Juice.

Juice sighed, but did as Chibs asked. Even she thought it was useless since the guy was tied up pretty good. He wasn’t going anywhere anytime soon.

Happy going around the barn and picking up various tools.

She sat down on a hay bale, just trying to stay out of the way, as Happy started working. Chibs leaning into her legs, her hands around his waist, she tucked her face into his back as Happy grew more violent. Their prisoner kept silent except for grunts of pain.

Blood stained Happy’s shirt and hands as he switched tools. The prisoner holding out, even though he was bleeding and in pain.

“I could read him.” She offered, peering at the state of the torture.

“No, I don’t want you in this bastard’s head.” He pressed her back further, making sure she didn’t get up and try to help or something.

Marcus and his two guys showed up about twenty minutes later. Marcus quickly speaking to the prisoner in rapid-fire spanish, but the prisoner refused to talk. Marcus looked and nodded to Happy to go back to work.

She could tell Happy was getting tired by the time Clay, Jax, Opie and Bobby showed up. Frustrated as to why the prisoner hadn’t given anything up by now.

“He hasn’t said a word.” Happy growled unhappily.

“You sure you didn’t cut out his tongue?” Jax asked unhelpfully.

“Not yet. I’m running out of ideas.” Happy answered Jax’s question honestly.
She shook her head. She could think of a hundred things Happy could do to this guy.

Rafi, one of Marcus’s guys, alerted them with a whistle. “Galindo.”

Marcus grinned and leaned down into the Lobos tied to the chair. Speaking softly in Spanish as Luis walked inside with a couple of his guys.

“You told us we didn’t have to worry stateside. Lobo had no northern network.” Clay accused to Luis.

“They don’t. What’s our guest saying?” Luis folded his sunglasses away.

“Nada.” Chibs said with a spat to the ground.

One of Luis’s men set down a small, utility briefcase filled with innocent looking tools. Happy peered down at its contents curiously.

“Definitely Lobo. Ex-military...infantry.” Luis read their prisoner’s tattoos.

“What’s that for?” Juice asked.

“Sodium pentathol. It'll get him talking.”

Luis was about to inject him when he looked over at her. “But couldn’t your Seer find out what he knows?” He questioned to Clay and Jax.

Chibs tensed up. “I don’t want her near this piece of shite.”

“Chibs, she did agree to read people if we couldn’t get the information we needed.” Clay reminded Chibs with a malicious light in his eyes.

“She saved all our lives with her warning. She's done enough.” Chibs argued.

“You have the pentathol, use that.” Jax tried, glancing at her and Chibs.

“Oh, we will, but I’d like to test your little psychic.” Luis challenged.

“It’s okay. I’ll do it. I offered before.” She said to calm everyone down.

She squirmed to get down from the hay bale but Chibs refused to move so she couldn’t get up.

“Chibs, move.” She huffed at his broad back.

He still didn’t move, so she pinched his side.

“Oy!” Chibs flinched and it was enough that she could get out from behind him. His dark eyes flashing for the mild hurt.

Rolling her eyes at him, she moved closer to the prisoner. His hands were a mess, Happy pulled out nails and broke several fingers. She noticed the man eyeing her. His face still fierce on her.

“So how does it work?” Luis asked her curiously.

She continued to circle the man in the chair. “Watch and see for yourself.” She answered him mildly.

Stopping behind their prisoner, she looked to Chibs. Waiting for him to join her.
“What’s the hold up?” Marcus asked next.

The guys all looked to Chibs. Marcus and Luis looked to Chibs curious as to why everyone seemed to be looking at him.

“Chibs.” Jax prompted with a careful nod.

“Tha Dia a ‘guidhe dha.” Chibs growled dangerously as he moved to her. His body and face tight in anger. She just waited for him.

His arm wrapping around her waist, tucking his palm to her navel. His other hand pulled his gun, easily flicking the safety off. She breathed hard at the warm heat of his body. Her knees threatening to buckle as she felt his crackling anger.

“Chibs, you don’t need the gun.” Clay said.

“You’re making her delve into this asshole, I make the call on her safety.” Chibs seethed.

Before anyone could argue anymore, she lifted her hand and placed her palm to the back of their prisoner’s head. It was warm in the barn, his skin hot and sweaty as he twisted his head back and forth to try and dislodge her hand. But she just let her arm move with his movements, maintaining the connection.

Gasping as she tracked the man’s past, present and future. Ah...his future wasn’t so bright, he wouldn’t live for another hour she saw. Turning her focus to the past and present. Chibs tightened his hold on her.

His name was Tito. He grew up a street rat. Never knowing his mother or father, lived by picking pockets from the tourists. When he was old enough he fell into a local gang. But it was recruitment into the Lobos Sonora cartel.

Tito liked to carry an ice pick. Built a reputation with it as his signature weapon of choice. He killed his first man when he was just twelve. This was the first time he’d been sent north of the border. It was a big deal for him, moving up in the ranks. Still a low level grunt, not part of the upper echelon of the decision makers. But still, proud that he was part of the move into Northern California.

She flinched as she saw Tito rape a multitude of young girls, barely teenagers. Loving to hear their cries of help and pain, as he took his pleasure. The police were after him for the rapes, its why he was sent to the US; the law was bearing down on him.

He was scum with no respect for life. Only took. And what he couldn’t take, he killed. The sound of the girls he’d hurt echoing inside her with their screams and the pride he felt at their pain disgusted her. She briefly wondered if maybe he’d had a stable home life early on in his life if he would have found himself here. But it was a philosophical question that didn’t apply at the moment.

Breaking the connection, she pulled her hand off Tito's head. Her mind fighting with the memories and knowledge of who Tito is, the screams of his victims echoing inside her.

“Well?” Luis asked.

“His name is Tito Juan Fuentes. He was recruited into the Lobos off the street, picked pockets off tourists to survive. He’s got a reputation for killing with an ice pick, check his sock, right boot. Killed his first man at the age of twelve.”
“Happy, check his boot.” Jax ordered.

Happy stepped forward and jerked at Tito’s boot, he paused in surprise and pulled out the ice pick. Happy stood up and turned to show the guys.

“Fuck…” Chibs swore behind her. “Juice! You said he was clean.”

Juice paled and took a step back under Chibs heated glare. The guys swiveled a look at Juice realizing he’d fallen down on the job. But the way their prisoner was bound, there wasn’t any way he would have gotten to the pick anyway.

“Anything on the other Lobos?” Luis interrogated her.

“There’s about a couple dozen of them in northern California. He was sent up here because the Mexican police are after him. He likes raping girls, the younger the better. Tito is merely cannon fodder, not privy to the decisions that the leaders make. But he knows they have people feeding them intel, much like Galindo has their spies, so too, Lobos. They have a camp in a wooded and rocky, hilly area.”

“Where?” Luis demanded of her.

“Don’t know. I’d recognize it if I were there. There’s two camps though. Men in the first are front line, cannon fodder, its where Tito camps. Like I said, he’s not privy to their commander’s decisions.”

The girls screaming distracted her from Luis and where she was. She wasn’t aware what she was doing but suddenly she had Chibs’s knife in her hand. Chibs jerking slightly as she took his blade.

“Mo ghaol? What’re you doing?” He asked worriedly.

“They’re screaming in my head. He cut them. Used them, he maimed and terrorized them; for the rest of their lives.” She said through gritted teeth, moving in front of Tito.

Chibs moved with her. She didn’t stop to think about what she was doing, her hands moving quickly and grabbed Tito’s nipple and pulled on it hard, taking the knife and cutting the nipple off. The knife slicing through the flesh easily, she was already cutting the second one off before the guys even realized she’d cut the first one off already. Tito screaming behind his gag.

She stared at Tito, holding up the second nipple in front of him and dropping it to the floor with the first. Fresh blood running down his chest.

“Holy fuck!” Someone yelled in the crowd. Her eyes were on Tito. The screaming in her head was all she could hear. Her teeth bared as she fought to keep from echoing the screams herself. She felt an overwhelming push inside her to act. It wasn’t her seeking this revenge, it was every single girl he attacked.

Tito fought his bindings, eyes wide as he stared at her and down at where her hands were moving. She quickly undid his belt and pants, exposing Tito’s dick and balls.

Tito squirming in earnest as he realized what she was doing. Trying to protect his manhood but his bindings to the chair held true. She grabbed his dick, the knife under the base, her eyes on Tito’s as she finally saw absolute terror in his wide eyes.

“Las ninas exigen retribucion. Orar por el perdon. Aprender de esto para su proxima vida.” She hissed into Tito’s wildly shaking head.
“Wait! I need to question him. I need him still able to talk.” Luis halting her.

It took everything in her to look at Luis. Her hands tense and ready to do what was required, yet Luis pulled her from her duty. Luis’s eyes held a thread of fear. Good. It’s always bad to interrupt when there was long past retribution to be meted out.

“Doubt me, still? Fine, give him your truth serum.” She sneered.

Flipping her grip on the knife, she quickly slammed it down through Tito’s cock and balls, deep into the wood of the chair. Leaving the knife a vivid exclamation point, as Tito screamed. The duct tape ripping open from the force of his screams.

The guys all shuddered a male collective at her swift action. All swearing in sympathetic pain. Chibs hissing in her ear. His grip tight on her.

“I doubt you will need it.” She said to Luis.

Turning to Happy, he stood looking at the knife buried in Tito’s privates then to her with newfound respect. “Running out of ideas?” She mocked him.

Luis shaking his head at her violent treatment, but gave Tito the injection.

The men who had crowded around them, recoiled away as Chibs moved her towards the door. Only Chibs firm grip kept her from flying apart. Her hands felt as if they were burning. Blood dripping off her fingertips.

She paused next to Marcus. “I’m sorry for your loss.” She said blindly.

“What?” Marcus questioned. “Your eyes…”

“Survival of the fittest.” She said. Staring into Marcus’s black eyes. “Crappy sentiment regarding family.”

“Come on.” Chibs forcibly pulled her away from a confused Marcus.

The rest of the Mayans crossed themselves as Chibs guided her out of the barn. Even her brothers of the club couldn’t or were wary meet her eyes. Voices and whispers broke out behind her as she and Chibs moved through the thick crowd.

She didn’t care what they were whispering about, she was still hearing the screams of Tito’s victims and the heavy presence of Chibs moving her.

Away was good, she thought. The screams dying down inside her as the sun hit her face. Chibs hustled her to the van and he dug into it for a bottled water, quickly rinsing her hands off from the blood. Looking at her worriedly as he dried her hands with a towel.

She lurched and stumbled to the other side of the van, hidden from the view of the barn as she heaved and vomited. Chibs holding her as she purged her body as best it could. Chibs speaking to her, his voice low and insistent at her.

“Mo gràidh, come on now, let it go, you’re okay.” He crooned to her, his hands at her forehead and waist as she bent over dry heaving now.

She gasped for air. Chibs holding her tight. Handing her another bottled water to rinse her mouth out. The guilt of what she did to Tito was hitting her. How could she do such a thing? She
questioned herself, staring down at her shaking hands.

“I can’t believe I did that.” She looked up at him, shock in her eyes. “Oh my god.” She cried. “How could I do that? How could you still love me after what I just did?”

Expecting to see his horror at what she did, but finding none of that. His grip tightened around her. Tears filled her eyes as she saw understanding and even with her violence in the barn, he’d stuck with her, holding her, loving her.

“How could I do that? How could you still love me after what I just did?”

“Hush, stop it. There’s nothing you could do that would make me stop loving you. Nothing that could make me stop holding you.” He took her hands in his and pressed a kiss to her fingers, his eyes capturing hers. “Maybe next time, let Happy or Tig do the honors, aye?” His brow lifted as he grinned at her.

She huffed a harsh laugh at his suggestion. As if there’d be a next time. Not if she can help it. She thought, still shaking a little, aftershocks of the reading and her actions. Scaring herself, but knowing that what she felt was nothing compared to what those poor girls felt. Chibs smiled gently at her, swiping away her errant tears. “I love you.” He whispered to her.

Taking a deep cleansing breath, “I love you, too.” They kissed again, breaking apart for air.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My darling = mo gràidh
My love = mo ghaol
God fucking damn it. = Tha Dia a 'guidhe dha.

The girls demand retribution = Las ninas exigen retribucion.
Pray for forgiveness = Orar por el perdon.
Learn from this for your next life = Aprender de esto para su proxima vida.
Chapter 97

Chapter Summary

Family Recipe, part 3

Chapter Notes

A Seer's work is never done...

And nuts, I forgot that Tig was with Gemma during the day. Well, it was bound to happen sooner or later that I'd get someone's location screwed up. I just like Tig...kneejerk response to have him around more in my writing. sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sound of raised voices had them turning around the van to see Luis and Marcus arguing amongst themselves. Jax jumping in to calm everyone down.

She and Chibs looked to each other and collectively sighed before rejoining everyone. Jax already detailing a plan to lure the local Lobos to the warehouse and let the Galindo’s take them out.

“That soldier says there’s about twenty-five Lobos local. I have only four men with me, I’ll need support.”

“Oh Jesus.” Bobby swore, turning away in disgust.

“Luis is understaffed.” She said as Chibs hugged her.

“Shit.” Chibs swore as Jax rounded on Luis.

“We’re not exactly an infantry unit, bro.” Jax stressed.

“You will be. Because make no mistake gentlemen. We’re at war.” Luis said before turning to his phone.

Jax was fuming, running his hands over his hair, sending Clay a pissed off look. Bobby wasn’t too happy either. But Luis kept on talking into the phone, the Sons shanghaied into helping Luis deal with their Lobos problem. And Marcus, shoulders slumped, leaned towards his men talking quietly amongst themselves. Only to turn to Jax, patting him on the shoulder to gain his attention. Talking to Jax, Jax nodding. Looks like Mayans were going to help, too. It was his Pedro that led the Lobos to attack their clubhouse and betray the Mayans. The more the merrier, she thought with a wry grin.

Everyone's voices stilling as they saw her and Chibs. She shifted closer to Chibs as he walked her back to the warehouse.

“Where’re you going, Chibs?” Clay asked.
“To get my knife back. You have a problem with that?” Chibs challenged.

Clay smirked, she wanted to slap that smirk off of Clay. Chibs took her hand and they entered back into the warehouse where Happy and Tig were crowded around Tito. He was lolling in the chair and his bonds.

Tig, Happy, and Juice looked up at them as they came into the warehouse. “He really raped those girls?” Juice asked, wide-eyed.

“Yes.”

“Wake him up.” Chibs demanded.

Happy grabbing a bucket of water, splashing it over Tito. Tito caught sight of them standing over him, but it was her standing in front of him that made him shriek from under the duct tape re-plastered to his lips. She just stood there, staring down at him.

Chibs slid her off to the side, crouching down in front of Tito, tapping the knife experimentally.

“Ye’ buried the knife down pretty good.” Chibs complimented her with a glance.

She shrugged. “I wasn’t really aware how hard I slammed it down. Sorry?”

Chibs and Tig gave a dark huff at her apology, finding it unnecessary. Chibs turned back to Tito, gripping the knife full on, quirking a brow at their broken-down prisoner.

Tito shaking his head violently, as he figured out what Chibs was going to do. Chibs ignored him and forcibly yanked the knife up out of the wood of the chair and Tito’s tender flesh. Blood streamed as the knife sliced its way back up as it had gone down.

Tito jerking and screaming against the pain, the bindings holding true.

Juice and Happy quickly cutting the bindings. Chibs washed his knife off, drying it against the leg of his jeans before sliding it back home in it’s holster, as they followed Juice and Happy dragging Tito outside.

Everyone stopped talking, turning their attention to what was going on.

Tig pulled his gun, pressing it to the side of Tito’s head. Happy taking a half-step back to stay out of the line of fire. But she stepped to Tig, with a shake of her head.

“No.” She said to Tig. “Happy, finish what I started. Let him bleed out.” Happy looked to her in surprise and then over to Clay and Chibs, checking if he should follow her order.

“Do it.” Chibs ordered.

Happy pulled his own knife and with a couple of deep slices, removed Tito’s dick and balls. Tito screaming behind his gag. His eyes wide in horror, as he watched Happy drop the flesh to the ground. Tito curling around himself, blood flowed to the earth.

Chibs pulled out a joint and lit it, taking a deep drag before handing it to her. The pot hitting her system hard, realizing that all she had to eat for the day was some cereal. And that she tossed up after reading Tito here. She knew he deserved to die, that if it wasn’t instigated by her, it would have been one of the guys. Sons, Mayans, Luis even. Tito was dead the moment he was sent out to shoot up their clubhouse.
"I'll be right back." She said to Chibs before walking over to where Luis and Marcus were standing.

"Do you think one of you can send Tito back south of the border for the police to find?"

"Why? He’s no one." Luis questioned.

"If he just disappears, the girls he hurt won’t have closure knowing that he can’t hurt them or anyone else anymore. And it’ll give the police a chance to close their case on this piece of shit."

"The police?" Luis scoffed dismissively.

She glared at Luis. “Yes, the police. I know you cartels love to buy off as many of them and the multitudes of politicians, judges, or whoever might hold any kind of power, but there are always a few that refuse to be bought. Give the girls that asshole hurt the closure they need. Please. God, I can’t believe I have to fight you over this.” She crossed her arms, muttering the last part to herself.

Luis and Marcus shared a look that she didn’t want to try and interpret. Most likely it would’ve pissed her off even more if she did know what that look meant.

“Did you have to knife him like that?” Marcus asked.

“You would do the same if he’d raped your daughter, wouldn’t you? If not worse.” She questioned Marcus rhetorically.

Marcus glanced to Luis and back to her. “We’ll take care of the puta.” He said, walking off to coordinate with his men, a couple of them dragging Tito off.

Soon as Marcus was far enough away, she looked at Luis again. “Tell Romeo and the men you are using for Clay’s dirty, little side-job to protect her hands.”

Luis glanced alarmingly towards Clay and back to her. “What do you know about that?”

“I’m the Seer.” She explained. “You think that asshole Tito was the only person I’ve read?” Luis looked at her like she was a problem and wasn’t sure what to do about it. Yet, at least.

“Don’t put all your faith and trust in Clay. Jax is the one to back if push comes to shove. Protect her hands.” Pulling back, sweeping her eyes over him. “We’ll talk again.” She left Luis to go back to Chibs, her head pounding.

Luis calling out to his men and they all piled back into their Hummer. God that was an ugly vehicle, she thought. Chibs took her hand and they both sighed in relief.

“Everything okay?” He asked her.

“Yeah. Can we go check on Piney?”

“Aye, take up some food for him. How’s that sound?”

She nodded. “Sounds perfect.”

He grinned and pulled her into a deep hug. “That’s cause I’ve got all the perfect ideas.”

She snorted at his overly-confident attitude.

“Of course you do.”

He laughed, pulling her closer, his eyes catching hers. “Ye’ mocking me?”
“Not one tiny bit, I wouldn’t dare.” She breathed.

He snorted and gave her a kiss. “Come on, let’s check with the guys and we’ll head out before we have to come right back here. Christ.” He swore.

Clay stepped back from Marcus as he got on his bike and led his men out. It was just the Sons left.

“Alvarez is going to bait the hook. Let Pedro know the guns will be here at eight.” Clay reported.

“I’m going to put the prospects on the warehouse. Pull Tacoma into this.” Jax decided.

“I’m going to cancel the fundraiser.” Clay added.

“No, man, its good you be there. Puts us somewhere else if this gets noisy.” Jax negated.

“I know every thought that’s going through your head right now. But we gotta roll as one into this. Otherwise, we’re all dead.” Clay summarized to Bobby.

“Yeah, I know.” Bobby said. Knowing that no matter what, they were committed to helping Luis deal with their Lobos problem.

“You’ll get your leadership vote.” Clay promised.

Bobby huffed. “Let’s hope there’s someone left standing to lead.”

Clay rolled his eyes at Bobby’s dig. But there wasn’t anything left to say until things settled down. The guys scattering to their bikes.

“I’m going to ride out to Mary’s, to see my kids.” She overheard Opie say to Jax.

“Good man.” Jax nodded. “Where’s Piney?”

“Tequila retreat. Cabin.”

“I’ll take a ride out. Check in on him.”

“Nah, m ‘anam and I are going to check on him. Bring him some food.” Chibs countered Jax’s suggestion. “Go check on Tara and your kids.”

Opie nodded. “Appreciate it.”

Jax gave her and Chibs a considering look to the plan of who goes to check on Piney. Shrugging and giving a nod to them. “Thanks. You did good today, Seer.”

“Yeah. I don’t think I’ll be comfortable with you handling any knives any time soon.” Opie grinned. Jax giving a slight, creeped out shiver at the thought, too.

“Well, it would help if you guys started listening to me. When I say duck, you duck.” She gaped.

“Jesus, you should have seen Tig’s face when you knocked your chair down, yelling like a madwoman.” Jax laughed hysterically.

“Aye, right til bullets started flying. Idiots.” Chibs backed her up. “Come on, mo ghaol. Hap and Juice are waiting on us.”

“Oh my god…” She groaned, exasperated as Chibs dragged her to the van.
Jax and Opie talked a bit more as she climbed into the van, Chibs shutting the door behind him and Happy pulling out back to the warehouse. Juice curled up in a corner by himself. Which was fine with her. Tired of dealing with his drama.

Soon as they pulled into the lot, they got on the bike and headed to the store to pick out some prepared meals in the hopes that Piney would eat them instead of drinking himself to death.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
My love = mo ghaol
They stopped at the grocery store, picking out some premade dinners that Piney could just pop in the microwave or in the oven to heat up. She clung to Chibs as the sun blinking in and out as they rode up the road and the trees grew tall and thick the deeper they went into the hills and forest to the cabin.

Stepping off the bike she felt better, taking in the quiet of the woods. Some unwieldy weight slipped off her shoulders as she breathed in the cooler air. Chibs pulled out the food and took her hand.

“Okay?” He asked.

“Yeah. I really like it up here. It’s so quiet.”

He gave her a quick kiss before leading her up the steps to the porch. He was about to knock on the door when Piney swung it open, shotgun in hand.

“Well, well, well...you on task or is this a social call?” Piney joked darkly.

Chibs rolled his eyes at the old man. “Only task I’m on is bringing you some food. Come on.” Chibs pushed his way into the cabin. "Ope's run out to Mary's to see his kids." Chibs reported.

She hesitated, looking at Piney. Blinking and pressing her fingers to her eyes, opening and blinking at him again. But the picture didn’t change. Oh God, she thought in despair.

Piney turning into the cabin as Chibs yelled at him, asking where the clean dishes were.

“You really think there’s clean dishes?” Piney smirked.

She walked into the cabin, the work that she and Chibs did the last time they were here was nearly destroyed. Liquor bottles and stuff was littered all over the place. She listened to Chibs scold Piney for not keeping the place up or letting one of the croweaters or prospects help him clean up.

“I don’t need any help. Been surviving on my own longer than you’ve been alive.”

Chibs sighing and set to washing a few dishes and glasses so they could eat lunch. She went to the table that held old photos. Looking at them curiously, making sure she didn’t move any out of place.
Piney’s heavy step alerted that she wasn’t alone. Looking up, Piney watched her with the photo in her hand.

“Sorry, I was curious.”

Piney sat down heavily, setting the shotgun down. “Yeah, all these were from a long time ago. Not sure if it was better then or not. A lot of things I wished I’d done differently.”

“Twenty-twenty hindsight?”

Piney regarded her a little. “You could say that.”

She took up one of the photos, giving him a sly grin. “You were a handsome devil, weren’t you?” She teased.

Piney snorted at her. “I was a mean bastard. Especially getting back from the War. Drank too much.”

“Noooo, really? I wouldn’t have guessed.” She snarked back to him.

He barked a laugh. His blue eyes dancing as she poked fun at him. Bracing herself as she talked with him, kept her gaze on his eyes and not the large bleeding hole in his chest. It was disconcerting listening to him and watch him move around with a...she didn’t know what it was. It was similar to when she saw the letters floating and flying around when she read JT’s book.

Piney shared a few other mementos and photos with her as Chibs was working in the kitchen. She curled up on the sofa, leaning towards Piney in the large, worn-out, leather chair that she guessed he must have fallen asleep in on more than one occasion.

“Come on you two. Let’s eat.” Chibs prompted, coming out of the kitchen with plates of food and sodas. Piney clinging to his beer, refusing the soda.

“So, how’d it go?” Piney asked of Chibs.

“Oy, it’s f*cked up shite.” Chibs sighed, chewing around a stalk of broccoli.

“Not surprising.” Piney huffed. "Everything's f*cked up, lately."

Chibs slid her a look and she shrugged to him. “We interrogated the Lobos we captured. Pedro from Marcus’s crew was feeding the Lobos intel to a family member in Nogales. It’s how Lobos knew where to hit Marcus’s cut and bag operation and where our clubhouse was located.”

“I knew it was a bad deal...getting involved with a cartel.” Piney said.

“Well, Jax figured out a plan of drawing out the Lobos that are here in Northern Cali. Feeding Pedro we’re moving the guns tonight, we’ll be waiting.”

“Ambush?”

“Aye. Luis only has a handful of guys with him. Marcus and his guys will be with us to help. We got it covered.” Chibs waved Piney’s worry off.

Chibs noticing the photos he leafed through them and Piney went back to sharing memories with him. She sat back and listened to the two of them talk. The men laughing over rescuing Tig from the bounty hunters by backing the tow right into the motel. Smiling, as both Piney and Chibs looked her way to share the story with her.
Letting them have this moment, a final afternoon with each other in peace. Making sure that they weren’t looking at her when she swiped away a few tears that refused to back down. Mourning for Piney already. Damn it.

“Hey, you okay? Headache?” Chibs asked her, taking her hand.

“I’m fine.” She squeezed his hand. "You two forget, I read Tig. He was so happy to see you guys come for him. He was really worried at the time.”

“Of course we went after him. Tiggy’s got a few screws loose, but he’s ours.” Piney said quickly.

“Aye, it was Clay that didn’t want to. Not right away. Wanted to get those fucking guns delivered first. No telling when, where, or if we’d find Tig. Stupid.” Chibs grumbled, setting his plate down.

“Well, it all worked out in the end.” She sighed, squeezing Chibs hand again. He leaned over and gave her a kiss.

Chibs was cleaning up some more as she and Piney stood out on the porch. A squirrel chattering angrily at them only to disappear up a tree and into the thick branches.

“Don’t stay here. Stay with us.” She said in the quiet, staring out at the trees.

“I don’t run from anyone. Especially Clay.” He said.

“He’ll kill you.” She pleaded with him. “We’ve got spare bedrooms. Please.”

Piney sighed and shifted his weight. “It’s my fight. I started this thing…I’m going to finish it. One way or another.”

The strain of threatening Clay was taking a toll on him, but he was determined, she saw. “Are you sure? We’re trying to fix things.” She tried one more time to change his mind.

“When?” He asked after a long pause.

She couldn't stop her eyes from glancing to his bleeding chest, forcing herself to meet his eyes. She didn’t have to say anything, her expression told him the answer to his question.

He gave a small nod and looked out to the forest. “I’ve lived my life, good and bad. I’m ready for what is coming for me.” Looking back to her. “And you have nothing to be sorry for. It was always going to come to this between me and Clay.”

"Okay. Okay." She nodded, swiping away her tears, drawing in deep breaths. “We’ll try and keep Opie safe. He’ll have a hard time but we’ll be there for him.” She promised.

Piney smiled at her. “Don’t cry for me darlin’. I don’t deserve it. All the shit I’ve done over the years, the least I can do is try and stop him.”

“I...sorry. I wish I could have gotten to know you better, the stories you must have.”

“Nah, all my stories are all violent and bloody. Nothing that should be known beyond me.”

She tilted her head at him. “It’s you, though. Your history.” She paused to catch her breath. "They won’t forget you. The truth of what happens...happened...it will come to light. What you’re doing...what JT tried to do...it won’t be in vain.” He was going to die and he deserved to know that his life...his death won’t be buried in another lie for another generation.
His eyes lit up. “I'm glad you're here. You are a treasure. I’ll never forget how you lit that cash on fire. The look on Clay’s face when you challenged him...makes all this worth it.” He smiled in memory.

“I’d hug you if I could.” She eyed him, mulishly.

Piney just laughed. “Right back at ya'. Now, let me kick your old man out so you two can rest up for tonight and I can get back to my drinking.”

She wiped at her eyes harshly as Piney disappeared into the cabin. Coming back out with Chibs.

“I’m just trying to help ye’.” Chibs argued.

“I know. I’m fine. Go take your girl home and rest up for tonight.” Piney dragged Chibs into a bear hug before he could argue with him some more.

She watched Chibs sigh heavily as he was dragged into the hug, patting Piney solidly.

“You’re a good man, Filip.” Piney said, clapping a meaty hand to Chibs cheek. Giving Chibs a solid look.

Chibs looked to say something, but Piney patted Chibs on the shoulder to turn him around and pushing him towards her and down the stairs to their bike.

“Alright, alright. Christ. I left some fresh fruit and more meals for you.” Chibs gave up, taking her hand.

“Yes, Mother.” Piney snarked. "Go on, the two of you.” Piney said with a final wave as he disappeared into the cabin.

Chibs frowned at the cabin one last time before getting onto the bike. She quickly joining him as she pulled on her helmet. Linking her fingers as her arms wrapped around his waist, they rode down to the main road and turned back towards home. Praying that Piney lived. But part of her knew, it wouldn’t work. God, maybe she should've had Chibs knock Piney over the head and drag him out of the cabin out to their place. Tie him up there until they could work something out to get Clay to back off of him. But she knew, too, that Piney would hate them if they took this from him. God damn it, she sighed to herself.
Chapter 99

Chapter Summary

Family Recipe, part 5

Chapter Notes

Ambush.

It's a little rough. Forgive the messy grammar, wanted to get this up sooner rather than later.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She scowled at the heavy vest she was wearing. Shrugging her shoulders to try and find a more comfortable way of bearing the weight of the heavy plating that was meant to prevent bullets from killing her.

Chibs was so pleased when it had arrived, that she couldn’t find in her to fight with him about buying it or putting it on her.

He had finished settling his own vest and weapons around him and turned to her and began fiddling with her vest and shoulder rig. Yanking and pulling at it all, making sure it was all secure around her. Her balance tipping with every jerk and tug Chibs made, grabbing around his shoulders, one of his hands going to her hip to help steady her.

“You know that all this isn’t necessary.” She said softly to him.

“Even so, we need to be prepared, just in case.” He said finished with adjusting the vest, finally looking into her eyes and giving her a kiss.

There had been an argument over her being here when they arrived. Opie and Bobby stepping in front of them. Stopping them just inside the door.

“Woah, Chibs...what’re you doing?” They chimed over each other.

“She’s not going anywhere. Last time we left her behind, I nearly got killed. I’m not letting her out of my sight.” Chibs snarled to the guys. She tried to look competent and an asset instead of a liability with their mission here.

Their tense argument drew everyone’s attention. Marcus and Luis walking into this now. Jax not far behind them.

“You know what we have to do here?” Marcus questioned her.

“Better than you do.” She snorted.
“Really? Anything you know that we should?” Luis questioned her suspiciously.

“Oh no.” She blinked and shook her head at Luis. "No. You don’t get out of this. This is a culmination of your bad intelligence. And this…” She waved vaguely over the men in the barn...the situation they found themselves in. “...is your punishment.” She stepped back with a grin. “Don’t worry, I won’t accidentally shoot you guys in the ass.” She joked lightly. Chibs slapped a hand to his forehead at her joke. Okay, so maybe her timing was a bit off.

Thankfully, Clay was at the stupid fundraiser and wasn’t here weighing in on this. Jax shrugging, “She knows how to shoot. Let her stay.” With Jax’s backing, Opie and Bobby backed off.

Luis and Marcus shared a look and went back to their men and geared up. Pedro was trying to get free of his restraints and gag as a couple of the Mayans guarded their prisoner.

Chibs huffing, taking her towards the back of the barn. “Ye’ couldn’t have just stayed quiet about this? Ye’ had to egg them on?” He griped as he fussied with her vest some more.

“I think by the end of the night, nobody will even remember I was here. Or care.” She griped back. “God, quit yanking on the vest.” She stumbled. “You keep fussing over it. I want to have sex later, not spend the rest of the night figuring out how to get this thing off.” She huffed.

He snickered. “I doubt there’s anything you could wear that I couldn’t get off you in two seconds flat.”

Narrowing her eyes at his challenge. “At least my choice of garments are more fun.” She countered.

Sweeping his dark eyes down and back as he took in her outfit, “I don’t know...ye’re incredibly sexy all geared up like ye’ are. We could have some fun with this.” He opined slyly.

She snorted. “God. One track mind there.”

“Hey, ye’ brought it up.” He defended, pressing her deeper into a back corner behind a stack of hay bales. Handing her an extra gun and a magazine of bullets for said gun.

She smiled up at him as he fussied over her. “Stay sharp, mo ghaol. Stay back here, fire only if you have to. And try not to hit one of us. Aye?”

“Yes, I got it. Stay out of the way and shoot the bad guys if they manage to blast their way through all of you.” Chibs huffed at her dark humor but went back to checking his own weapons.

As night fell, the warehouse was filled with soft, metallic snapping and weapons checks, a low murmur of men’s voices hushed over the air.

Jax rolled his eyes at her as she yawned dramatically at him. But he kept preparing for the gun battle that everyone else was expecting. Well, everyone except for Juice.

Idiot was just swaying on his feet, not looking at anything except the floor. Not bothering to check his weapons or put on a vest like pretty much everyone else was doing. Just completely checked out.

Chibs caught her look and tilt of her head towards Juice. Chibs frowning as he noted Juice off in his own little world.

Some hushing came from the front of the barn, the heightened tension roused the men. She yawned
“Two vehicles.” Ope whispers back lowly, from where he’s peering carefully out the barn door.

“Wait for my signal.” Luis orders, slipping out with a couple of his guys.

“Hey, hey, come on.” Chibs grabs Juice by the neck to get his attention.

She pulled her attention from Juice to the front of the barn, the sound of a car leaving...a whistle...and a couple of soft pops with some glass breaking.

After a tense minute, the guys moved cautiously out of the barn, weapons at the ready as they surround a truck. By the graphics along the side, it was the jacked Mayan truck from the other day.

Bobby is first to sweep the cab of the truck.

“Empty.” Bobby said.

“No one on the perimeter.” Luis reports.

“What the hell is this?” Opie asks confused, indicating the lone truck left for them.

“Trojan tortilla?” Bobby joked in the growing confusion of why the Lobos didn’t try to take the guns from the barn.

“That’s gotta be rigged. This thing will blow us all to hell.” Chibs surmised. Taking hold of her hand and pushing her back away from the truck.

Rolling her eyes at him, knowing that there wasn’t any bomb in that truck. But his dark eyes flashed at her to let him protect her regardless.

At the mention of the possibility of a bomb on the truck had everyone all tense again.

“Where’s Pedro?” Jax questioned and suggested at the same time.

Couple of the Mayans ran to get Pedro from the barn, still tied up and gagged.

“Open it.” Marcus ordered Pedro.

One of the guards cut the bindings off around Pedro’s wrists so he could open the back of the truck up.

“Step back.” Jax cautioned.

Bobby chiming Jax. “Back...back.” The men as a whole shifted back a mere few feet.

Pedro grabs the door to the back of the truck and gives it a solid heave. Luckily, no bomb went off. The men all stepped closer to peer inside the cavern of the truck.

“Jesus Christ.” Bobby swore at the sight and putrid smell of the headless bodies. Catching sight of body bearing the denim kutte with Armando’s patches.

She sighed thoughtfully at the butchered bodies. It was actually kind of nice of the Lobos, returning their dead for proper funeral rites. And Marcus got his truck back.

Course, she didn’t think anyone else would think this was nice of the Lobos. And she doubted the
Lobos thought that this would be taken as an olive branch. No, this was to prove that they weren’t going anywhere and knew Pedro was feeding them bullshit for tonight. Meaning the Lobos had more contacts that were forking over intel besides Pedro.

“How the hell did they know we were waiting for them?” Opie asked.

“Pedro never left our sight.” Marcus said just as confused.

“Yeah. Looks like the competition’s one step ahead.” Jax seethed in Luis’s direction.

Luis pulls his knife, stabbing and slicing Pedro’s neck open. The men holding Pedro, drop him to bleed out on the ground. Luis looking like he wanted to confront her, her words earlier ringing in his ears no doubt. But he just glared hard at her and left in his Hummer.

Happy and the Mayans were organizing the bodies when Clay showed up in the tow truck. Chibs lit a joint, passing it to her to share. The smell of the weed helped cover up the stench of the corpses as they were pulled out of the truck and laid out onto plastic sheeting.

“...tell Samtaz we’ll send the rest of Armando.” Clay said as she and Chibs got close enough to hear.

“Luis is sending more guys. Be here tomorrow. I’ll keep Tacoma at the warehouse.” Jax said dejectedly.

“Shit.” Clay swore. Everyone bummed out that their little cartel deal isn’t going as well as they’d hoped.

She eyed Clay, debating if there was a chance that she could warn him to stay away from Piney. But, there were too many people around. And damn it, she couldn’t tip their hand just yet.

“This is for Galindo to fix.” Bobby said.

“We’ll get Romeo up here. Clean it up.” Marcus tells Bobby before taking off himself.

Their joint finished, Chibs turned towards the van, grabbing up a heavy equipment bag. Juice already had been packing away their gear into the van.

Heaving the last of the heavy equipment bags, Juice looked to Chibs. “I’m gonna head back to the warehouse with Tacoma. I won’t be able to sleep.” Juice said.

“Yeah, okay.” Chibs agrees. They, both, watched Juice jog off.

“Come on. We gotta tail Juice. He’s not right.” Chibs held out his hand for hers. His eyes tracking Juice as he rode on his bike down the drive.

She didn’t question him. Silently holding onto Chibs as he carefully followed Juice.

“What the hell is he doing?” Chibs questioned as they pulled over to the side of of the road. Right where they’d found Juice before dragging him back to the clubhouse for the leadership vote. “Stay here.” He said. “I’ll be right back.”

“Okay.” She nodded, watching him disappear into the woods, the moonless night swallowing Chibs up whole with him dressed all in black.

She breathed in the cool night air as she waited. After a couple of minutes she heard yelling.
Wondering if she should try and find them. But it was so dark, she’d probably lose her footing, fall down and knock herself out silly.

Pacing a little as she waited, she breathed a sigh of relief as she saw Chibs coming back. Juice in tow. Juice unable to look up and stumbling along under Chibs hard hold moving him along.

Chibs shot her a warning look as he took Juice by the shoulders. “You’re coming to our place for the night. We’re riding there right now. Get on your bike and don’t even think about trying to run off. Or, I’ll fucking beat the shite out of you if ye’ do. We clear?”

Juice didn’t seem to hear Chibs. “Wake up! You’re staying with us tonight.” Chibs shook Juice to wake him up.

“Yeah. Okay.” Juice managed to look at Chibs fully.

Chibs nodded as he pushed Juice towards his bike. Juice’s movements slow and sluggish as he got onto his bike. And with another look to Juice, they rode home. Chibs glancing towards Juice at his side as they made the trek across town.

She got off first and went to unlock the front door as Chibs and Juice trailed behind her.

“Chibs. I can go home. You don’t…” Juice tried to squirm out of staying the night.

“Shut up. I’m not letting you out of my sight. Fucking idiot. Get in here.” Chibs manhandled Juice into the house and down the hallway to the guest bedroom.

She shut and re-locked the front door, hanging up her kutte and jacket. Toeing her boots off, she heard Chibs stomp to their bedroom and go back to the guest room. His voice low but stern, telling Juice to clean up and get some sleep. Threatening him to not try and leave without him.

She couldn’t hear Juice’s reply if he had one. Staring down at herself, she tried to get out of her shoulder holster and vest but it was no use, she couldn’t get the stupid thing off. Stomping off to the kitchen she poured herself a Scotch whiskey, and given how pissed Chibs looked, she poured him one, too.

She heard the shower go on and Chibs joined her in the kitchen. Sliding his waiting drink towards him, he grunted a thanks and took a hearty sip.

“He okay?” She asked after a minute.

“The bruises around his neck...he didn’t clothesline himself. Fucking tried to hang himself. He was trying to hide the evidence.”

She pulled him into a hug. “Sorry.”

“I fucking told Clay to take him off the cartel shite.”

“I know.”

“I’m going to have to talk to Jax. I don’t know what to do with this. The club’s never had a member lose it like this. I don’t know, maybe Jackie can talk some sense into Clay.” He took a final sip of his drink, his eyes finding hers finally only to turned confused. “Why’re you still wearing that vest?”

“I can’t get it off.” She admitted, slightly embarrassed and ticked off at the same time.
Understanding flooded his eyes, with it, his lips curled into a grin as he fought to keep from laughing at her.

“You strapped it on me. Now I can’t reach to unstrap it without dislocating a shoulder, an elbow, and quite possibly my pinky finger.” She teased him.

Her humor over a simple thing had him chuckling in relief and the stupidity of the situation she found herself in that he momentarily forgot about Juice.

“Great, laugh it up.” She rolled her eyes at him. "You promised you could get me out of this in two seconds flat. I’m timing you, buster.” She poked him, looking at the clock on the microwave.

His laugh deepened as he started pulling on the rig and vest, smirking at her as he easily lifted it off her, dropping it to the floor with a heavy thud.

“Oh, thank God. That things heavy.” She breathed easier, feeling like she would float away if Chibs wasn’t holding onto her.

“It’s supposed to be. Keep you safe.” His eyes heavy-lidded as he looked down at her. The events of the long day catching up with him.

She gave him a quick kiss. “Come on. Time for bed.” Pushing him towards their bedroom.

“Thought you were wanting some sex?” He grumbled like a child that he couldn’t stay up late and play with his toys.

Smirking at him as they walked down the quiet hallway. “Later. You’re not the only one that’s tired. Besides, I’d hate for you to fall asleep on me.”

He snorted at such a ludicrous idea, but the increasing heaviness of his body told her that he was in dire need of sleep. “With you? Fucking never happen.” He argued.

She helped strip him of his clothing and he fumbled his way with hers. “I got it.” She pushed him into bed as she put on one of his t-shirts.

He groaned as he shifted back. “God, remind me to never sleep in the bunks again.”

Curling up into his side, their arms and legs tangling around each other. “No problem. Go to sleep.” She hushed.

“I’ll make it up to ye’. I promise.” He breathed, half-asleep.

“Sleep.” She said one more time.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 100

Chapter Summary

Kiss, part 1
Chibs pov

Chapter Notes

Sorry...sorry for the delay in updating. Work has reared it's ugly head. And, plus, I wanted to switch POV for this chapter and that required some re-writing. We haven't been in Chibs head for awhile. So forgive me of any rough edits/grammar issues. And I'm half-asleep going through this before hitting Post.

And holy cow...we're at Ch 100?!?!!! How the heck did that happen? At this rate, I'll have a few thousand chapters by the end...but I haven't actually gotten to an end with this story. ::headdesk::

I'm also going to be shuffling some of the events from the shows to get them to fit better with what I've got outlined coming up. At least, I think I will. Maybe, possibly. We'll see how it shapes up. I don't want to give up too much of what I've already written.

Thanks for sticking with me and have a good weekend!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He breathed deep, Nancy's vanilla scent flooded his senses as the light of the rising son crept through the window of their bedroom.

She was still sleeping hard, her steady breaths wafted across his chest. He hoped that today would be quieter and less dramatic than the last couple. He glanced towards the door that led to the rest of the house. Recalling finding Juice in that wood, trying to untangle the chain from around a large tree branch.

There was no question he wasn't letting Juice go wandering off on his own after last night. He never thought Juice would crack like this. He understood the pressure the club puts on members. All the guys hit bottom at some point with the life of the club. He’d gone through it himself when he had to do his first kill for the Army. There was a choice to be made, he made his long ago. Juice has to make his. But maybe he and Jax can help him by easing the way for him. Give him some time away from the business of the club a bit so he could get his head on right. Something Clay failed to do.

Glancing at the clock, he rubbed his face and gently slid Nancy off to the side so he could get up. He grinned as she frowned at being moved, her hands clutching at his pillow, dragging it into her face. His bladder making him move, eyeing the shower, God, felt like ages since he’d had a proper shower. Another reason to never bunk at the dorms. The showers there sucked, barely any water
pressure. His head twisted up, making him wince as he looked at himself in the mirror.

A thump and movement from beyond the bedroom had him moving. Rushing, he put on a pair of sweats and forced himself to leave the sanctuary of the bedroom and Nancy’s arms. He caught Juice coming out of the guest bedroom. Fully dressed and looking to escape, by the white of Juice’s surprised eyes.

“Where the fuck do you think you’re going?” He growled roughly.

“Thought I’d get out of your hair.” Juice said, unable to look him in the eye.

“Oh? How you planning on doing that? I took your keys, ye’ idiot.”

“Chibs…” Juice breathed, shifting on his feet in the doorway to the hall.

“Don’t. You’re with me until we talk with Jax.”

“But, I’m fine? Really.” Juice wheedled.

“The fuck ye’ are. Put on some coffee. We’ll eat and then head out.” He ordered, turning back to the bedroom as the pain in his head spiked.

“Are you going to make her read me?” Juice hesitatingly asked.

Turning to look at Juice again. His eyes narrowed at Juice's question, studying him and the way he couldn’t hold his look. “Does she need to?” He countered.

Juice’s Adam's apple bobbed and the panicked look filled his eyes again. Juice shook his head. “No. It doesn’t matter anyway.”

Fuck, he was getting constipated just looking at Juice. Wondering maybe if Nancy should read him. Get to the truth, once and for all. No. He resolved to himself again. Whatever going on with Juice, he wanted to get Jax's opinion first before letting Nancy lay her hands on him.

“Put on the damn coffee while I get Nancy up.” He reiterated his order, turning back to his bedroom.

He relaxed a little at the sound of cabinets opening and closing as Juice searched out the coffee. It’ll keep him busy for a bit.

The bed was empty. The sound of the shower running told him where she was. Slightly disappointed, he wanted to wake her up a bit more...salaciously. A missed opportunity. Filing away the mental picture of what he’d had planned for another morning he stripped off his sweats and walked into the bathroom.

The sight of her soaping up under the spray, and new thoughts entered his brain, both of them. His feet moving of their own volition until he was right behind her. His hands sliding around her waist to cup her breasts, giving them a bit of a massage that he knew she loved.

He grinned as he felt her breath deep, leaning into him as their pain dropped off with their touch.

“You weren’t in bed when I woke up.” She complained grumpily, twisting around so she faced him.

“Hmmm. Sorry. Put Juice on making coffee.” He took the soap from her hands and took over the soaping duties.
He caught a flicker of annoyance at the mention of Juice. “Let’s not talk about him right now.” She suggested.

“Juice who?”

She grinned and he swooped down, catching her lips with his. Her jaw easily unlocking and his tongue took advantage, sliding along hers and tickled along her teeth. Heat traveled down his spine and gut to settle around his cock.

Her head dropped back, gasping for air and he dropped his lips to her throat. Licking away the water along her sensitive skin. Her hands clutching at him as she fought to keep upright. Helping her, he pressed her into the tiled wall at her back. Her arms winding around his broad shoulders. Dropping the bar of soap to the floor, his hands dropped to her hips, raising her up.

She writhed and moved along him. Her nipples rock hard against his chest. The sound of her mewls shot through him. His cock hard and ready for her. Ready to find his place inside her. The thought made him groan and bit down at the curve of her neck, capturing her racing pulse. Sucking at it, drawing the flesh into his teeth. Nancy writhing against him only urged him on.

Fuck. His hand searching out for the condoms usually tucked next to the shampoo was empty. Ripping his lips from her tantalizing flesh, he saw that their stash hadn’t been replenished in here. Fuck!

Nancy was gasping against the wall, her eyes blind. He saw that she had the beginning of a bruise at her neck where he’d just been. Marking her, claiming her. Fuck! Condom. Now.

He didn’t even think twice as he scooped her up in his arms. Her eyes blinking at him in surprise as she automatically clung to him, her arms around his shoulders, legs around his hips as he let the spray wash over them for a moment to wash off the suds only to step out and stride right to the bedroom. The shower still running behind him. Fuck it. He had more urgent matters to attend to here.

“What?” She asked confused as she blinked the water from her eyes. Yelping when he abruptly dropped her to the bed.

“Condom. Gotta be here.” He growled, yanking the nightstand drawer out of the slot. Letting it fall to the floor as he searched the items for what he was looking for.

“Ah ha! Success.” He grinned at her, holding the condom up for her to see his accomplishment. She snickered as he ripped open the condom and put it on. Moving over her, their laughter calming to soft groans and need. Her hands trailed over his chest as her ankles locked around his hips once again. Her feet pressing him closer to her.

Closer was good. He pressed a kiss to the bruise at her neck and then to her lips. Their tongues dancing and drawing out their rising passion. His free hand urged her knee higher at his side as he angled his hips.

“Oh God.” She groaned as he ran his cock over her folds and clit. Her back arching, stretching to meet him.

Finding his way, he slid inside. Her warm wet walls clamping down around him as he pressed and nudged his way into her embrace. Her feet urging him on, fingers carding through his hair. All he could think was yes. Yes and yes. Surging and rocking inside her, mentally documenting every shiver and gasp she uttered as he found all her sweet spots. Lighting her up so he could partake in
He’d never been with anyone that didn’t seek out their pleasure the way she did. Completely giving
over to the experience and turning it around on him and dragging him along with her for the
exquisite ride. It was a wholly new experience every fucking time, he thought.

“Fuck me! Oh christ...love ye’,” he cried out as Nancy flew over the edge, surging once more
inside her and let himself go. Feeling like he was being turned inside out and he fucking loved it.
The two of them sharing the power of their desire and love. It was a beast that demanded attention
or there’d be hell to pay if denied.

He collapsed on top of her, breathing ragged. “Love you, too.” She gasped in his ear. “And the
shower’s still on.” She started giggling.

Sliding off of her so he wasn’t crushing her, he debated about getting up to turn the shower off or
not, but he wasn’t sure he could walk quite yet. “Let it run, we’ll need it again soon as we can
fucking walk.” He gave up as he stripped off the condom, dropping it to the drawer still on the
floor. He’ll clean it up later.

Their hands finding each others, fingers twining together. The sun played across her skin. Her eyes
sparkled gold as they held each other’s gaze. He was constantly amazed at how her eyes shifted
color with the light and whatever she was feeling.

“So, you think it would be possible for us to have bad sex?” She asked. “I mean if we really
tried and put some effort into it?”

“No!” he barked a surprised laugh at her humorous question, pressing a kiss to the
back of her hand. “Why would ye’ ever want that?”

She shrugged and hummed contentedly.

“You ever think about having a baby?” He asked. Her gold eyes shifted to his at his serious
question. Shrugging, “I saw how you looked at Thomas when you carried him from the house. It
just made me wonder.”

She twisted her lips in thought. “I don’t know. I mean, I really didn’t think I was going to live long
enough to have kids. And with my powers, I don’t know if it would work. Would I be able to
touch our child without drowning in them?” She looked back to him, her brows creased to a serious
line. “Do you want more children?”

He sighed as he thought about it. “After being excommunicated, I was angry and depressed for a
long time. Missing Fi and Kerrianne and not being able to do anything about it. A few years went
by, the loneliness crept up on me. The croweaters were after me quite a bit back then. I didn’t like
the idea of getting one of them pregnant when all I thought of them were just a one-nighter. I made
sure I’ve always got a condom on me.” He emphasized.

“But I can’t think of anyone else who I’d want to have a child with.” She smiled as he pressed
another kiss to the back of her hand.
“Although, I suppose you’re right about the touching issue. It would be really complicated with the way things are with the club right now. I’d worry for your safety. And the way I worry over you now, you with child would ramp up my anxiety to the nth degree.” He admitted, wincing mentally at the stress of that if it really occurred.

Leaning up she kissed him, running her free hand along his cheek and jaw, he couldn’t help his sigh and curl into her hand with his head. “I’m happy for it to be just the two of us. And my powers do seem to be getting stronger, I’d worry how that would affect a baby. Plus, I would be constantly freaking out. I really have no clue what to do with a baby. They’re all like these alien creatures to me.”

He grinned amusedly at her sentiments. It was pretty much dead on what Fi said when she found out she was pregnant with Kerrianne.

“Although, Thomas is just so freaking cute.” Nancy continued. “So quiet and easy going. I was curious to see if I could touch him. I just wanted to simply brush his hair off his face, when Gemma grabbed the carrier from me. Practically ripped my arm off.”

He recalled the incident. “It was no wonder, Abel was screaming his head off with Gemma bulldozing her way with all of them. Think I’m still deaf in my one ear.”

Smiling, she twisted and settled to sit astride him. His hands settling at her hips. Her hands on his chest. Hmmm, this had potential. But she leaned down and whispered in the ear that Abel had been screaming in. “I love you.”

Leaning back upright. “Did you hear that?” She asked.

“I’d hear that from across the ocean, mo ghaol.” He said with a beatific grin.

“Hmpf, you better.” She grumped with an amused twitch of her brows.

He huffed and flipped her onto her back again, making her gasp and laugh as he purred into her skin. His lips floating a mere hair's breath over her, teasing her until she strained into him, and he relented and pressed a deep kiss on her lips. Teasing and delving in her. And she into him. Giving as he gave.

He froze as he heard movement coming from the living room. “Ah, shite. Juice is here.” He reminded himself.

She dropped her head back with a groan. “I could read him for you if you want.” She offered.

“No. Let me try talking to Jax. See if we can get his head on right.”

“You know, if he is suicidal...ultimately it's Juice’s decision to live or not. He has to choose.” She warned to him, her eyes worried.

“I know. But I have to try.”

“Okay.” She ran a hand through his hair, tucking some loose locks behind his ear.

He couldn’t resist another kiss. Leaning his forehead to hers, soaking up their solitude for a moment longer before having to go and deal with the day. He knew that they had to get moving but he just simply didn’t want to. But, the sound of Juice wandering around in their house forced him to get up and move.
Pulling on fresh clothes, he lit a joint and took a drag for himself only to hand it to Nancy. “I’ll get breakfast started. Don’t be long, alright?”

“Yeah. Okay. I’ll finish my shower that had been so rudely interrupted.” She waggled her brows at him with a grin.

Chuckling he shook his head and moved out of the bedroom. Giving Juice a hard look as he saw the boy looking at one of his records. “Make sure you put that back where you found it.”

Juice looked up at his request, confused. “How? There’s no organized way these are stored in. How do you find what record you want?”

“Fuck it.” He gave up the idea of trying to explain his very organized system for filing his collection to instead work on putting together some breakfast.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 101

Chapter Summary

Kiss, part 2

Chapter Notes

Bit of a transition, sorry if it's a little rough. I'm a bit distracted with work. And I'm trying to find a style in my writing. I'm pretty sure it's in there, I'm just not seeing it at the moment.

If I don't update before the 25th...happy holidays! Odds are, I'll update before then, but just in case.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Flopping back into the bed as Chibs walked out, she took another pull on the joint while trying not to contemplate Juice and his problems. She was still angry at him but recognized that he was learning. Chibs was learning, too, by going through all this drama. It was hard to not be angry at Juice. At the whole situation. It was something that is easily rectified compared to what they had to deal with regarding the Clay, Gemma, Galindo, Irish, and the letters; just to name a few.

She offered to read Juice to cut through all the bullshit for everyone, but Chibs wanted to try things his way. And perhaps, this was a teaching experience for her, as well. Learning to let things go and play out. Learning how to step back and not be so emotionally involved with every little problem. Yet, knowing part of her just would not let things go.

The shower was still running and she had enough of thinking for awhile. Heaving herself up she stubbed out the joint, she finished her shower and got dressed face another day.

Ignoring Juice at the table with a cup of coffee, doing her best to not get drawn into whatever morose thoughts he was having. She went right to Chibs, who was plating fried eggs and crispy bacon onto plates that already sported some fruit mix.

He glanced at her, his hands full, as she tucked herself into his side and met his kiss. Setting the pan and spatula down, he twisted more fully into her as their kiss deepened. Their headaches easing off the longer they kissed and leaned into each other.

"Hi." He said with a happy grin.

"Hmmm...hi back." She hummed.

"Go sit down. Time to eat." He prompted.

She turned away with a sigh. Chibs picked up plates and set one down in front of her another in front of Juice, only to sit down himself next to her with his own plate. "Eat up." He said, waving
his fork at the two of them.

“I’m not really hungry.” Juice said sadly, pushing his food around on the plate with his fork.

Chibs clanged his fork down on his plate, shifting glaring eyes at him. “I’ve got one that literally can’t eat because she’d been nearly starved to death. I’ll not listen to you whining because you’re feeling sorry for yourself. Fucking eat. I’ll not have you fucking pass out for lack of food.”

She looked from Chibs to Juice, munching on a bit of bacon. Juice glancing at her then back at his plate, starting to feed himself.

She glanced back to Chibs with a shrug.

Chibs took up the local paper now that Juice was eating. “Looks like the Community Gardens will survive Hale’s bulldozers.” He reported from the front page.

Turning over the paper to her to take a look at. “Yeah.” She huffed. "I’m sure it’ll make Hale run to Georgie’s investors.” Chibs handing her the business section.

“That’s what we want, right?” Juice couldn’t help contributing to the conversation.

“Aye.” Chibs said shortly. His stern tone had Juice return back to eating his breakfast.

She finished her egg and most of her fruit, sipping her coffee as she studied the business section. Scoffing at some of the writer’s opinions in regards to the growing volatility in the markets. It was long overdue in her opinion. Yet, reading about the large drops in the stock prices had everyone panicking. Smirking in glee that all this panic was prime opportunity for trading.

“What’s got you grinnin’ like that?” Chibs questioned amusedly, catching her pleased look.

Glancing at the clock. “I’ll explain later. We gotta get going.” She got up and cleared up the plates.

“Fuck, we’re late. Jax is meeting us.” Chibs checked his watch and went off to finish getting ready while she rinsed the dishes and pans.

She was packing up her laptop into her bag thinking of the trades she needed to put on when she saw her vest on the floor where Chibs had dumped it. God damn it, she swore to herself, staring down at the stupid thing.

Juice waited uncertainly amidst their activity.

“What?” Chibs asked as he came back with her jacket and kutte, ready to help her into it.

“God damn it.” She swore, out loud this time. Mentally debating with herself over to bring it or not. Odds were that they’d be fine. But if what she saw came true and they were dragged into another gun fight with the Lobos...stupid cartel...stupid Clay.

She grabbed up the heavy vest and tried to find her balance with it as she started towards the front door.

Juice, closest to the door, saw what she was doing and grabbed the vest from her.

“Thanks. Pack it into the bike for me, will you? You should bring yours, too.” She suggested to Chibs.

“When? We’re at the garage most of the day.” Chibs said as he helped her into her jacket and kutte.
“Just trust me. You’ll be pissed if we didn’t bring them. Even though nobody we know will get hurt...just trying to head off an argument later on. You’re going to want them.” She explained brokenly.

He hesitated a moment, eyeing her, but went to get his vest as she settled her bag over her shoulders. Vest in hand, they walked out of the house. She locked up as Chibs packed up the bike, handing her her helmet.

“Do I need one today?” Juice asked.


“Jesus Christ.” Chibs sighed. “Let’s go.” Handing Juice his keys.

Juice was wise enough to not try and deviate from the route to the garage and clubhouse. The garage didn’t officially open for business for another twenty minutes, but Lowell and Dog were already there getting set up and chatting with each other.

She settled in at her desk, powering up her laptop. Checking in with the financial markets to see how the Asian and European systems are handling the increased volatility. Looking for indications of weakness or strength and calculating how her positions will hold up under various conditions when the US markets opened.

It kept her occupied while Chibs set up his bay for the day, waiting for Jax to show up. He hitched his hip on a corner of her desk, taking her free hand in his after lighting up a cigarette.

“Want to tell me why you think we might need the vests today?”

“We’ve been lucky the last few days regarding the Lobos. Statistically, our luck won’t hold the longer this drags out.”

“Jesus.” He breathed a plume of smoke from his nostrils in frustration. “I was really hoping for a quiet day today.”

She snorted. “Bet you’re wishing we could just go home and crawl back into bed right now, aren’t you?” She teased.

“Well, you are a seer.” He teased back with a kiss.

Hearing the rumble of a bike, they looked towards the noise and saw Jax pull in. “Too late. Go on, I’ve got work to do here.” She waved him off.

He grunted, but got up and met Jax in the next bay. She focused on her trading while the men talked. Glancing back towards them at Jax’s surprised swearing when he put the pieces together. She turned back to her laptop, letting Jax and Chibs handle Juice their way.

A few minutes went by and Jax took off again. Chibs coming up behind her again, his hands massaging her shoulders.

“Everything situated?” She asked, leaning back, tilting to look up at him.

“Aye, we’ve got Juice hanging out here. Cleaning up after the cops, making sure no bugs were planted in the clubhouse. Until it’s all clear, church will be at Clay’s house. Going to keep an eye on Juicey. Figure out where his head is really at. Expecting a call from the Irish in a couple hours yet.”
She patted his hand. “And Jax? Where’d he run off to?”

“Meeting with Clay, Alvarez, and Galindo. Figure out what the hell is going on with the Lobos. For now, we work and get caught up here. Gemma’s not here yet, could you take care of the phones for a bit?”

“Yeah. I can do that.”

“Thank ye’.” He gave her an upside down kiss to both of their amusement.

They both managed to get some significant work done in the next couple of hours. She answered the phone, traded, put in orders for parts and dumped paperwork on Gemma’s desk in the office to file for later. About an hour in, Chucky showed up and took over the phones and started dealing with the paperwork.

Chibs managed to make a dent into the backlog of repairs with the help of Lowell and Dog before taking a call on his cell.

“Aye. Give me twenty. We’re on our way.” She heard Chibs say before snapping his cell shut.

“Come on. We gotta go.” He said to her, as he washed his hands of the grease and oil.

She shut down her laptop and took his hand. “Jax?”

“Aye. Church.” He said simply as they got onto the bike. Pulling out of the lot and heading through town and to Clay’s house. The driveway littered with the guys bikes as they pulled in. Gemma’s SUV parked further up and closer to the side of the house.

Chibs didn’t bother to knock, just opened the door and walked in, leading her in with him. The guys were sitting around the large dining table, Gemma pouring coffee for Jax as they guys finished eating. The silence over the table was stilted and awkward as they walked into the dining room. Happy, Opie and Tig nodded at their entrance.

“Did you talk to your dad today?” Gemma asked Opie, as she straightened up from her pouring duties.

“Nope.” Opie answered her.

Her eyes went wide at the sight of Clay. Rearing back into Chibs. His hands wrapping around her waist. She blinked hard and felt as her heart skipped a beat, her blood rushed through her ears and she was deaf for a moment as she took in what she was seeing. Fighting to keep from crying or losing her stomach.

Blood, viscous, red blood dripped off of Clay’s hands as they wrapped around his coffee mug. Flowing and dripping down onto the table and over the sides to pool on the floor. Gemma blithely stepping through it with her coffee pot. None of them saw it.

Oh God. She quickly looked to Opie and he was so fucking calm. He didn’t know. They didn’t know. And somehow that made it all that much worse.

Tearing her eyes from Opie and the blood, she looked at Clay.

His eyes met hers. And fuck, he knew. He knew that she knew. And, by the satisfied glint of his eye and smirk, he wanted her to know. A ghost of a smirk floated over his features as he stared at her over his coffee. He actually did it. God damn it.
“Get me out of here.” She whispered hoarsely, unable to look away from Clay and the blood. She could not be here. She couldn’t sit here and listen to whatever bullshit problems they thought they had.

“What?” Chibs asked her in concern.

“Get me the fuck out of here.” She repeated, her feet already twisting and walking out of the house. The weight of the evil Clay committed clung at her, perfuming the air inside the house with it’s stench. She couldn’t breathe. She had to get out. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

She was practically running when she jerked the front door open. Gasping for air as soon as she got outside.

“Nancy? What’s wrong?” Chibs questioned, wild-eyed as she hunched over, trying not to fall into a full-blown panic attack. But she was also fighting to not burst into tears in grief and rage. She couldn’t do all of it at one time. Something had to give.

Hot tears slipped out of her control, the scalding tears slipped down her cheeks. Chibs caught her in his arms, one hand at her chin, to make her look at him.

“What’s wrong? Tell me.” He ordered, worry edging over his face.

“He did it. He really did it.” She said hollowly. Not wanting to believe it. But the visions she’s had...she knew.

“Who? Did what?”

“Piney. He’s dead. Clay did it.” She felt Chibs still at her words. “There’s fresh blood dripping from Clay’s hands as he’s sitting in there like a...a goddamn king with his fucking coffee. Dripping and pooling on the table and down onto the floor.” Her lungs aching and burning as she told him what she saw.

“Are ye’ sure?” He asked, but by the resignation in his eyes, he knew she was telling him the truth.

“Yes. It’s like with the vision of the letters. He did it. And he knows I know, or at least, hopes that I know. He smirked at me. Jesus Christ. Opie...he...none of them know.” Her jaw clenched as she forced herself to tell him. “I begged Piney...I told him...he didn’t want to give up his plan. God! Opie’s sitting in there and has no idea that Clay's killed another member of his family.”

“Mary, mother of Christ.” He gasped harshly, drawing her deeper into his arms. The two of them leaning hard into the other for support as the storm of Piney’s death hit them.

Chibs cell rang, interrupting their grief. “Fuck.” Chibs swore, digging out his cell, looking at the ID. “It’s the Irish.” The phone rang again in his hand.

She nodded and wiped at her eyes, trying to get herself back together. “Take it.”

He looked to her as if thinking to ignore the call.

“Take it. There’s nothing we can do for Piney anymore. We have to think of the club, Jax...I told Piney I wouldn't let his death be for nothing.”

Chibs looked torn. He had to deliver the phone to Clay, yet he didn’t want to leave her alone.

“Go on. I’ll be fine.” She nodded reassuringly.

He frowned at her as he hesitated a moment longer. “Okay, I’ll be right back.” He kissed her quick and strode back into the house.

Walking back into the house, he just wanted to get in and get the fuck out of here as fast as possible. The phone held tight in his his fist, he heard Bobby and Jax bickering.

“Yeah. Because *all* our plans with these guys have worked out perfectly.” Bobby scoffed.

“Enough!” Jax yelled. “We voted it in. We play it out. You can’t get behind that, turn in your goddamn patch.”

He couldn’t look at Clay, holding the phone out to him he slid his eyes to Jax. “Irish. O’Shay and Roark.”

He fought to keep from wiping his hand against his jeans to rub off the psychic blood from Clay’s hand in taking the phone from him.

“Galen! Appreciate the call.” Clay said brightly into the phone. His skin crawled at the sound of Clay trying to charm the Butcher to do business with the Mexicans.

“What happened? Nancy okay?” Jax asked, catching their abrupt turn around a few minutes ago.

He took a breath. “Yeah. She’s fine.” He covered quickly. “What’s going on?” He distracted everyone away from Nancy and him running out to what the reason was for church. He risked a look towards Opie, but it was like she said, he was too calm to know that his old man was dead. Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Jax filled him in, Bobby huffing and squirming over the developments that Jax was telling him. “When’s the meeting set with the Niners?”

“Couple of hours.” Opie said.

“Aye, okay.” He nodded. “Oh! Fucking...shite.” He gasped with a rush of why Nancy insisted on bringing the vests earlier.

“What?” Jax questioned, his blue eyes sharp on him. The rest of them looking at him, curiosity in their eyes.

“Nancy.” He waved a hand towards the front of the house. "She insisted on bringing the vests before we left the house this morning.” He said, glancing back towards the kitchen where Clay was still talking and grinning into the phone.

“Why?” Tig asked, drawing his attention back to them around the table.

“Just said that we’ve been lucky so far dealing with the Lobos. That I’d get pissed if we didn’t bring them. Might be a good idea to pack yours’ up before we meet with Niners. Especially if they’re hooked up with Lobos and Galindo are coming to meet.” Chibs looked meaningfully to Jax.

“Jesus Christ.” Bobby swore.

“She say anything else?” Jax asked with a brace of his shoulders, his hand running over his hair.
“No. Figure safe than sorry.” He shrugged.

Clay came back, grinning as he handed the phone back to him. It took him a second to take it back, not sure if he wanted to even touch it.

“Irish agreed to a meeting with the Galindo.” Clay announced gleefully, retaking his seat.

His head hurting, he started for the door, giving Jax a final warning look. “I’m heading back to the garage.” Giving Opie a squeeze to his shoulder as he went.

“We’ve got a meet with Laroy at one.” Clay called after him.

“Yeah, sure.” He couldn’t find it in him to be all that excited about it. Fucking Clay.

Nancy met him halfway on the front walk, holding onto each other as their headaches backed off once more and they took comfort in their shared grief.

“Come on. Fuck the garage, let’s ride a bit before we have to meet everyone.” He suggested.

“Really?”

“Yeah, come on.”

He led her to his bike and they set off on a scenic ride. He was tempted to go up to the cabin, but he didn’t want his last memory of Piney be tainted by the violence of what Clay did to the old man. He’d rather hold onto the memory of his last meal with him, sharing memories of their antics in saving Tig from bounty hunters.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

Hold on. I'll get him = Fán. Gheobhaidh mé é
They rode through the hills and back roads for the better part of an hour, before they pulled off to a secluded park.

Climbing off and setting their helmets down, they linked hands and walked around a little, taking in the scenery.

“Did you tell Jax?”

“No.” He lit a joint, handing it to her. “Just as well. Things are going to start to speed up.” She took a hit on the joint, passing it back to him.

“Christ. I can’t believe it. We just saw him.” He waved an arm vaguely as his voice cracked.

“I know.” She swiped at her tears. Chibs pulled her into a hug, his hands grabbing at her just as tightly as she held onto him. “I begged Piney. Told him...he didn’t…” Fisting her hands in Chibs kutte.

“No. I suppose he wouldn’t.” He hushed thickly in her ear.

She shook herself and pulled back a bit. “Sorry. I didn’t mean to lose it like this. You’ve known Piney longer than I have.” She apologized shakily.

He grinned down at her, brushing her hair back behind her ear. “Nooo, don’t be sorry. He told me how much he liked you. Told me not to screw shite up with you.” He took another hit of the joint, slanting an amused glint at her.

“He did not.” Her eyes widened as he told her Piney had taken him to task, as if he were her father looking out for her. Although, compared to her actual father, Piney would’ve been a huge step better, she thought.

Passing her the joint, “He did. He loved ye’, m ‘anam.”

She took the last pull on the joint, stamping the butt out under her heel. Nodding a little, taking in what Chibs told her. “He loved you, too. He complained about you hovering, but he loved you.”
Chibs breath hitched and dropped his head to her shoulder, her arms wrapping tighter around him as his grief worked through him.

“I love ye’, m ‘anam.” He said gruffly.

“Love you, too.” She wiped at his cheeks, brushing his tears away.
He sniffed harshly and gathered himself up. “We have to make sure Clay goes down for this.”

“He will. I promised Piney. And I keep my promises.” She warned Chibs with how strongly she felt about this. His dark eyes searched hers, giving her a short nod.

“Good. So do I.” He checked his watch. “Fuck. We gotta go.”
She sighed as Chibs took her hand and led her back to the bike.

They reconnected with the guys as they all made their way up to the outskirts of Oakland.

“Shite…” Chibs swore, looking around. He kept a tight hold on her hand as he scoped out the place. “I don’t like this.”

“You and me both.” Bobby muttered as he walked past them.

They didn’t have long to wait for the Niners to stroll in. A round of handshakes and manly hugs went around. She let Chibs tuck her in slightly behind him, gripping her hand tight.

“Been a minute, gentlemen.” Laroy smiled easily.

“Yes, it has.” Jax grinned back.

“Seems like our state facility treated you all well.” Laroy surmised.
Clay chuckled at Laroy’s reference to their sojourn in Stockton. Thankfully, Clay’s hands weren’t dripping in blood anymore. Yet her skin wanted to crawl off at the mere sight and sound of Clay.

“So why are we meeting out here in the middle of a dead zone? Got some new merchandise you all need to shoot off?” Laroy asked, distracting her away from Clay.

“We just like the peace and quiet.” Clay smirked.

“Where are the guns at?” One of Laroy’s men asked, clearly not amused by the polite chit-chat.

“Get ‘em.” Clay nodded. Tig and Happy, along with a couple of Laroy’s guys, moved to follow Clay’s order.

“How’s business?” Jax asked.

“Can’t complain.” Laroy answered.

“You rolling a little deep for a pickup.” Clay observed.

“So are you.” Snapped back. Huh, someone else that didn’t like Clay.

“Hear you are moving out of H. Got a new product?” Jax eased in.

“Carousel of progress.” Laroy informed. She liked his linguistic skills.
“Cocaine carousel?” Clay questioned.

“Not your business. You sell the guns. I sell the drugs.” She liked Laroy, he clearly had his priorities in order. Although she wondered how much of that was Pope talking or Laroy himself.

“Look man it’s all our business. We made a deal with Galindo. You buying from Lobo puts us at odds. We can’t have that.” Jax explained.

“I don’t give a shit who you’re dealing with. You don’t tell me how to make my goddamn money.” Laroy snapped back.

“I ain’t going to tell you anything. But I got a feeling these guys might be weighing in.” Jax warned as Luis and Marcus came in with their men, all brandishing weapons at the ready.

Laroy looking between the newcomers and back to Clay. “What is this? You set me up?”

“This is the puto with Lobos?” Luis swept Laroy up and down dismissively.

Laroy spit in Luis’s face.

“Shite.” Chibs snarled as Jax leaping in between Laroy and Luis. The guys moving to help Jax, except for Clay. He stood on the outskirts of the fight, out of the danger zone. His sunglass-covered eyes inscrutable, waiting to see where the cookie crumbled. Ready to side on the winning side.

She wondered if Clay even cared that Jax could’ve easily been killed, jumping between the Niners and the Galindo like that. Which led her to wonder if Clay ever told Gemma the risks that Jax takes. Or rather, the risks that Clay lets Jax take when it should be Clay’s. She already knows that Clay and Gemma are lying to each other. Gemma stupidly believing Clay when she makes him promise her shit. God what a fuckup.

Her hand tightened around Chibs hand as she watched Jax whisper harshly into Laroy’s ear. She couldn’t hear what he was saying, but from reading him, she knew. She hated watching this. Jax got through to Laroy, or Laroy realized that he and his crew were outnumbered and relaxed in Jax’s tight grip.

The two of them nodded and Jax stepped back as Laroy straightened up his shirt. Everyone else shook off their instinct to escalate the fight.

Luis stepped forward, crossing his arms still brandishing his gun, glaring at Laroy to not toy with him.

“Lobos approached us last month. Before you guys even got out. We didn’t know about Galindo.” Laroy told them.

“What’d they offer?” Clay asked. She rolled her eyes as Clay stepped into the conversation, look who decided to join the party, she thought nastily.

“Manpower protection. Piece of anyone else that wanted to buy. They want to grow.” Laroy detailed.

“Call them. Tell them you have a big buyer with an urgent need.” Luis ordered. Laroy hesitated. “I’m going to line up your men, gonna gun them down, drop their bodies on their mother’s doorstep.” Luis threatened.
“Let us talk to him.” Jax said to Luis, pushing his way between Laroy and Luis. “Come on.” Jax dragged Laroy off towards her and Chibs and more importantly away from Luis. Luis frowned that Laroy just wasn’t doing what he ordered. But he wasn’t killing anyone yet, so all was good so far.

She shot Chibs a look, who shared the same thought as she did. It was clear that it was Jax who was taking control of this shitstorm. Even their guys were looking from Clay to Jax. And she suspected it was why Clay followed after Jax and Laroy.

Laroy was shaking his head not really aware of where Jax was leading him or who towards.

“Who’s this?” He asked when he looked up, waving a hand at her.

“This is Nancy, our Seer. Member of the club.” Jax introduced quickly.

She gave Laroy a small wave hello with a shrug. Rolling her eyes at Jax for that lame introduction.

Laroy whipped his head from her to Jax. “You’re shitting me. What the fuck, man?”

“Laroy, we don’t have time right now. You have to quit the Lobos.” Jax hissed, just as Clay leaned into their little group.

“I turn on Lobo. They’ll crucify us.” Laroy stressed.

“You see what we got behind us here. You don’t get on board. There won’t be anything left to crucify.” Clay didn’t help with his two cents thrown in.

“You don’t do this, here...now...You and your crew won’t walk out of here alive.” Chibs added.

“We can not get between a cartel beef. Gotta roll with Galindo. We’ll talk to Alvarez, figure out a way to cut in the Niners.” Jax assuaged, ignoring Clay’s sharp glare at the mention of money.

Laroy huffed and looked back at his guys again, taking in the odds once more. “Alright.” He gave in.

Jax patted Laroy on the shoulder and the two of them set off towards Luis once more. Laroy pulling out his cell phone.

Luis, Marcus, and Jax started coordinating positions and who is in charge of what for this ambush.

“Fuck, I hate this. There’s no where good here for coverage.” Chibs muttered, looking around.

“Let’s get the vests on. It’ll be fine. We’ll be fine.” She patted his hand.

At the mention of the vests had him steering her to their bike and he was determined to strap the vest back on her. And she knew that she had to let him do this. Let him protect her as best he knew how.

“It’ll be okay.” She reassured him as he fussed with her vest. “You need to put yours on, too.”

“Aye, just a sec. Just need to straighten this bit here.” He tugged at the vest behind her before turning back to the bike and grabbing his vest.

The other guys took their cue from seeing them getting their vests on, grabbing theirs as well.

Clay swore as he took in the guys putting on their vests. Glaring at them. “Chibs.” Everyone shifted their looks to Clay, interrupting their weapons checks. “Take her out of here.”
“No.” Chibs said defiantly, returning to his weapons checks.

“No!” Tig yelled.

“Not happening,” Bobby said. “She’s a member, Clay.”

“She’s staying.” Came from Jax.

The guys countered Clay’s order. Clay seethed as he glared at the guys for defying him. Even Chibs glanced to her in surprise by their full-throated support of her being here. She shrugged confusedly.

“She’s our good luck charm.” Happy explained to Clay.

“What the fuck are you going on about?” Clay blinked in shock at the sudden rebellion within his ranks.

“She’s a member and she stays.” Bobby said. “And you don’t want to fuck up our luck now do you?” With a cocky brow lift.

Clay sent her another glare before turning away to check his weapons. Shifting on her feet her hands on her hips as she glared at Bobby as he tried to get back into her good graces with his support. Like that was going to be enough of an apology to get her to forget his stupidity with Otto. Bobby hesitated at her look and edged back away from her going back to his own weapons checks.

“Good luck charm? Didn’t think you guys were so superstitious.” She questioned Jax as he joined her and Chibs.

Chibs and Jax snorted in unison, amused by her reaction.

“You sure we’ll be okay?” Jax asked, his eyes turning serious.

“Yes. This is just a precaution. You’re doing good.”

Jax snorted as he checked his gun. “It doesn’t feel like it.”

“Just keep doing what you’re doing. The others are picking up on what you’re doing. The questions are rising in their minds over Clay’s leadership. Alliances are shifting to your favor.”

“Yeah.” Jax huffed and walked away.

“Come on m’ anam, we gotta get set into place.” Chibs took her hand, leading her off to a part of the building that had some level of coverage, tucking her behind a concrete pillar, some large machinery close to one of the outer walls of the building. “Happy. Over here.” Chibs called out.

“Uhh...nope.” Shaking her head and dragged Chibs with her so they weren’t so close to the wall.

“What? What are ye’ doing?” Chibs complained.

“Stay away from the walls.”

“What? Why? That was a good position, better protection than over here.” Chibs complained.

“Nooo. It isn’t.” She grabbed him, catching his eyes with hers. “This is better.”

Happy came over to their new position, crouching down next to them. “Problem?” He questioned.
“Fuck me.” He swore softly, pressing her back into the concrete pillar that was wide enough that hid them from view. “Stay down.” He told Happy. “And you, don’t move from behind this pillar.”

“It’ll be fine.” She said again.

The rest of the guys scattered to their assigned positions. Mayans taking up another section of the building. Luis and his crew doing the same. Meanwhile, Laroy and his guys were anxiously standing out in the middle of the space as bait.

By some unspoken signal, everyone fell into a hush as the sound of new people coming into the building. Lobos.

“So, where’s this new buyer?” One of the Lobos questioned Laroy.

“Waiting for my call. You have the blow?” Laroy replied easily.

The sound of a heavy bag hitting the floor. “Three kilos already half cut and bagged.”

“They’re a few minutes away.” Laroy said.

Gunfire erupts around them. Men yelling and the bullets ricocheted around the concrete and machinery. Chibs pressed her hard into the concrete column, facing towards the fight. The sound of his gun going off rang in her ears. Happy next to them firing as he bobbed up and down.

“Fuck!” Happy yelled as he ducked down fast.

Chibs yanked her down to curl into a ball on the floor. She raised her hands to her ringing ears. Chibs peering around the pillar, tucking back at the sound of a large boom. The floor and pillar shook under her feet and at her back. Dust plumed. And where there once was a wall, now had a large hole in it. Another thunderous boom and a third. Sunlight streamed through the new openings.

They peered around their pillar, Happy looking up over a car he was hiding behind. Watching as the Galindo, Mayans, and the Sons chasing after the Lobos who had escaped out of one the new entrances into the building. She had to hand it to the Lobos. That was creative.

Happy and Chibs looked at the hole in the wall where Chibs was at first going to be up against and then back to her. They both looked to each other as she began to pat off the concrete dust from her jacket and kutte.

Chibs helped her up and she brushed off his jacket as they started towards where Jax was yelling at Luis.

“God damn it! What the hell was that!” Jax yelled at Luis.

“Guess the threat was bigger than you thought.” Clay stated the obvious.

Luis snapped. “Line them up.” Pointing at the Niners. His men forcing Laroy and his crew down to their knees.

“Whoa, what are you doing?” Tig questioned in alarm.

“Sending a message.” Luis seethed.

“Clay! I did what you asked!” Laroy yelled.
Everyone watched Clay as he stood off to the side, silent. Letting Luis do what he wanted.

“Clay!” Jax yelled.

With Clay’s silence, Jax jumps between Luis and Laroy. Risking his life for Laroy. “You can’t do this.” Jax tells Luis.

“Its not your business.” Luis said.

“Its all our business. This isn’t Mexico. We’re not kings here man. We gotta work with other crews. You start gunning people down. No one is going to trust us. You want to move your product. We need relationships.” Jax explained.

“Not this relationship.” Luis said, not wanting to give up taking someone’s life.

“Laroy made a bad choice. Better message is that he changed his mind. Decided to roll with Galindo. You kill this guy, you’re killing everything.” Jax reasoned.

Luis glared at Jax, considering what Jax was saying. Turning his attention back to Laroy. “One more bad decision and I’m going to wipe 19th St from the map.”

Jax nods in relief as Luis turns away to talk to Clay. Laroy and his guys being helped up to their feet.

“Fuck me.” Chibs breathed. The threat of people getting killed tabled for now. The guys nodding and relaxing, Bobby nodding approvingly towards Jax. Tig giving Laroy a pat on the shoulder.

But she kept her eyes on Luis and Clay. The two of them sequestered together, chatting...alone.

Watching as Luis tried to slyly hand Clay a burner phone. Catching the satisfied look on Clay’s face. She moves in front of Chibs, her eyes on Clay across the room. “Do you see? It’s happening.” She shivered.

Chibs pulls her in his arms, tucking her into his body as he sighted on Clay. “Aye.”

“See what?” Happy asked, confused by what they were talking about, glancing between them and where Clay and Luis were huddled together.

She caught Luis’s smirk to something Clay said. Luis was backing off towards his men to leave. Clay heading to the rest of the guys and the Niners.

She moved out of Chibs arms and headed towards Luis, he stopped when she got close enough to him. “You’re not going to try and stop us from this?” Luis asked, a slight head tilt towards Clay.

“No.”

“Why not?” He shot her a curious look.

“Because left to his own devices, he really will kill her. At least with you, she’ll live...and still be able to save babies lives with her surgical skills. Won’t she?” Her voice darkened at that last question.

“We’ll do our best. Does Jax or she know that Clay’s targeted her?”

“Yes.”
Luis frowned at her. “Then why is she still here? Why hasn’t he sent her off someplace safe? Why put her at risk like this?” He questioned harshly.

‘Because it’s not just Clay. It’s Gemma.’

“Who?”

“Jax’s mother, Clay’s wife. Any word that Tara might be thinking about leaving with the kids will push her over the edge. Twisted family shit. You really don’t want to know.”

“Jesus Christ.” Luis muttered. His frustration had her grinning. He scowled at her, catching her amusement.

“Bet you thought that things would work like clockwork when you snagged Clay into this arrangement. Made you all kinds of promises. Yet now, there seems to be nothing but problems.” By Luis’s reaction, she hit it dead on.

“Your point?”

“My point is that some of us are actually trying to help you. The problems won’t end with the Lobos here in California, you’ve yet to deal with the Irish. But if you give us time and a little bit of trust and a dash of patience, Jax will work things out. We will work things out.”

“And Clay won’t?”

“Clay only looks out for himself. In case you haven’t noticed, it’s Jax that’s been trying to find solutions to all of these problems. Look at them.” She nodded towards the Sons talking with the Niners and the Mayans.

Jax in the middle of it all talking with Marcus and Laroy. Except for the guys still wearing their vests, it looked like this was a party. Clay had lit a cigarette and stood on the outskirts of the group. Tig next to him, but Clay just seemed annoyed with whatever it was Tig was talking about.

“Jax is showing them what kind of leader he is. The club was in the middle of casting votes on a leadership change when the Lobos shot up our clubhouse.” Luis shot her a surprised look.

“Clay’s in a war that he’s already lost. Without people to lead, there is no leader.”

Tig threw up his hands at Clay, turning to join the main group with Jax. Chibs patting Tig on the shoulder.

She glanced at Luis one more time, then walking towards Chibs who was making his way towards her. She breathed in relief as he folded her into his arms. Her headache dropping off a cliff.

“Oh, that’s good.” She groaned.

“You were the one that went off by yourself.” He reminded her.

Chibs swung around and she saw Luis watching them. Chibs held his hand out. “Luis.”

“Chibs. Thanks for your help.” Luis took Chibs hand.

“Aye. No problem. We’ll get those bastards.”

Luis looked at her and Chibs a moment before whistling to his guys. Everyone broke from their conversations to watch Luis and his guys walk out. Mayans and Niners left a few handshakes later.
“Come on. Let’s get out of here.” Chibs prompted.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 103

Chapter Summary

Kiss, part 4

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year everyone! I meant to update sooner, but I hit a kind of mental block with this update. Some of my revisions are scattered in different files/folders. So it's a bit choppy, sorry. And this part is a bit of a transition stage to the next big canon part coming up.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dog dropped off a packing list on her desk. “Sorry, could you? I’m backed up.”

“Yeah, no problem.” She waved him off as she took the paper and went into the office. Gemma was at her computer, hunting and pecking at the keyboard.

“What do you want?” Gemma growled.

“Dog asked me to bring this in. They’re really busy out there.”

Gemma peered at the paper she held out to her. “Just put it there. I’ll deal with it later.” Pointing at the pile of papers on the corner of the desk.

“Sure. Did you get hold of Piney?” Remembering Gemma asking Opie earlier about Piney.

“No. Why do you care?”

“I care, Gemma. He didn’t look too good yesterday. Chibs and I went up to the cabin, brought him some lunch and pre-made meals.” She explained at Gemma’s dark look.

“I’m sure he’s fine. Just on one of his usual Tequila-benders. I sent Wayne went to check on him.”

Gemma turned back to her computer but there was a tension about her, clearly dismissing her out of the office and stop her from questioning her further about Piney. She knew Piney was dead. Gemma was lying to her. And she was using Wayne to clean up the cabin. To further push the lie of what really happened.

“Wayne, huh. Why not Opie? His son? Instead you sent a man riddled with cancer to check up on Piney.”

“What I do is none of your business.” Gemma snapped.
“Don’t tease him, Gemma. He’s not well. He doesn’t deserve to be bossed around or promised things that you aren’t ever going to follow through on. That’s just cruel.” She pressed.

“He could have said no.” Gemma said snidely.

“Could he? Really? After all the empty promises you’ve made to him over the years? After he’s fallen in love with you?”

“I didn’t promise him any such thing. It’s a goddamn lie. I’m married to the man I love. Which is Clay.” Gemma qualified.

“I’m sure you believe that. But to Wayne, your words...your promises... “ She broke off seeing that Gemma wasn’t listening to her. She was hearing her, but not really listening and it was exhausting.

“Aren’t you tired? Tired of all the lying?”

Gemma leaned back in her chair, silently glaring at her. Her jaw clenched.

“I’m here to help. I’ve read you, Gemma. I know everything about you. Why you do the things you do. What drives you. I can help.” She tried again to get through to the woman.

“I have no idea what you’re spouting off about. Get out.”

“Okay, the offer stands. When you’re ready.” Gemma scoffs at her, turning back to the computer, dismissing her. “But I warn you...you, Clay, Wayne...the longer this goes on, the worse it will get. One way or another, there will be a reckoning. Nothing stays buried forever.”

“When I bury something, it stays buried.” Gemma threatened.

“No, it doesn’t. Jax found out about Maureen and Trinity, despite all your attempts in burying that secret.” Gemma glared harder, but she caught the flinch Gemma made. “Cruel of you to keep that history from Jax all those years.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about. Don’t talk to me about my son.” Gemma seethed.

“Gemma, if you don’t let up on everyone, you’re going to lose them all. And you’ll have no one but yourself to blame. My offer still stands.”

“Get the hell out of my office! And stay away from my family, nothing but a nosey bitch!” Gemma threw her pen at her, but she was already out the door.

She joined Chibs as he leaned over a car, her hand sliding up under his shirt. Her headache eased back once more.

“Thank fuck.” Chibs groaned as he twisted a nut into place. His eyes slanting to her as his head cocked towards the office. “Everything alright?”

“Yeah. Just telling Gemma that I’m willing to help her.”

“Sounds like it’s a no go.” His head tilting at the sound of the office door slamming shut.

She shrugged. “Gemma and I may never be best friends, or friends at all, but she’s human and deserves to get help when she asks...or before she goes off the deep end. Just like everyone else.”

He stood up and she tucked into his front, both hands sliding around his waist. His dark eyes glittering down at her, a faint smile. “Well, just keep a careful eye on her if I’m not around. I don’t want her attacking you. You push her too hard when she’s having a bad day...I don’t want to have
you go to hospital with a broken nose because she took a skateboard to your face.”

She huffed, catching the incident he was talking about. “All she threw was a pen and she missed. I’ll keep an eye out for any skateboards.”

He rested his forearms on her shoulders, his greasy hands clear of her clothing. “Love ye’.” He murmured.

“Love you, too.” She breathed as she met his lips with hers.

Relearning to breathe, they swayed together until her laptop binged in rapid succession. “Damn, I have to check that.”

“Aww, no rest for my Wall Street tycoon.” He teased.

“I’m not a tycoon.” She pouted.

He laughed and nudged her off. “Go on. I have to try Juice again.”

Rolling her eyes, she went back to her desk and checked her positions once more. Adding new trades as she went, soon she lost herself in the numbers she was crunching. The noise of the guys, their music all just became background noise as she concentrated.

She jerked as Chibs snapped his cell shut right near her ear, pulling her from her trading. It was his fourth call to track down Juice. He had been muttering since they got back from dealing with the latest drama over the cartel. Realizing Juice had done a runner and nobody knew where he was.

“Heeeyyy. I know you’re worried, but could you maybe not snap that right in my ear?” She grinned widely up at him, as he grimaced apologetically.

“Shite. Sorry.” He pressed a kiss to her cheek, taking her hand in his.

“Thank you. He’ll turn up.”

“Aye, he better if he knows what’s good for him.” He said as he got up to get some more work done. As she turned back to her trading, Jax walked into the office.

She could vaguely hear him talking with Gemma. The noise of the guys and the music blocking out most of what was being discussed. But given the timeline and what she knew already, she knew Jax was telling her Tara was taking the kids with her to Oregon. Gemma’s voice rising when she realized that her grandkids were going to be out of her reach.

“You can’t do that!” Gemma said stridently.

Jax said something back, but he wasn’t rising to the same vocal level as Gemma, keeping his cool and not taking the bait to escalate things. But she could tell he was stressed.

Chibs stridently talking into his cell pulled her attention away from Jax and Gemma. Blinking at Chibs who left a very creative message on Juice’s voice mail. He shut the phone off and walked into the doorway of the office where Jax was still located with Gemma.

The two of them stepped out of the office and discussed Juice. “Just keep trying. He’ll have to pick up eventually.” Jax said turning away towards the clubhouse. Chibs groaned but started dialing the phone one more time before going back to his repairs.
She checked her positions one last time before shutting down for the day.

“Hey, I’m going to check in with Jax.” She told Chibs, rubbing her fingers up along his back.

“Come back soon.” He gave her a kiss before letting her go.

“You okay?” She asks after sitting down with a soda.

“Yeah.” Jax breaths out a plume of cigarette smoke.

“You did good today.”

“What are you talking about? The Lobos got away.” Jax's eyes sharpened on her.

She shook her head at him. “I meant with the Niners.”

Jax ran his hand through his hair. “Great.” He said grimly.

Watching him, he wasn’t meeting her eyes fully. There was something bothering him but he wasn’t talking. She considered pressing him on it, or even telling him about Piney. If Jax listened to her, he should know. So either, he really was clueless, Jax was too smart to be that dense. Or he was hoping that she was wrong and he was right and he could still escape with his original plan.

Her headache starting to get unbearable, she changed tack. “Gemma know you and Tara are going up to Oregon?”

“Tara told her earlier.” Jax said diffidently, his eyes scanning the lot behind her.

She just smiled tightly back at him. “You’re a good man, Jax. I hope you have a good trip. You and Tara deserve a break from all this.”

She and Jax looked over at Bobby who was walking towards them. His eyes intent on Jax.

Standing up to head back to Chibs, she glared at Bobby. “You’re still on my shit list.”

“What?” Bobby wide-eyed her his supposed confusion as to why. Jax grinned amusedly between the two of them.

She didn’t deign to answer his question. Giving Bobby another warning glare before turning back to the garage. Her head feeling like it was cracking open. Damn it.

“You ready to go?” Chibs asked as he pulled her into his arms.

“Yeah. Been a busy day.”

“Come on, then. Thinking ordering in pizza for dinner. What do you think?”

Nodding as she nestled closer, watching Jax storm out of the clubhouse and race off the lot.

They showered and threw on some sweats, Chibs ordering the pizza and they settled into the couch to watch some TV as they ate. He scarfed down nearly half the pizza while she managed her slice and a half. She was nearly asleep when the late news flickered on.

“Guess we lucked out on the cops being called in for the firefight.” He murmured.
“Probably for the best, they’d be out-gunned if the Lobos were still there.” Chibs grunted his agreement. “Course, it would have been funny watching the Lobos and Galindo try and figure out if they’d paid off that particular group of cops or not.”

Chibs snorted at her thought. “Wouldn’t matter, they would’ve been dead.”

After watching the weather forecast, Chibs snapped off the TV and trundled the two of them to bed.

“I love you.” She sighed in the dark of their bedroom. Chibs rolled towards her, pulling her in his arms.

“Graim thu.” He purred into her neck. “Go to sleep, mo chridhe.” She lets herself relax into his arms. The deep slumber pulling her under.

He falls asleep not long after Nancy dropped off. Only to wake a couple of hours later, Nancy’s muttering to herself in her sleep, her hands clenched in the sheets, her legs twisted tight around his so that he can hardly move.

Checking and sees its still only just past midnight. He runs his hand over her arm soothingly and whispers in her ear. Calming her with the sound of his voice. She fights him for another minute or so, but relaxes again.

The next morning the sun is glaring into the bedroom, having forgotten to pull the curtain. He groans as Nancy yawns next to him, rubbing at her eyes. Not looking as rested as he’d hoped.

“You’re right, its way too sunny in California.” She said thickly, tossing the sheet over her head. Grinning at her with a shake of his head, pulling a the sheet down again as she groaned in protest. “Told you.” Leaning in and giving her a kiss. His eyes on hers, just enjoying the quiet moment when it was just the two of them. No interruptions, no distractions, no demands.

“Come on, I’ll make up some pancakes.” He enticed her with a cock of his brow.

“Blueberry?” She cracked an eye at him as she negotiated his offer.

“Sure.”

“Okay.” She kissed him, running her hand through his hair and scratching at his scalp. The sensation had him purring. His body growing heavy and increasingly aware of her. God in Heaven he loved her touch.

“You keep doing that and we won’t have time for breakfast.” He moaned reluctantly.

Nancy snatched her hands from his hair. Turning his eyes to hers, wondering why she stopped touching him and he caught her sly grin. “We can’t risk the most important meal of the day.” She teased him.

Jesus Christ, he mentally swore. She’s teasing him over the possibility that she wouldn’t get her pancakes. He created a monster. Yet, he couldn’t help going giddy over that. She was healing.

He winked at her, she smiled up at him, her hands coming to his jaw and cheeks. He leaned in to kiss her but instead he grabbed her up and pulled the two of them out of bed.

Nancy shrieked in surprise at being ripped from their comfortable bed. Carrying her into the
shower. The heat of the water reviving them a bit more. He wasn’t sure if they actually got clean given all the laughing they did.

He took the comb to start combing out her wet hair, but she grabbed the comb from his hand.
  “Oy.”

“I got this, you go start those pancakes.”

“But…”

“No buts, you comb my hair and we really will be late.” She shooed him away.

He grumbled but went off to put on fresh clothes and start making the pancakes. Grinning as he listened to her moving around and eventually joining him. Her hands sliding around his waist.

He twisted around and grinned down at her, spatula in hand as the last round of batter was bubbling.

“Thank you.” She whispered.

He gave her a kiss, swaying with her as it deepened. Fuck, he could stand here kissing her to the end of time. Dropping the spatula, his hand pulled her closer, bending both her and himself as the kiss demanded.

Nancy jerked in his arms, her lips ripping away, her head twisting around. “Oops.”

He looked to where she was looking, his brain not up to speed as his heart raced from the kiss.
  “Shite.” He swore, the batter burning, smoke starting to thicken. Clicking off the griddle, he picked up the spatula. “Just as well, those were the last of the batter.” He grinned and she started giggling.

Giving her butt a pat, he pressed her towards the dishes. “Make yourself useful, grab the plates and stuff.”

“Patio?”

“Aye, its nice out.” He took up the platter of pancakes following her out the french doors. She passing him back into the house, coming back with the tea.

Pulling her into his lap instead of having her sit next to him. They fed each other pancakes and drank their tea. Before too long, they had their fill and rinsed off the plates, leaving the bowl to soak.

He pondered how he was feeling as he pulled to a stop for a red light. His hand coming to rest on Nancy’s knee. He was content, he decided. After all the shit going on with the club, losing Piney...he couldn’t imagine being alone through all of it. Being with Nancy made all the bullshit easier to deal with.

Feeling her hands around his waist tighten, he realized the light had changed green while he was woolgathering. Catching her soft smile in his mirror, he yanked himself back to their ride to the garage.

Soon as he parked, he pulled her into his arms once more laying a gentle kiss before they had to get to the grind of the day. “Love ye’.” He said simply, tucking a stray lock of her hair behind her ear.

She tilted her head at him, smiling at him. “Love you, too.”
Translations:

I love you = Graim thu
My heart = mo chridhe
“I just want to check.” Chibs explained of why they stopped at an apartment complex, from reading Tig, she knew that this was where Juice lived.

Leading the way up a set of stairs to the second floor and down a hall. Stopping at room 206 he started knocking on the door. Pulling out his cell, he dialed Juice’s number. They stared at the door as if they could see right through the door, listening for the corresponding ring and not hearing anything.

A blonde woman stepped out of the apartment next to Juice’s. Dressed in a tailored skirt and blouse, a matching jacket over her arm, purse slung over her shoulder as she locked her door.

“Yes, do you know if Juice came in last night?” Chibs asked the blonde.

“No, sorry. I didn’t hear anything.” The woman shrugged and moved on her way.

“Maybe he’s at the garage.” Chibs said.

“Maybe.” She shrugged, as they climbed back onto the bike.

She tensed soon as Chibs turned into the lot. Her hands gripping his tight. Her eyes scanned over the line of bikes as they parked. Juice’s bike wasn’t there which had Chibs swearing and pulling his phone out again. Jax’s bike, of course, wasn’t there since he’d gone with Tara to Oregon. Clay’s was MIA, too.

Trying to breathe around the noise, she couldn’t help but hear it. The rapid buzzing noise filled her ears. It was like the sound of a bee hovering as it gauged whether you were a good source for pollen or not. And knowing that if you swatted at it, it’ll sting you.

She turned around but she didn’t see any bees. It was so prevalent that she didn’t hear Chibs come up behind her.

“Hey, you okay?” He asked, noticing her distraction.
“Do you hear that?”

“Hear what?”

“That buzzing.” She frowned, looking for the source of the disturbance.

Noting that Gemma was here and in the office, Dog and Lowell Jr. were working already. Glancing towards the clubhouse, Opie, Bobby, and Tig were at the picnic table chatting and smoking.

She swung around again as the noise zoomed right by her ear, louder this time. Fucking hell.

“This sucks.” She swore.

“What?” Chibs was still staring at her confusedly.

“I’m hearing...like a bee or something.” She stressed out. “I’d rather see a ghost or stuff flying around rather than this. God, this’ll drive me crazy.” She stepped away from the noise, but it was no use, it kept coming at her.

“There’s no bee, m ‘anam.” Chibs, too, looking around.

Clay pulled into the lot and swung into his spot.

She stared at him in horror. The noise of the bee became bees. A swarm of them. As if someone had knocked their nest down and every bee on the planet was pissed off. And that someone was Clay.

“Holy shit.” She said softly, staring at Clay as he set his helmet down on his bike. Clay must have heard her and looked at her.

“What?” Clay asked her, his eyes flaring in annoyance.

“You fucked up.” She breathed.

Trying to wrap her head around the fact that Clay actually did it. He put a hit on his daughter-in-law. The mother of his grandchildren, he really put a target on her back. She didn’t know why it affected her so much. Clay had already proven himself a murderer to anyone who stood in his way. She saw it happening from reading Jax. She warned them of this. Yet, it set her back on her heels as she stared at him over the din of the swarm.

Clay glared at her harder, and made to reply back to her, but she didn’t let him.

Raising her arm and pointing at Gemma, who had come out of her office at Clay’s arrival. “She’ll tell you.”

Chibs wrapped his arms around her as Clay rolled his eyes at her, stepping around her like she was off her rocker, swearing under his breath at her.

Her arm still pointed at Gemma, Chibs pressed her arm back down. His hand taking her pointed one, massaging it.

Gemma flicked an annoyed look her way before, raising a hand to block out the sun as she looked to Clay. Her other hand resting on her hip. “You handle that mexican thing?” She asked, stopping Clay in his tracks.
“Not your concern.” Clay shutdown Gemma regarding what is clearly club business. “Where’s Jax?” He finally noticed that Jax’s bike wasn’t in the lineup.

“Went up to Oregon with Tara and the kids. Family outing.” Gemma answered. At the news, Clay turned and looked at his wife.

“Guess that’s why he didn’t show.” Clay covered with a fake grin, turning back to the clubhouse, ending any further conversation with Gemma. But the seed has taken root. Clay glanced back at her and she saw the panic in his eyes. The noise of the bees rose in pitch.

“He fucked up.” She repeated.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs muttered as they followed Clay towards the rest of the guys. The noise of the bees trailing Clay. “Is there anything we can do? Call Jax, maybe?”

“No, it’s too late. He won’t pick up, he’s on vacation.”

“Tha Dia a ‘guidhe dha.”

“We did what we could. It’ll be okay...just scary and hectic.” She reassured him. “In the meantime, lets watch Clay try and fix this. Should be fun entertainment.”

He huffed despite himself. “We need to work on your idea of entertainment.”

She rolled her eyes ready to defend her choice of entertainment, but their attention shifted to Clay again, dispatching orders.

“Need you to track down Jax. On his way to Oregon with Tara. Bad time to be traveling. I want him back now.” Clay snapped to Tig.

“Hey Clay, there’s something up with Juice. Nobody’s heard from him. No calls...not been home.” Chibs reported.

“Gotta be Roosevelt.” Clay concluded.

“We would have heard something from Lowen if he’s been picked up.” Bobby contradicted.

“Go check anyway.” Clay said to Chibs, ignoring Bobby’s perfectly good reasoning.

She relaxed a little as Clay headed inside the clubhouse, the buzzing dropping down in pitch as Clay moved further away from her.

“I’m going to the cabin. Check on my old man.” Opie stood up as the rest of them started moving to their assigned assignments.

“Uh, you should stick around.” Clay abruptly swung around, making her flinch as the buzzing increased again. “Kozik still up north. Happy at Oswalds. I’m going to need bodies. Just in case we gotta deal with this Lobo shit.” Clay explained.

“Yeah, okay.” Opie said. His confused look shared by the rest of the guys at Clay’s odd behavior.

Chibs took her hand, drawing her attention away from Clay who was disappearing into the clubhouse. The noise of the buzzing dropped as the door shut behind him. Only a low level hum remained.

“You okay? We gotta go track down Juice.” Chibs questioned her.
“Yeah. Sure.” She ran her hand over her hair, breathing deeply as she got used to the buzzing. Her worry for Jax and Tara though kicked into high gear. She hoped that her warning to Luis worked.

“I’ll come with you.” Bobby said, walking next to them to the bikes.

She followed Chibs and Bobby into the sheriff’s station. Taking in the ramshackle of desks and outdated computers that the officers had to use. While Roosevelt’s office door was shut to block out the noise. A holding cell to one side of the main room. Her eyes couldn’t help but stop at the stairs leading to the second floor. Stairs that led up to where the Feds were holed up. She was oddly tempted to go up there.

Grinning at the idea of how the Fed’s react if they just popped in to say hello. Okay, maybe Chibs has a point with her idea of entertainment.

“Can I help you?” Roosevelt asked brusquely, stepping out of his office.

“Aye, you can tell me where Juice is.” Chibs demanded.

“He was released last night.”

“Why was he brought in?” Bobby asked.

“We needed to do another drug test.” Roosevelt shifted on his feet. “He was released last night.” He repeated.

“How many drug tests has Juice done for you now?” Roosevelt didn’t answer. His eyes not meeting hers.

“How many?” She asked more forcibly so that everyone heard her question. She already knew the number of times Eli had Juice brought in. Their secret meetings. This was for everyone else to witness.

“Seven.” A woman’s voice answered deeper into the bullpen of desks. Everyone looked to who dared to answer her question. It was Candy, from reading Jax and Tig, she was a good cop. Understood how things worked with the club and the town. Remembering her whispered sorry in Jax’s ear when the ATF raided the clubhouse.

Roosevelt glared at his deputy for speaking out of turn, but Candy simply held her own and didn’t back down to the truth. Looked like Roosevelt wasn’t liked by his deputies.

“Jesus. Seven times? What the fuck for?” Bobby questioned in astonishment.

“Seven times in what...a month? Six weeks? And only Juice? None of the other guys who are out on parole. Just Juice.”

“I’m doing my job. Making sure criminals are behind bars.”

She felt Chibs and Bobby go still as they glared at Roosevelt.

Stepping closer to Roosevelt. “I hope you have paperwork from Juice’s PO authorizing all of these tests.” Roosevelt shifted on his feet, his eyes taking flight again.

Taking another step towards Roosevelt, Chibs and Bobby huffing and growling as they realized what had been going on.
Ignoring them she glared up at Roosevelt. “I’m not a lawyer, but if you’ve been bringing in Juice without authorization, that sounds like a violation of Juice’s civil rights. A Sheriff stalking a parolee, targeting him. Driving him to try and take his own life because of your harassment.”

“He’s on parole, he doesn’t have any civil rights.” Roosevelt blustered, resettling his gun belt. The unconscious move was a threat in itself.

“Seer.” Bobby warned.

“M ‘anam…” Chibs took hold of her hand, trying to pull her back from the brewing danger.

“I don’t care about his parole status or not. It’s a life you are tormenting. Like a child pulling the wings off a fly just because you can. You drag him in here for another drug test and I’ll sic a team of lawyers on your ass so fast that your head would spin.”

“You threatening an officer of the law?” Roosevelt raised his brows in surprise.

“It’s not a threat. It’s a promise. I take a dim view of anyone abusing their power. Law or no law. Back off from Juice.”

She took a step back, glancing around the room, everyone watching her dress down their boss.

“Let’s go.” She said to Chibs and Bobby, leading the way to the front door.

Soon as they stepped outside, Bobby nearly tripped as he reeled in front of her. “What the fuck was that in there?” His finger pointing dramatically back to the building. “A team of lawyers? Juice is on parole...what the fuck is going on?” His arms and hands flailing.

“It was a threat. Seven times Juice has been hauled in for drug tests in as many weeks. Seven fucking times, unbelievable.” She grabbed her helmet.

Bobby looked from her to Chibs for an explanation.

“Went to get Juice for the leadership vote, found him at Oswald’s coming out of the woods. Claiming he’d clothes-lined himself taking a piss. Marks around his neck. After the failed ambush at the barn, followed Juice, found him trying to hide the evidence.”

“What are you saying?” Bobby blinked at Chibs.

“Juice tried to hang himself.” She cut through the lead up.

Bobby gaped at her and Chibs as he tried to wrap his brain around the idea. “Are you kidding me? Juice?”

“Aye. I told Clay before that we need to get Juice off the cartel shit. I sensed something off with him, especially after Miles. Instead, Clay patches him with Mayhem. When we found him, I went to Jackie. Told Jax to get Clay to pull Juice off of the cartel until he’s right in the head.”

“Suicide...the guys...they’ll vote him out.” Bobby breathed.

“I know. Told Jax I’d keep an eye on him. Figure out where he’s really at.”

“That’s why you’ve been calling Juice all the time.” Bobby figured out.

“He’ll turn up.” She said. “Let’s go, or did you two want to keep talking about club business in front of the police station?”
Chibs and Bobby frowned in unison, glancing at the utilitarian building and back to her.

“Jesus, you’re turning into a real ball buster.” Bobby muttered.

“Only with idiots who do stupid things.” She fired back. Instantly regretted her words.

Bobby whirled around again at her insult. “I said I was sorry.”

“No, you only think you are.” She couldn't help saying. God damn it. “Fuck. Sorry. I don’t mean to yell at you. I’m pissed, worried, and I keep hearing this drone of bees, it’s driving me nuts.”

“Hey, hey, calm down.” Chibs stayed between her and Bobby.

“Bees?” Bobby asked with a quizzical expression.

She shrugged helplessly.

Bobby looked her over, considering something. “If all you're saying is true with Juice, Sheriff targeting him like that, I’d want you in his corner. But to threaten Roosevelt like that in front of witnesses, cop witnesses no less…”

She sighed. “Look, I know, Jax explained it when I went off on Clay about letting Roosevelt tear up the clubhouse on that bullshit fire inspection. That it’s easier to let them walk all over you just to get them out of your hair as fast as possible. I get it. But this can’t go on.” She tried to explain.

Bobby nodded, thinking about her reasoning. “I had my doubts about you...patching you in. I don’t anymore. Defending one of us when you barely know any of us...that takes some real guts.”

“No, it isn’t guts. It’s just what’s right.”

Bobby barked a laugh, “Jesus. Seriously? Did you not see? You had Roosevelt’s back to the wall, literally. On a bluff. Christ, I’ll never forget that.” He laughed again. “I bet he’s in there cutting and pasting those authorizations right now.”

She threw her hands up in the air, as Bobby missed the fact that she meant every word she said in there. And on top of it all, that freaking Rico Suave lyric started up again.

“Okay, you two. Let’s go.” Chibs wrangled the two of them back onto the bikes and back to the garage.

She didn’t bother look around the passing scenery, just rested her forehead against Chibs back. And, of course, soon as they pulled into the lot, the buzzing increased. Perfect.

Taking up her laptop and holding Chibs hand, he led the way into the clubhouse. She took a deep breath as she tried her best to ignore the invisible swarm of bees and hornets now, too, she thought dourly. Clay glanced to her and she saw his guilt gnawing at him.

Tig snapped his phone shut, turning to Clay at the head of the reaper table. “Clay, I can’t get hold of Jax. He’s not picking up his cell. Tara either. I’ve got the name of the hotel. I’ll have Rogue River waiting. You want me up there?”

“No. Keep calling.” Clay instructed.

“Roosevelt picked up Juice yesterday for another piss test. Released him last night. Hasn’t been seen since.” Chibs told Clay.
She pressed harder behind Chibs when Gemma came up behind them. The swarm spreading towards her, as she involved herself in Chibs and Clay’s conversation. She gripped Chibs hand tighter, his flexing back with hers in response.

“Call his old girlfriend, he crawls up there when he’s wounded.” Gemma said to Chibs.

“Precious stays in touch with her, I’ll give her a call.” Bobby adds, the three of them walking back out of the clubhouse.

“Find him neck deep in pussy…” Chibs muttered threateningly as they went.

“Ick.” She winced at the imagery.

Bobby and Chibs grinning at her amused for her reaction.

Soon as they stepped outside she found she could breath and hear easier. God, it felt like they’d need to call an exterminator squad to clear out the building.

Bobby called his ex-wife who got an earful about medical bills and alimony. Chibs grabbed the phone before Bobby managed to say something else to piss off Precious that she’d refuse to tell them about Juice’s old girlfriend.

She settled down at her desk and tried to do some trading. But the place was literally buzzing with activity that she couldn’t concentrate. Gemma came out of the clubhouse and left in her SUV. Checking her email, she shot Alison and Mark an email for updates.

Chibs hanging up his phone with a growl. Helping her up from her chair so he could sit, then pulling her onto his lap.

“No luck?” She asked.

“No. She hasn’t seen him in months.” He said.

She took in his worried eyes. “I really wish that you wouldn’t get so worked up over this. You can’t be responsible for him all the time. You just can’t. It’s not healthy.”

“I know. But I made a promise.”

“Je t’aime, mon féroce chevalier.” She said to him, her hand resting on his jaw.

“What? Ah...this mysterious french that you claim to know.” His eyes lit up recognizing some of what she was saying.

“Hey!”

“Well, I was beginning to wonder. You said you learned it yet never hear you speak it.” He shrugged with a sly grin. “Well, except in your sleep sometimes.”

“What?”

“It’s not all the time, you talk in your sleep is all.” He shrugged.

Giving up on the idea of dragging their conversation about her nocturnal ramblings, she pressed her forehead to his, their eyes locked onto each others. “Hi.” She said softly.

“Hi back.” He smiled the familiar greeting.
The took another moment to decompress. Running her fingers through his hair, he gave a little shiver. His hands gripping her tighter, he leaned in and she met his kiss.

She felt her spine literally melt as she eagerly followed Chibs heated kiss.

“Chibs!” The yell had them jerking back at the rude interruption.

“We gotta go.” Opie said as everyone was moving to their bikes.

“What’s going on?” He asked, standing them up and heading to their bike to keep up. She was still trying to figure out what her name was as she managed to scoop up her laptop while trying to keep from being dragged by Chibs in his rush to catch up with the guys.

“Jax called. Tara’s at St. Thomas.” Tig said worriedly.


“Don’t know.” Clay said, firing up his bike.

Everyone quickly followed Clay to St. Thomas.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
God fucking damn it. = Tha Dia a ’guidhe dha
I love you, my fierce knight = Je t’aime mon féroce chevalier
Chapter 105

Chapter Summary

Hands, part 2

Chapter Notes

Hope everyone is safe from the recent bouts of winter storms that have hit here in the US.

Kind of curious to see how you like this chapter. Things are heating up. Find out how Tara's hands are and the visit to the Niners clubhouse deviates from the canon. Got this idea for that scene and I couldn't help myself.

PS. I fixed my mistake regarding poisonous vs. venomous. Thank you RaptorSquad22 for pointing out my error!

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chibs kept a tight hold on her hand as they race-walked through the ultra-clean hallways. Clay in the lead, the rest of them right behind him looking for Jax. Their heavy leather and denim clothing a stark contrast to the hospital staff in scrubs and lab coats.

Jax was thanking a police officer, shaking hands with him when they all found him. The gray-haired officer glanced at them as they approached. “Hope your fiance is okay.” The officer said to Jax with a nod as he left.

Soon as the officer left, they swarmed around Jax. She was relieved when Clay broke off to talk to Gemma. The buzzing that emanated around him was deafening. Opie hugged Jax, offering his support. When they broke apart, Chibs grabbed up Jax next.

Chibs whispered something to Jax but it was too soft to hear. Jax simply nodded and hugged Chibs back before the two of them pulled away. Jax swiping at his eyes.

“What do we know?” Clay asked, sneaking up behind her.

“Jesus!” She jerked fighting the urge to swat at the freaking bees, moving closer to Chibs and away from Clay with his swarm. Chibs pulling her to his other side as everyone started at her confused for her outburst. Ignoring them, she glared back at Clay. “Hey, how about asking how Tara is? The kids? How Jax is holding up before you start demanding to know what happened.” She shot back at the man responsible for all this right now.

Clay heaved his body up angrily at her criticism, she swiftly looked to Jax. They guys glanced from her to Clay and between themselves only to land back on Jax.
Jax stood there a little stunned. Rolling her eyes at him. “How’s Tara? The kids? You holding up?” She prodded him.

“I’m fine, the kids are at the house with Alita. Tara’s shaken up pretty good. They’re x-raying and testing for nerve damage.” Jax glanced over his shoulder in the direction where Tara had been taken for her assessments.

“Shite, her hands?” Chibs questioned. She held her breath waiting for Jax to answer the million dollar question. Did her warnings to Luis work, please, please, please let it.

“Her hands seem to be okay. The door on the van caught her forearm though. Looks like she broke her arm. Doc’s want to make sure the nerves are intact.” Jax said.

“Thank God.” Chibs breathed in relief which she echoed silently.

The guys all nodded, realizing how seriously Tara was hurt and what was at stake. “That’s good, Jax. She’ll be okay.” Opie half-hugged Jax again.

“Yeah, thanks.” Jax swiped his eyes with the cuff of his sleeve.

“Ohay, good. Breathe, you’re okay. Tara’s okay. The kids are okay. Take a minute to just breathe.” She reminded him. He was nodding, his blue eyes still wide with shock as he looked at her.

Clay huffed as he’d been pushed towards the back of the group and was pretty much ignored as everyone consoled Jax.

“It happened so fast. We’d just finished lunch at a park we like to go to. The van came up behind her, grabbed her as she was putting the kids in the car seats. Fuck!” Jax shuddered as his imagination started running away from him.

“They’re okay, Jackie. You’re golden.” Chibs repeated.

“We’ll get them. Whoever they are.” Opie promised.

Jax shook his head, still trying to figure out what had happened. “They were speaking spanish. Had to be Lobo retaliation.” He shrugged.

The guys all grumbled in agreement with Jax’s reasoning, given the troubles everyone has been having with them.

“Really?” She rolled her eyes at them. “Just because you heard some guys talking spanish doesn’t mean they are Lobo. I speak french, it doesn’t mean that I’m French.”

“M ‘anam…” Chibs sighed as everyone looked at her. Even Jax flashed an amused grin at her.

“What? Just pointing out a flaw in your reasoning.” She defended.

“Let it go.” Chibs whispered in her ear.

“Fiiine.” She breathed. “Okay, so the men who may or may not be Lobos, how many were there?” Tig and Bobby snorted at her sarcasm. Opie looked like he couldn’t decide what reaction to go with, caught between outright laughter to confusion.

Jax glared at her but he seemed to be calming down at least. “There were three. Driver and two in the back. They had their faces covered.”
“I got a call to Romeo. Haven’t heard back yet.” Clay interjected. Ah yes, their illustrious leader, couldn’t let his band of followers start doing things on their own without his input.

“Let’s find Laroy. He knows how to get in touch with Lobo.” Jax said.

“Absolutely.” Clay agreed. Everyone nodding that it was a solid idea.

“Alright, we got V-Lin at your house with the nanny. Keep Phil and Rat here with Tara.” Tig organized.

“Call Alvarez. We might need him.” Jax added as they headed out.


“Stay with Tara. Keep me posted.” Jax ordered, pushing past his mother.

Everyone pulled up into a parking lot outside a bar where the Niners called home. Her attention went to full alert as Chibs shut off the bike, helping her off. Her eyes locked on the heavy door. “Something’s wrong.” She said.

The Mayans had pulled in and everyone went to greet them with their usual backslapping. She ignored them and kept walking towards the door. The anger and fear rattled her bones. It was different from the swarm around Clay. It was thick with sorrow yet crazed with electric bites along her skin with anger, underneath it all was fear. The zings set her skin crawling the closer she came to the door. She didn’t realize she was in right in front of it until Chibs halted her.

“What is it, mo ghaol?”

There was a camera mounted up in the corner of the entryway, giving it a brief look and looked back to the solid door. She was fascinated, staring at the door as if she could see right through it. Yet, not. It was the emotions that she was wading into. Unconsciously swaying to the rhythm. “It reeks of anger and fear. Grief.”

He glanced at the door put a hand up under her shirt and kutte, his fingers spread wide across her lower back as they started at the door, the two of them blocking the rest of the guys from entering.

“What’s the matter.” Marcus asked confused by her refusal to move or enter the bar.

“There’s something wrong.” She said, still staring at the door. Her hand knocking solidly on the door.

“What the fuck you knocking for?” Clay demanded.

“This is their house, we need information, it’s rude to just walk in uninvited. Not when they are this angry.” She glared at Clay, “If you want to get shot, by all means.”

“Shit.” Tig muttered.

“Are you serious?” Marcus’s VP accused to her.

Before anyone could say anything the door swung open and a thin, black man held a gun in her face.

The men around her jerked swearing going for their weapons at the sight of the gun in her face. “Take your gun off her right now.” Chibs growled, pointing his weapon.
She froze and just looked at the man, looked beyond the gun. His eyes dark and angry. And shit, there was a ghost behind the doorman. Interesting. The ghost was yelling at the man with the gun, yelling ‘Darnell’. She guessed it was the doorman’s name.

She smiled to the man, “Hello, Darnell. I’m the Seer. The Sons and the Mayans request audience with Laroy. We seek only information on a common enemy. We’ll wait.” She said calmly to the man in the door.

Darnell gave her an angry look, debating with himself. “Please.” She added politely still looking into his eyes and not at the business end of the gun ready to go off in her face.

“Stay here.” Darnell relented, slamming the door shut.

She breathed she tried to feel herself back in her body, the floating feeling filled her. The whispers of the emotions coming from the bar was seducing her. Chibs relaxed his stance and tried to pull her behind him.

“Are you serious with this?” Marcus’s VP questioned again.

“Shut up.” She said crossly to the man. “If we had just stormed in, they would have started shooting. You…” She pointed at Marcus’s VP “…would be dead. Marcus’ll kill a Niner in retaliation. Let me do my job. They have been gravely injured, lost men recently. They are angry with grief.” She glared at the man. He and everyone looked uncertain what to do with her information.

She turned to Chibs. “They have a ghost.” She said in a low voice.

Chibs raised his brows. “You sure?”

“Yeah, can’t help but hear and see him. It’s how I knew our gun-wielding doorman’s name.” Chibs took her hand and held it tightly. His harsh grip helping ground her.

The door swung open again, Darnell glaring at her, but his gun was tucked into his jeans at least. “Only you, club Presidents, VP’s, and SA’s can enter.” Darnell said. “Leave your guns behind.”

“I require Chibs, non-negotiable.” She countered. Darnell gave Chibs a look and back to her. “Fine. No one else though.”

Turning to Jax and Marcus, ignoring Clay’s angry glare. She didn't have time for his hurt ego. “Do as he says, leave your guns.” Then walked into the bar, leaving the guys scrambling to hand over their weapons. She heard Chibs swearing that she'd gone ahead inside without him. But the draw of the pain that emanated from inside was too strong to ignore.

She moved to the center of the room, her eyes looking from person to person, taking a deep breath as the anger and grief filled her. Her eyes lingering back to Darnell, or rather the ghost, who looked at her suspiciously. Mirroring his brothers looks, even in death he still acted as if he were still alive. She couldn’t help her grin at her warped humor of the situation.

Chibs came up behind her quickly. Jax and Marcus shifting uncomfortably as they walked into the bar. Eyeing all the Niners hanging around staring at them, guns in plain view.

“Where’s Laroy?” Clay demanded of Darnell.

“He’s finishing a call to the Pope.” She answered Clay’s question. Her eyes drifting over the bar where a set of men sat. Their eyes sharpening on her.
“How do you know that, bitch?” A large man asked, standing up from one of the bar stools.

“I’m the Seer.” Another uncomfortable looks go around but she ignored them. Trying to keep from floating out too far. Her eyes going back to the ghost and Darnell with his haunted eyes.

The ghost’s eyes widened as he realized she could see him. He came rushing to her. “You can see me? Hear me?”

The ghost asked loudly making her flinch back in Chibs hold. His excitement effervescent. “Holy shit! Lady you can hear me! You gotta tell them shit for me! It’s really important!”

She frowned and tried to ignore the ghost that was yelling at her, hoping he’d give up and leave her alone.

“Laroy! Get out here!” Clay yelled, pissed off that things weren’t going the way he thought they should.

She was about to yell back at Clay to shut up, but Laroy eased out of his office.

“What the hell Laroy?” Jax questioned, confused at the Niner’s twitchiness.

“Lobo took out three of my men this morning. We’re all a little skittish.” Laroy explained.

“We need to know where the Lobos are.” Jax said.

Laroy laughed at Jax’s request. “Did you not hear what I just said? Lobos are targeting us because we had to roll with Galindo. Because of you.”

“Look, they came after me and my family. My old lady is in the hospital right now finding out if she can still do surgeries or not. You’re the only ones that had a relationship with them. You must know where they are. Tell us, and we’ll take care of them and we all can get back to business.”

“I’m sorry about your old lady. But I don’t know where they are. We never did.” Laroy shook his head.

“Come on, man. There must be something.” Tig tried.

“All I had was a burner. It got switched out after every meeting we had with them. I never knew where they hung out. Everything was done over the phone. They met us.” Laroy explained. “Now, if you don’t mind, I have funerals to arrange.”

Jax and everyone looked around at the grief-stricken men realizing that there wasn’t anything that the Niners could do for them. Jax nodded in defeat and everyone started for the door. Chibs gently pulling her with him.

“No...no...hey...lady...you can’t leave…” The ghost was racing after her.

She flinched as the ghost stumbling in front of her, halting her progress to the door.

“What is it?” Chib asked.

“He doesn’t want me to leave.”

“Well, tell him we have to go.”

“No! You gotta tell them shit for me!” The ghost yelled right in front of her face.
“God damn it! You don’t have to yell! I can hear you just fine.” She couldn’t help yelling back at the ghost. “What could be so important? You’re dead, you’re done with this life.” She felt like she was on a sensory overload with Clay’s bee swarm, the grief-stricken Niners, now the ghost was demanding her attention.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs grumbled as she yelled in the empty space in front of her.

The guys had all stopped with her outburst, talking to someone that wasn’t in front of her.

“What’s going on?” Marcus asked Jax.

“I don’t know.”

“Fuck, I know. But I can’t leave.” The ghost claimed. “Malcolm and Tiny left already.”

She ran a hand over her hair. “What’s your name?”

“Oh sorry. Tyrone.”

“Jax? What's with the crazy?” Laroy waved a hand at her.

"She's not crazy, fucker." Chibs threatened.

Jax sighed and stepped closer to Laroy. “I’m not sure. She’s the Seer, though.”

“Tyrone? One of the guys you lost this morning?” She asked Laroy impatiently.

Laroy jerked at her question, his eyes bugging out a little. “Yeah. Why?”

“He’s here. Says he needs to tell you something. Won’t let me leave without passing along the message.” She focused back to Tyrone. “Well? What do you want me to tell them?”

“Oh man...thank you! Thank you! I’ve been trying to talk to Darnell and everyone for like fucking forever but nobody hears me!” The ghost hopping up and down excitedly.

She was getting a headache watching him bounce around the place, Tyrone ending up next to Darnell. “Oh my God. Quit that. And pull up your pants before they fall down. I don’t need to see your ghostly ass. Thank you, very much.” She scolded like a schoolmarm. But Tyrone straightened up and did in fact yank at his jeans so his ass wasn’t half hanging out.

“Jesus Christ, we don’t have time for this shit.” Clay glowered.

“M ‘anam?” Chibs checked her.

“I’m fine. He’s just excited that I can hear and see him.”

Rolling her eyes, she walked up to Darnell, staring past his shoulder and to Tyrone who was just behind Darnell. Ignoring Darnell’s flinch and freaked out eye-stare as she went into his personal space.

“Look, you gotta tell them shit for me, it’s super important!” Tyrone started yelling again.

“Yeah, you said that already. Tell them what exactly?”

Tyrone shifted on his feet. “Right, so see, they have to go to my apartment and take care of my babies.”
“Babies?”

“Yeah. They’re like loose out of their cages. I was letting them roam around for some exercise when I got the call about the attack going down. And well, Beyonce actually bit me when I tried to rush them back to their cages. So I had to leave them loose in the apartment, take care of business.”

She really tried to follow what he was telling her but it wasn’t making sense. He was talking about babies being kept in cages? That didn’t make any sense whatsoever. “You keep babies in cages?”

Tyrone’s eyes widened as he realized she wasn’t understanding what he was saying. “That’s what I call them.”

“So, then, what the hell are you talking about?”

“They’re dragons. Komodo dragons. Love them like they were my kids.”

She had to stop and blink as she digested that tidbit. “Oh for crying out loud!”

“What?” Darnell asked confused.

She waved Darnell quiet. “Not you, him.” Waving towards the ghost behind Darnell.

"Are you kidding me?! How did you get your hands on them? They’re on the endangered list...you know what...don’t tell me. I don’t want to know.” Unbelievable. “You know there are professional places you can go to to look at exotic animals...like the zoo!”

Tyrone shrugged. “They’re my babies.”

“How big are they?”

“Steve is about seven feet now. Beyonce, she’s only six and a half, but she’s feisty.”

“God. And she bit you this morning you said?”

“Yeah. It was nothing, just a small nip.”

“Did the bite break your skin? Were you bleeding from the bite?”

Tyrone scratched at his head. “A little.”

She shook her head. “You do know that their bite is venomous, right?”

“They’re actually pretty clean.” Tyrone contradicted her.

“And yet, Beyonce bit you, breaking your skin where her saliva contains an anticoagulant. You come running out to the Lobos attack and you didn’t notice anything different about you?”

“Oh, yeah.” Tyrone admitted. “I wasn’t feeling so good. Probably why I got killed.” He figured out. “But it’s not like she meant to bite me. She’s just a dragon.”

She slapped a hand to her forehead as Tyrone defended his choice of pet. “Well, what did you expect? Idiot.” She sighed. “I guess getting shot was a mercy.”

Tyrone shrugged. “Yeah, I guess. It happened fast. Barely felt a thing. But hey, you gotta tell them to take care of Beyonce and Steve. And, also, tell them I’ve got a safe in the bedroom. Got a watch that I want Darnell to have.”
Tyrone tried to set his hand on Darnell’s shoulder but his hand disappeared inside Darnell’s body. Tyrone grinning as he popped his ghostly hand back and forth inside Darnell. Darnell’s eyes went wide as he tensed up at the sensation, not knowing what exactly it was.

“The rest in the safe can go to my brothers. Tell them I’m sorry. Should have been quicker.” Tyrone mulled. His head jerked up, “You gotta tell them!”

“Yeah, okay, okay. I’ll tell them. Jesus. Again, you don’t have to yell. What’s the combination?”

She sighed as Tyrone told her the combination.

Shaking her head, going back to Laroy. “Okay, sorry, Tyrone’s been yelling at me since I walked in. He has a couple of Komodo dragons loose in his apartment.”

"Oh fuck....” A groan came from one of Laroy's guys.

"He was bit by one of them as you called him in to help with your fight with the Lobos. His body was already infected, its probably why he was too slow in the gunfight and got killed.” She continued. "Most likely bled out pretty fast."

She glared at Tyrone, “What the hell did you feed them anyway? They eat carrion, don’t they?”

Tyrone had started walking his whole body back and forth through Darnell. Darnell, the twitchy man with a gun.

“Oh, I fed them the good shit. Go to a butcher over on Elm, he gets me fresh meat for them. It’s so dope watching them eat.” Tyrone popped back through Darnell again with an amused grin.

Jesus Christ.

Forcibly turning back to Laroy. “Anyway, you need to call a zoo or someone who can get them out of there. The apartment is probably contaminated with their venom by now.”

“Don’t forget about the safe!” Tyrone reminded her.

She broke off, looking at Tyrone with a cross look. “I’m getting to it. Geez, Calm down.”

“He’s saying he has a safe in the bedroom, he wants the club to have the contents. The combination is 97-15-12. It’s Shanique’s birthday backwards. The watch inside, he wants it to go to Darnell.”

“You’re talking to Tyrone? He’s here?” Laroy asked still a bit freaked out.

“Yeah, he’s been hanging around with Darnell, partly why he’s so twitchy, Tyrone’s been trying to get his attention.”

“Yeah. Tell them I’m sorry. I was too slow. I’m not usually off my game like that.”

She rolled her eyes and sighed. “Fiiinnnne.” She drawled. “Just quit playing with Darnell, he’s freaking out enough already.”

“What?” Darnell asked, his voice on the edge of a panic attack. “What’s going on?”

“What? This is sooo dope! Look at him jumping.” Tyrone laughed, popping through Darnell again.

She stomped over to Tyrone and stood between him and Darnell with a hard glare, daring him to try and walk through her.
“It may be funny to you but not to him. And he pointed a gun at my face at the door. So I’d appreciate it if you wouldn’t freak out the twitchy man with the gun because you think its the most hilarious thing in the world, especially when I’m helping you.” She scolded.

“What the fuck is he doing?” Darnell panicked.

“He’s trying to get your attention by trying to tap your shoulder, but he’s not solid, so his hand just disappears back and forth inside you.” She amended to what Tyrone had been doing, Darnell didn’t look like he could handle knowing that Tyrone was popping in and out of his body completely for the fun of it.

Darnell took a step back from her, his hand going to his gun. “Make him stop.”

“Calm down. He’ll stop doing it. He’s very sorry for freaking you out. Aren’t you?” She said to Darnell while glaring at Tyrone.

“Sorry.” Tyrone apologized at her glare.

“You’re dead. Okay? You can’t stay here, you need to move on.”

“Sorry. I know. I just needed my dragons taken care of.”

“I know you’re in shock with the changes. But you don’t belong here anymore. You’re time here is done. It’s not healthy for you or your brothers if you hang around here like this. They need to mourn and they can’t do that if you’re being a pest trying to get their attention all the time.”

Tyrone looked around at his freaked out brothers staring at her. “Yeah. Okay. Just tell them I love ‘em.”

“He says he’s sorry for not being faster. And that he loves you all.” She looked back to a chastened Tyrone, “Happy now? You’re welcome. Good Lord.” She muttered, walking back to Chibs.

Chibs taking her hand, pulling her close to him.

“Is he haunting us?” One of Laroy’s guys asked thinly.

“No, well, sort of. He saw Tiny and Malcolm move on. He just needed to make sure you guys took care of his dragons. And wanted you to have the safe. He might hang around for awhile and then move on.”

“Move on?”

“Yeah, move on. Look, don’t get caught up in the theology of it. Just find someone to take those dragons and get the safe.”

She looked sharply at Laroy, “And you, make sure you keep her happy. Daddy doesn’t like it when she’s unhappy. And he’s not the forgiving type.”

“Make who happy?” Laroy asked with a pointed look.

“Don’t play coy with me, you know who. Give us some time, lay low for a while. Things will settle down. Again, sorry for your loss.” She expressed her condolences before walking towards the door. Her job done here.

The men pulling back from her. The Mayans crossing themselves as she breezed past them in the heavy silence. Chibs right behind her.
The bright sunlight glared down on her and she was able to take a full breath again. She could still feel the weight of the grief in the bar, but the level of anger had come down at least.

Clay was on his phone while the guys took back their weapons. Jax and Marcus walked up next to her and Chibs. They stared questioningly at her.

“What?” She asked gruffly.

“Was there really a ghost in there?” Marcus finally asked.

She blinked at him. “Why would I make something like that up? Yes, there was a ghost in there. It’s not the first one I’ve seen.”

Marcus blinked and finally just shook his head at her, before turning back to his guys and taking off.

“Learning curve?” Jax said, his brow popping up in amusement.

“No, you don’t get to use the learning curve.” She pointed at Jax. “That’s mine. And you’re welcome by the way. Nobody was shot or killed.” She grumbled.

Clay snapped his phone shut. “That was Romeo. Just finished a meeting in Rio Vista.”

“All right, let’s go.” Jax eagerly nodded. The hunt for the men who tried to take Tara was back on.

“You’re too amped up.” Clay denied.

“What the hell do you expect!?” Jax argued.

“Go back to Charming and be with Tara. I’ll get the intel from Romeo.”

“I’m talking to these guys.” Jax pressed.

“Come on…” Opie interjected.

“What?” Jax questioned sharply.

“He’s right.” Opie defended Clay’s order.

“Let it go, Jackie.” Chibs said.

“Tara’s probably out of all her labs and testing, wondering where you are. Go reassure her that the kids are safe.” She added.

Jax was seething at being sidelined.

Clay set his hands to Jax’s shoulders, forcing Jax to look at him. “Hey, we’re going to find who did this to Tara. We’re going to hurt them. I promise. Now be with your family.”

Chibs and she shared a look at the irony of what Clay just said.

“Bobby and me are going to ride with you.” Tig declared.

Clay shook his head at Tig. “You stay with Jax.”

Bobby shook his finger at Clay. “No. You can’t ride alone. Not today.”
Clay sighed, seeing that the guys weren’t going to let this go. “Alright, let’s go.”

Jax fumed a bit but everyone was already moving. She, Chibs and Opie headed back to the clubhouse. Tig, Bobby, and Clay turned the opposite direction heading to rendezvous with Romeo. Jax riding off back to St. Thomas.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My love = mo ghaol
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 106

Chapter Summary

Hands, part 3

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone, just wanted to warn you that there is a small discussion about religion, Catholic Church, the existence of God, Jesus Christ. It's just a light discussion, not meant to rile or offend anyone. So, you are hereby warned.

Also, it's very early in the morning and I'm half-asleep posting this. So forgive me on my loquaciousness. It just flowed as I wrote it. And I get twitchy if I don't post anything in awhile.

Thank you and hope everyone is staying warm and safe during the midst of the latest round of snowstorms that have come through the Midwest. And hey, have a good Super Blood Wolf Moon! I love that name.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Her enjoyment of the ride dampened when they pulled into the lot and saw Juice. Chibs tensed up under her hands, the Rico Suave lyric started up in her head, again.

“Where the hell you been?” Chibs demanded as Juice helped walk the bike into place. Her own anger rising at Juice’s hands on their bike.

“Sorry. Roosevelt picked me up.”

“Yeah, we know. Then what?” Not letting up on Juice.

“Told a ride out to Yosemite.” She huffed at the lame excuse. Juice catching her and Chibs annoyed looks. “Should have checked in. I’m okay.” Juice tried to reassure them.

“Should have stayed in Yosemite. Shit’s hit the fan, brother. Lobo tried to take Tara.” Opie told Juice as they walked towards the clubhouse.

“Shit.” Juice swore.

Chibs walked Juice towards the garage. Talking to him as they walked. Juice nodding and Chibs slapping a hand upside Juice’s head before turning and coming back to her. Juice rubbing at the hurt but settled in to work in the garage.

She took Chibs hand when he came back to her. The two of them walking into the clubhouse.
“You okay?” He asked.

“Yeah. I’m fine. Tired.” She admitted with a shrug.

“I’ll bet. Scared the crap out of me, you talking into the empty air like that.” He said as they sat down on the sofa. Phil quickly bringing them a couple of beers before going back to the bar with Rat. “Was worried that ghost would try and take you over, like John did.”

“I didn’t even think of that. Tyrone was just so excited to see me. Started yelling and bouncing around the place. I couldn’t help but see him. It was different though from how I channeled JT. I don’t know.” She trailed off thinking about the times she’s interacted with the ghosts so far. She was glad that Tyrone hadn’t figured out how to take control of her body, not like JT did.

“Was Tyrone a young guy?” Chibs asked.

“Yeah, mid-twenties. I don’t think it was his age, maybe he just really wanted to tell them about those dragons. Those idiots better not try and keep them as pets. Shit, we should call Laroy, tell him to make sure they don’t try and keep them.” She worried.

Chibs snorted. “I don’t think the Niners would dare risk having you come back. Jesus. Half expected you to whack someone with a ruler. Maybe you were a Catholic nun in a past life?” He joked.

“Huh? What does a nun have to do with anything?” She shot him a confused look.

“Oh god.” He wiped at his eyes. “I have to get you to watch ‘The Blues Brothers.’” Was his answer. Which didn’t help her confusion.

“I give up.” She declared, setting her head down on his shoulder.

Chibs snorted and took a swig of his beer. Grinning at her, amused. She couldn’t help her grin back. She was so happy when he was like this. Just content even when things had to potential to turn to crap on a dime.

He set his beer down, twisting around a little to settle her the two of them more comfortably, his hand taking hers. Their fingers dove-tailing. Opie came back out from the apartment and walked out the door.

“Are you religious, m ‘anam?” He asked.

“Not really. Never went to church or anything.” She shrugged. “You’re Catholic. What would the Church say about what’s going on with us?”

“Hmmm...You’d probably be denounced as a witch. Especially when you don’t hold to the concept of heaven or hell. You keep talking about life lessons and learning. Even with that shit Tito, you said to him to learn from this life into his next. I mean, do you believe in God or Jesus Christ?”

“Not really, Jesus to me was just a guy who lived way back in the day. I’d thought about evil and good. If there was a heaven or a hell. And I just coming back to you live your life and reap the good or the bad you create from your actions. From all the people I’ve read, we trap ourselves by our own thinking. And the Bible, its just a book. Written by second hand accounts. A lot of it, probably is complete fiction; or science that was touted as a miracle because nobody knew what science was back then.”

“Aye, you’d definitely be going to hell with talk like that.” He joked. Planting a kiss on her cheek.
“Yeah, well, Fiona emailed me her research about Druids. Theory has it they could turn themselves into trees.”

“What?” He chuckled, his eyes flying wide open as he stared at her.

“It came from the whole ‘knock on wood’ phrase. Saying goes that the Gods or Druids would turn themselves into trees, and if you wanted to talk about something without them hearing about it, you knock on wood, deafening whatever deity is in the tree. I really hope that I’m not turning into a tree.”

“Fuck. Did it say if they turned back?”

“No, nothing that Fiona could find at least.” She shrugged. “I don’t feel very tree-y, despite the tattoo. Not when I need you to keep from floating or passing out. You’re still my anchor.”

“Rat, give me a Jameson. My head’s going a million miles.”

She grinned at his ire.

“Maybe the more strongly the message intent is, the louder and pressing it feels. Plus, Tyrone was recently killed, he’d been poisoned and then shot in such short time. With JT, he’s written his book and the letters, his message was already here for someone to find. The thing with Maureen, I don’t know, Maureen was just so horrified, her emotions were right there, you couldn’t not see them. It felt more like tapping into that energy and JT sort of slipped in. God, I don’t know.”

“What about Piney.” He asked quietly. “You see him around?”

She glanced around the room making sure they weren’t being listened to. “No. I talked to Piney. I asked him if he was sure. He wasn’t budging. Told him that he wouldn’t be forgotten and the truth of what happened would be brought to light. Maybe that was enough for him to move on instead of hang around here.”

Chibs sighed heavily. Turning his whiskey eyes to hers. The look was enough of a response. She tightened her grip on his hand. He squeezing back.

Rat dropped off the glass of whiskey for Chibs as she curled closer to him. Closing her eyes as she tried to let go of the stress of all that’s happened today.

She was nearly asleep when Tig showed up. Dropping into the chair next to their sofa with a beer in hand.

“Bobby back, too? How’d it go with Romeo?” Chibs asked.

“Bobby’s working in the garage with Juice and Ope. Clay talked with Galindo then went home.” Tig scratched at his mustache.

“Did they know anything about where the Lobos are?” Chibs questioned.

“Clay said not yet.”

“Clay said.” She asked, looking more directly at Tig over his wording.

“Yeah.” Tig tilted his head at her, his brows creasing.

“Weren’t you listening to what Clay and Romeo were talking about? Was Bobby?” She asked Tig.
“No. We were watching out for Lobos.”

“Jesus Christ.” She muttered.

“What?” Tig asked, sensing that something was wrong.

She shot a warning look to Chibs that he rubbed at his eyes in frustration.

“What the fuck is going on? Why would we need to listen in on Clay’s meeting with Romeo? He told us there wasn’t anything to know yet.”

“How are you doing reading that book?” She questioned Tig, turning the conversation away from the missed opportunity to catch Clay in a lie.

“Almost done. JT was fucking complicated. Had no idea he was thinking all that stuff.” Tig said, rubbing at his chin in thought. “Reminds me of why I joined the club in the first place, though. What it was like back then. We were already in guns, but we still needed to establish ourselves. We had to have a show of force with the other clubs. But JT never would have touched the coke.”

“No, he wouldn’t. I fucking hate it. Hate that I helped keep us in the guns.” Chibs agreed with a scowl.

“Being king isn’t all its cracked up to be. The best leaders are people who have vision and don’t ask anything of anyone that they wouldn’t do themselves.” She said.

“Clay’s a good leader.” Tig defended.

“Really? Is this from being Clay’s right hand and his confidante all these years? Or is this from his past performance? Following his plan of action...did it come close to the conclusion that was best for the club or for Clay? Or was it by sheer blind luck that you all came through things despite what Clay set you out to do? You just said that JT wouldn’t mule drugs for a cartel... Would he sell military grade weapons to a cartel? Would he have put a hit out on a member? Would JT ever put the club at risk like Clay is right now?” She debated back.

Tig squirmed as she brought up Donna and his part in her death. “Its a risk, sure, but the money is good. Fast.”

She scoffed at his answer. “How easily you forget my little demonstration. Money is nothing without the people in your life. And by the way, notice we haven’t finished the vote on leadership? How convenient for Clay. You and Bobby not even listen in on his conversation with Romeo earlier? How do you know what was discussed? You just blindly accept whatever Clay tells you. The club touts itself a democracy, everyone having a vote, yet how can you vote unless you have all the facts?”

“Why you dislike Clay so much? You’re suggesting Clay’s betraying the club...unless you have proof, don’t be talking like that to anyone else.” Tig warned.

“Jesus, we’re just talking. She’s bringing up points that you should be asking yourself just from reading JT’s book.” Chibs said.

“I’m sure Clay is a nice person when he wants to be. But he and Gemma have a history, they harbor secrets. You know some of them, some of what they’ve done that the club hasn’t been made aware of. But it is only a fraction of what they did behind your back. Behind the club’s back.” She mollified slightly.
Tig frowning at her as her questions made him think.

“Take a step back, Tig. Think of all the things that Clay has done and how it has affected the club. The things he’s had you do. He didn’t even have to ask, just dropped a hint in your ear and you go running off and spill blood for Clay; the two of you feeding each other your discontent, making assumptions without finding out facts. You know what I mean. I read you so don’t act like you don’t. You got a tattoo to remind yourself of your mistake. If you had simply questioned Clay a little more. Waited another day, Donna would still be alive. Lowell Sr. might be alive. Clay uses you do his dirty work, would he do the same for you? I doubt it. Not unless there was an upside for him. And worse, he makes you think it was your idea. Shifting blame from himself.” She shot back to Tig.

Chibs silent as he listened to her talk. Tig glancing to him then back to her.

“Lowell, Sr. was ratting. He was a junky and knew what was going on with the club. Got taken in by the cops. We were in the middle of the bloodiest war the club has ever seen.” Tig countered.

“Really? You sure about that? Clay told you that and you took care of it, no questions asked?” She leaned closer to Tig, getting into the debate with him.

“Fuck.” He breathed sharply, getting upset at her poking into things. “Look, things were happening fast. We didn’t have time to think, we slow down and we would’ve been dead. Donna, fuck, that was a mistake.” Tig was pointing at her with the heat of his opinion. “But Opie was bugged. His phone, his truck. Clay and I met with Rosen, he told us that Opie might be back just to get us wired and on tape. The evidence was stacked against him.” Tig defended his and Clay’s actions.

“Then why didn’t Clay bring it to the table? Why keep it from us? Clay had just pardoned Opie, what the hell was the truth then?” Chibs questioned. “If he was ratting, you know that it has to be a club vote, a mayhem vote. You and Clay decided all on your own, and it got Donna killed.”

“God. You don’t get it.” Tig fought them.

“Tig, think. Take a look at Jax, that whole scheme he came up with to deal with Stahl. Giving Opie a chance to find peace, just like Chibs for taking out Jimmy, once and for all. Though you thinking that it was Stahl’s fault with what happened to Donna...she didn’t put the gun in your hand. You did that all on your own. You and Clay. Whatever.”

She cut herself off from dressing down Tig over his part in Donna’s death, feeling her own anger at Tig’s idiocy for believing Clay. His belief that it wasn’t him, it was Stahl that forced them to target Opie. Tig and Clay had a choice that day. They chose wrong and Tig continues to believe that it wasn’t his fault.

“But it was!” She waved at Tig’s angry outburst. “She…”

“Stop. I read you Tig. I’m really don’t want to get into who was to blame for Donna. That’s a whole other discussion. I’m helping you see the difference between Clay and Jax handling things. Jax cut that deal to get you all out with short time, instead of a much longer sentence. Even Gemma was let off the hook for her going on the lam. Jesus, if Clay had listened to Jax long before, you guys never would have gotten caught up in that trap laid out for you in Morada. He warned all of you of what would happen. Did Clay listen? No. He just blindly steamrolls over a problem the same way he does everything else and ends up making everything more complicated.”

Tig rubbed at his forehead as he listened to her. “It’s all just a bunch of could’ve, would’ve, should’ves. That’s all in the past. We can’t go back and change anything.”
She sat up and leaned closer to Tig. “That attitude is killing you. Didn’t you learn anything through all of that? What not to do when something happens now or in the future that’ll remind you of what happened in the past? Leading you to take a different approach? And when you think about it, you had the most fun on Jax’s schemes than Clay’s. Clay had you go after Opie. Jax would never ask you to do that.”

“Ope’s his best friend, never would have happened.”

“Even so, Jax has the moral fortitude to do the dirty work himself. He’d never ask anyone to do something like that if he himself wasn’t willing to do it himself. He’d hate himself for having to do some of the things that you’ve done for Clay, but he would do it. If it was good for the club as a whole, he’d do it. Jax sees the good for the club, the vision and is able to fix things to twist it into that path. Caracara for instance. JT was like that.”

Tig narrowed his eyes at her. “You...Did you read Jax?” His jaw dropped at the thought of her knowing Jax. Shit.

“I don’t need to read him to know what kind of person he is. I have impressions of him through you and Gemma. I’ve seen him in action from the dreams.” She deflected. “You’re trying to deflect the point of this whole conversation.”

Tig’s jaw snapped shut as he sat back with a huff.

“If you were running the club, what would you do? Where do you want this club to end up? Do you want it still muling coke for the next couple of decades? Still selling heavy guns to a Mexican cartel? The probabilities that the Sons would survive is very slim. You’d either be dead or in prison. When was the last time you saw Otto? Go visit him, that will be you if you survive.”

“Christ.” Tig muttered. “Where are you on this Chibs?”

“Like she said, the leadership vote’s been forgotten. And I agree that Clay is twisting us up to his own ends. He’d been planning this deal since Stockton. We’d only agreed on moving the existing gun sales from the Russians to the Galindos when you stepped out of Stockton. Now we’re dealing in wmd’s and muling serious weight of coke. Those are life sentences. I don’t need a seer to tell me it’s bad. This can’t go on the way its been. It’ll destroy us...just as JT predicted in his book.”

“Fuck, Why’d you have to give me that book. I’m a simple guy, a soldier. Give me an order and I do it. All this thinking is making my head hurt.” Tig complained.

“Tig, you’re not twenty-two years old anymore. You have to start looking and weighing your options. Looking to the future, what and where you want to be and doing. For the club. You can’t just make a snap decision, the ramifications amplify around you. Affecting not just you, but the people around you. You get your dick sucked by your taco two-fer, they’re found dead at the blown up, Bluebird warehouse. And the club is left to clean it up. It was fun and hilarious at the time, but if you had simply taken more care in who you get your rocks off the club wouldn’t have had to run all over town to create a whole other crime scene just to delay the cops so you and the guys could clean up your mess.”

“How was I to know that the warehouse was going to be burned down? Or that they would be there?” Tig waved his arm out wildly.

“That’s not the point. Of course you couldn’t know that. But you’re running around looking to get off without regard to how your behavior affects everyone else around you. You banged that nurse of Nate’s and he fucking shot you.” She gave him a cross look, huffing at his grin. “And don’t get
me started on your little sexcapade in the livestock trailer in Oregon, the guys had to rescue you
from those bounty hunters because you ran on your bond.”

Chibs started laughing.

“So what I’m supposed to become some monk?” Tig blinked at the horror of that notion.

Chibs fairly choked on his own laughing fit at the idea and Tig’s reaction. Tig flipping him the
finger.

“Christ, no.” She rolled her eyes at Tig. ”What I’m getting at is that you need to be more aware of
what the hell you’re doing. Not just with your dick, but with your actions. Keep up the fun and
games and everyone will look at you like you’re a fool that can’t be trusted, that can’t potentially
lead this club. You are third in line to the gavel.”

Tig’s head jerked back at that reasoning. Something he didn’t actually think of. Good Lord.

“Where is your line? Where is your critical thinking? Even questioning Clay’s directives? Is what
he doing the best course of action for the club? Are you okay with it? With the consequences? And
it isn’t just Clay, its Gemma, its me, its Jax, its everyone around you.”

She shook her head. “JT was complicated and kept things close to his chest, things that he should
have been bringing to the table but for some reason he didn’t. There had to be a reason for doing
that. What was the table like then? Did it lend to open debate? Or was Clay undermining JT? What
do you want for the club? Do you want it to be a place of discord, fear, and greed? Or do you want
to be of friendship, support, a sanctuary, a home? Does your behavior reflect those choices? So far,
not so much. Still out for the quick pleasures and fun. Allowing yourself to be led around the nose
by Gemma and Clay. Wake up, Tig. Things are moving fast and will be changing soon. You need
to start thinking about the future of this club and what your role is going to be.”

“What does Gemma have to do with the club?”

“Really? You have to ask that? Whose dick almost serviced her?” She asked pointedly. “How
much information have you told her about the club, of what is going on in chapel? How often has
she come to you to express her opinion or lent her ear to you, and then you walking into that room.
Who is it that is in your head? Between Clay and Gemma, I doubt you’ve made a vote that was all
your own in a very long time. If ever.”

Tig looked like he wanted to argue with her. But she shook her head at him.

“Don’t say anything. Think about what I’ve said. Take your time with it. You don’t look at things
the same way as you do when you were eighteen or twenty-five. Even when you hit your fifties or
sixties, you’ll look back and reflect on what you were thinking or did. Experience and events shape
us. Help us draw lines of what is acceptable and what isn’t, no matter what anyone else it telling
you. And this self-reflection, its for you. Nobody can take that away from you. Stop listening and
believing everything Clay or Gemma tells you. Ask yourself, do they have the best intentions for
you or this club? Or is it for themselves? I gave you that book because this club forgets its original
intent. The club is at a decision point. And you have been drifting along for the ride for far too
long, being spoon fed by Clay and Gemma. Letting everyone else make the decisions for you.
Time to step up and apply some critical thinking, Tig. The book is only half the story of what
happened to JT. The other half will come to light soon.”

She sighed and finished off her drink, as Tig blinked at her a little dumbfoundedly.
“I don’t know if I like the idea of Tig thinking for himself, gets into more trouble than you know.” Chibs quirked a beginning of a sly smile at Tig.

“Fuck you. I can think on my own.” Tig argued, whipping his head at Chibs for his smack. “Fuck, my head hurts.”

“Bullshit. You think just fine. Just let yourself get lazy. The club can’t afford you to be lazy anymore. Put some brains behind your actions. Read JT’s book again, really think about what he’s writing about. How does it apply to you? What can you do to make things better?”

“Oh my god.” Tig groaned, scowling at her. “You said you’d have answers for me, so far its just more fucking questions.”

“I have answers for you. But until you think about the questions and try and answer them yourself, I can’t help you. It’s work you have to do on your own. Work everyone in the club has to do on their own.”

“Fuck me.” Tig groaned again.

“Come on, let’s go check on Jackie. Make sure he didn’t bust out Tara.” Chibs said laughing.

“Thank Christ.” Tig stood up rapidly, looking to get away from her and her questions.

She grinned at him, which seemed to make him more antsy to get away. But she knew that her questions wouldn’t let him get away. They’d plague him until he actually sat down and tried to think about things for himself.

They gathered up Bobby, Opie and Juice for their visit to St. Thomas. She oddly was feeling better after her debate with Tig, not exactly why that is. But didn't want to jinx it by questioning it too much. She held tighter around Chibs as they rode through town, feeling more settled than before.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 107

Chapter Summary

Hands, part 4

Chapter Notes

Sorry for delay. Was/am besieged with work and had to rewrite this section a few times. Finally settled on a version that I'm happy with. Could've been fine-tuned a bit more, but I'm working on upcoming chapters that I'm dying to get out to you.

I hope that everyone is safe and in a warm place for the next few days if you're in the midwest-east coast of the US. We've got a bit of a freeze going on here. About ready to see polar bears and penguins to come waltzing by at any moment.

Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Oh Christ.” Bobby muttered, as Roosevelt appeared before them.

“See you found your lost friend.” Roosevelt snarked.

“Aye, no thanks to you.” Chibs said, stepping right in front of Roosevelt. The guys automatically circled around Juice.

Roosevelt heaved a sigh, his eyes landing on Juice. “Give me a minute?”

“Back off!” Tig warned.

Animosity grew between the guys and Roosevelt as the stand-off dragged on. Hospital staff were shooting them curious looks.

“Hey, this isn’t the time or place.” She warned the guys, turning her glare onto Eli. “Do I need to call my lawyers?” Eli’s eyes went wide at her threat, but Juice spoke up.

“It’s cool. I’ll be right there.” Juice stepped in.

The guys glanced at Juice, who just nodded and gave them a bit of a smile that he was okay.

Chibs glared at Roosevelt warningly as he and the guys started back down the hallway. Leaving Juice behind. She glanced back at Juice and Roosevelt and watched the apologetic expression wash over Roosevelt.

“What the hell was that about? Calling your lawyers? What lawyers?” Tig asked. The guys all looked to her for an answer.
“Oh god.” She sighed.

Bobby laughed and started telling everyone their trip to the police station earlier. Her threat to Roosevelt. Laughing about it. The guys who were just learning of her antics shot her a mix of shock to wonderment at her defence of one of their own.

Chibs glancing at her, she rolling her eyes as they kept moving down the corridors.

“That takes balls. Throwing down to a Sheriff in his own house.” Opie said. “You know something that we don’t?”

“Holy shit!” Tig yelled, bouncing excitedly in front of her. Making her jerk back.

Everyone stopped as Tig didn’t let up, grinning at her gleefully. “You read that fucker, didn’t you?” He questioned with a pointed finger.

“Tig! Jesus man.” Chibs glared at Tig, pulling her close protectively from Tig’s wild gesticulations.

“Oh for god’s sake, it doesn’t take a genius to figure out that Roosevelt’s got a bug up his butt over Juice. Did you not know that Juice has been targeted? He’s been hauled in for drug tests seven times since you guys got out.”

“Seven? Really?” Opie eyed her with a tilt of his head.

“Shit.” Tig muttered.

“I told you guys that you have to stop treating yourselves as criminals. It plays into Roosevelt’s hands. Strengthens the already existing opinion that you’re nothing more than criminals. You have rights, even with you on parole. You have a right to a lawyer. The way he smirks and talks to you…” She shook her head at them. “He’s overstepping his authority. I called him on it.”

The guys all shifted a look between themselves.

“Hey, come on.” Chibs prodded and started them all walking again. Shifting his hold around her to her hand.

She shot Chibs a grateful look, squeezing his hand. His dark eyes looking to her and gave their hands a playful waggle.

They found Jax in a small waiting area near Tara’s room, standing up at the sight of them. Chibs drags Jax into a hug, letting him go so the rest of the guys can hug their VP.

She takes in how shaky he looks. “How’s Tara doing?”

“They had to put some screws and plates in to straighten her break. But it looks good. She’s still shaken up.” He said tightly, his eyes flicking to her and to where Tara’s room was.

“It okay if I go check on her?” She asked.

Jax nodding, “Yeah, that’d be good. Thanks.”

She gave Chibs a peck on the cheek before leaving him with Jax and the guys to talk.

Giving Phil a nod, she slipped into Tara’s room. Tara was hooked up to monitors, her arm all trussed up.
Tara opened her eyes and upon seeing her burst into tears.

“Oh...hey, you’re okay. It’s okay, everyone is okay.” She rushed to Tara’s bedside, patting at the air around Tara, but realized she must look like an idiot and crossed her arms. Feeling helpless to provide comfort to Tara’s pain and distress. God this sucked. She was tempted to run out and grab Jax to have him hold Tara for her.

She looked around and saw a box of kleenex. Grabbing it she waved it in front of Tara. Tara pulling a couple tissues out to mop herself up.

“I didn’t want to believe it. I’m sorry.” Tara cried. “I’m so sorry.”

“Hey....you’ve got nothing to be sorry for. You’re okay, you’re still a kick-ass surgeon.” She reassured with a grin. Trying to humor her out of her fear-fueled crying episode.

Tara gave a harsh laugh despite her roller-coaster emotions. “I was so scared. They came out of nowhere. God, I was putting the boys in their car seats when they grabbed me. The boys?” She jerked looking directly at her for an answer that the kids were okay.

“They’re fine. Relax, breathe. The boys are fine. You’re fine. Of course you were scared. It’s okay.”

Tara looked away again. “If Jax wasn’t there…” She started crying again, hiccuping with every other breath.

“But he was.” She tried to cut off Tara’s emotional train of thoughts once more. Glancing at the IV and wondered if there was actually any medications in there to help Tara calm down or not.

“Jax blames himself.” Tara managed to say.

“Of course he does.” She huffed. “He wouldn’t be Jax if he didn’t try and take the blame for all the bad shit that happens.” She rolled her eyes, setting the kleenex box down alongside Tara’s bed so she could reach it for fresh tissues.

Tara staring at her, flummoxed by what she’d said. “But you know that it wasn’t his or your fault. None of this is your fault.” She leaned closer to Tara, catching her eyes. “Don’t you dare think for one second that you are at fault for any of this.”

Tara’s eyes went wide at her directive, only to look away. Her cheeks flushing. Her eyes flicking back to her.

“What is it? Do you need the doctors?” She asked, worried Tara had hurt herself or something during her meltdown. Ready to run out and grab someone.

“No. I’m...I’m okay.” Tara ended up with a small shrug.

“Then what’s wrong?”

“I’m sorry.” Tara apologized with a quick look.

She leaned back a little, confused to the sudden shift in Tara’s demeanor and apology. “I told you, you don’t have anything to be sorry for.”

Tara huffed. “No, not that. Jax had me believing...told me to take the job in Providence. That he was out.” She admitted softly, giving a shake of her head. “I believed him. I was so happy. Elated.
Everything was clicking into place. That maybe it had all changed already.”

“Oh...I see. Even after I ran Jax and you through the wringer, the two of you still thought that you’d be able to get out like Jax had planned.” She put together.

Tara pressing her hand to her eyes, her tears running fresh. “I’m sorry I didn’t believe you.”

Sighing, she pulled the visitors chair up closer to Tara’s bedside.

She sat there, letting Tara get herself together. Eventually, looking to her. Confusion at why she wasn’t yelling at her or admonishing her for even thinking that she had gotten free despite her warnings.

“What?” She shrugged at Tara. “You think you’ve been the only ones who thought they’d escape the future that I’d warned you about? Of course, the two of you would try and get out.” She said obviously.

“You...you knew?” Tara asked, blinking at her in astonishment.

“I suspected. It’s no big deal. It happens. I threw a very harsh mirror in your faces and of course you’d balk. Jax especially. Want to try and prove me wrong. Actually hoped that he’d succeed.”

Tara threw herself back into her stack of pillows, well as much as she could. Her wounded arm holding her in a somewhat limited space. “God. How stupid you must think we are.”

“Oh, Christ. Don’t start.” She whipped back harshly. Tara looking at her again. “I don’t think you’re stupid. You’re under a lot of pressure and looking for an escape from all this crap. It’s obvious that Charming is not safe. And what I know of what you are capable of, you are anything but stupid. There’s nothing wrong to have hope.”

Tara pressed her lips together, balling up her fistful of tissues.

“But, you are caught in a trap. Clay and Gemma are fighting tooth and nail for those letters. There isn’t anything either one of them will do to keep those from coming out. Today is proof of that. Clay is willing to kill you to keep those letters secret. To keep you from telling Jax or anyone about those letters. Gemma isn’t at the same place of violence as Clay at the moment, but she’s willing to beat the shit out of you to keep you in line. After, of course, you’ve handed her the letters.”

“God damn it! Why can’t we just deliver them to the club now. End all this subterfuge. This...this isn’t a normal life. This isn’t how I saw myself living. This isn’t how I want my kids growing up!” Tara lambasted.

“And we are working on it. I told you, the future is hard to change. You’ve got multitude of people that are affecting the future all the time. As long as Clay and Gemma are in their position of power over the club and the town...nothing will change. But things are changing, Tara. In my reading of Jax...it was your hand that was crushed. The risk of nerve damage was much higher than it is now. You’re a doctor...you know all this. Your doctors probably told you, too. You’re scared and you have every right to be scared.”

Tara dropped her head sheepishly for a moment. “When? How much longer? I don’t think I can do this for much longer.”

“Soon. The next few days.”

Tara’s eyes narrowed on hers, searching for a lie. “How?”
“Piney.” She said simply.

Tara turned confused again. “What does Piney have to do with this?” Waving her free hand to her damaged arm.

She glanced at the door, her headache tightening around her skull. “Clay killed Piney. Opie is going to find him up at the cabin soon. Gemma sent Wayne to stage the scene. He’s been working up there the last couple of days.”

“Oh my god. He’s dead? When?”

“After the Community fundraiser.”

Tara gave a deep breath. “Gemma...she accused me of showing Piney the letters. Oh my God.”

“Tara, Piney put together enough all on his own without ever reading or seeing the letters. He still made the choice to leverage Clay over them. Chibs and I both tried to talk Piney out of it. But he was determined to carry on with his plan.”

“I got him killed.” Tara’s voice hitched.

“No. You didn’t. Don’t put that on yourself. You had nothing to do with what Piney decided to do. He knew the risks he was taking. He knew Clay better than any of us. He still went through with it. Piney would be telling you the same thing if he were here.” She quickly put the kibosh on Tara’s guilt trip.

“I can’t...I just can’t believe this is all happening.”

“I know. It is a bit over the top. And it’s only going to get even more insane in the coming days. But Tara, you have the upper hand right now.”


“Appear weak when you are strong, and strong when you are weak.” She said simply.

Tara’s breath caught at the quote, her brows reaching towards her hairline. “You’re quoting ‘The Art of War’?”

“Think about it.” She shrugged as Tara blinked at her. “They think you are weak. But I know that you are much stronger than you think. Stronger than what Gemma or Clay believes. And when you calm down, you’ll know it too. You have the upper hand. You have what everyone wants.”

Tara’s eyes hazed out a little as she thought about what she’d said. One of the machines Tara was hooked up to beeped. She glanced at the various screens, trying to see if anything was wrong, but Tara wasn’t concerned about it so she looked back to Tara.

“Things will get better. Just give it a little more time. We talked about your options and your life here in Charming. I’m not giving up on that. It’s not just you Tara, it’s this town and everyone who has suffered under the weight of Clay’s leadership. Under Gemma’s meddling.”

“Damn it.” Tara groaned.

“Well, it would’ve been better, if you hadn’t been targeted at all. But hey, gotta work with what we’re given. You’re still a surgeon. Nobody can take that away from you. Even if it had been your hand and not your arm, you would’ve come through this to still be a surgeon. Just would have
Tara huffed and stared at the black screen of the TV across the room. “I’m not feeling so strong at the moment.”

“Let your body heal. Let your mind plan. Jax, Chibs, me—we’re here to help. You survived a battle, but the war rages. So I suggest you take this time to rest and get yourself together. Because Clay, Gemma, even Wendy will all come to see you. Each with their own agenda. You aren’t alone here. Jax is right outside.”

“God. I screamed at him. He must hate me.” Tara swiped at her eyes again.

“No. He doesn’t. He loves you. Even when you scream at him...he’ll always love you, just as much as you love him. If you didn’t feel as deeply as you do, you would have left a long time ago. So don’t twist yourself up over that bullshit. It’s a waste of time and energy. If I were you, I’d let everyone pamper me. You’ve been carrying quite a lot on your shoulders and you deserve a break. I know I’m tired. It’s been a busy day.” She grinned as Tara shot her a confused look.

“What do you mean? What’s been going on?”

“Hmmm, well, there’s a swarm of pissed-off bees surrounding Clay all day.” She sat back in the visitors chair.

“What? Bees?”

“Psychic bees. Clay fucked up. Knew what he’d done the minute he’d pulled into the lot this morning. The noise is driving me nuts. Anyway, Jax is worried and pissed off about your attack, we had to go running all over town to calm his ass down.”

“Huh?”

She huffed a laugh at Tara’s confusion. “You’ll love this. Ran into another ghost. The Lobos attacked the Niners this morning. They lost three guys. Well, one of them was hanging around their clubhouse, trying to get his brother’s attention. It wouldn’t let me leave without passing along a message. Get this, the idiot has a couple of Komodo dragons loose in his apartment. Beyonce and Steve. He’s hanging around until they get taken care of. I mean, come on, what was he thinking getting a pair of dragons. Calls them his babies. What an idiot.” She rolled her eyes at the memory.

“What?” Tara glanced at the IV drip that was feeding her whatever painkillers and other drugs her doctors had prescribed. “Did you just say dragons?”

“You can ask Jax, he’ll tell you.” Tara didn’t look convinced and glanced towards the door. “In all my readings, it still amazes me at how weird people can be. Anyway, one of the dragons bit him before he was killed by a Lobo. We figured that getting shot was a blessing instead of suffering the venom from the bite.”

“I suppose so. Haven’t had any patients with a bite from a dragon.”

She grinned watching Tara trying to follow along with her story, not sure if she wanted to question her over the truthfulness of it or not. But she was glad that her story was distracting Tara from her pain and fear. At least for a little bit.

“Anyway, it’s been busy.” She stood up and pushed the chair back out of the way. “I’m glad that you’re okay and your hand is safe. I have to get back to Chibs, or I’ll steal your morphine for my headache. But I think you need it more than I do.” She grinned catching Tara grabbing at her
clicker protectively. “Call me if you need anything.”

“Thanks. I feel so stupid for doubting you.”

“It’s okay, you’re a scientist, built to question everything. You want me to bring you anything? Book or something?”

“No, I’m good.” Tara’s speech slurring a little. “I’ve got Gemma to turn the screws to. Make her jump through some hoops.”

She chuckled, Tara was already plotting. “Well, have fun with that.” She said as Tara dropped off into a drug-induced slumber.

With Tara down for the count, she left the room and headed back to the waiting room. Chibs looking up from the discussions the guys were having. His hand reaching out for hers.

The two of them groaned as soon as they took each other’s hands. Chibs pulling her into his lap.

“How’s Tara?” Jax asked, his worried eyes glancing at Tara’s door.

“She’s fine. Just dropped off to sleep. Needed to vent.” She gave Jax a hard look.

He shifted his eyes from hers at her subtle admonishment, giving a nod. “I’m going to hang, stay with Tara. But you guys should head back.” Jax said to the guys.

“We’ll leave the prospects. You need anything?” Bobby asked.

“I’m good.” Jax replied, standing up as they all gathered Jax into another round of hugs.

“Ope, can I talk to you a minute?” Jax called as the group of them headed for the exit. Opie hanging back at Jax’s request.

They waved and headed back through the hospital to where they’d parked their bikes.

Chibs was scheduled to close up the garage. Soon as everyone had clocked out they went into the clubhouse.

Bobby and Tig were inside already, a couple of croweaters hanging around. One tried to beeline to Chibs, but they brushed past the girl as he pulled her into his arms, dancing her to the music playing.

Leading her around the tables and chairs in quick swoops and circling steps that had her laughing as she tried not to step on his feet.

She turned her head when Chibs abruptly stopped moving, his eyes looking off to their right.

Clay walked into the clubhouse. A duffle in hand, his face scratched up, walking towards the apartment. She held her breath, watching the swarm around an oblivious Clay. The bees weren’t as active as before, just a low drone.

“What the hell happened to you?” Tig asked Clay. Bobby and Tig pushing the croweaters away as they stood up at Clay’s entrance, taking in Clay’s beat up appearance for themselves.

Clay didn’t respond to Tig’s question. Didn’t even break stride as he disappeared from their view.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs muttered.
Tig stared off at where Clay disappeared only to glance her way. The guys not sure if they should go and try and talk to Clay or not.

Chibs looked into her eyes. “Ready to go home, mo ghaol?”

“Absolutely.”

He stared down at her a moment longer before grabbing her up into a quick, breathless kiss.

Leaning her forehead to his, his eyes looking into hers, their harsh breath wafting between them. She gave him a small smile and he smiled back, his arms tightening around her as he led her from the clubhouse and out the door. Leaving all the troubles that was brewing behind for another night. Because whatever the fallout...it could wait a few more hours.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 108

Chapter Summary

Call of Duty, part 1

Chapter Notes

Survived the polar vortex. Lost internet, phones, and TV for 3 days. Thank goodness for my cell phone. That worked, but wasn't good for writing. Need an actual keyboard.

Here's the next part, enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was late when they got home. Too tired to do much beyond wash up and eat some leftover dinner. The sun breaking through the gap of the curtains helped push her back to wakefulness. The light cast a warm and gold light across Chibs arm that was folded around her. The tiny hairs on his arm caught her attention, watching the way the light played with his skin and hair as her fingers lightly strummed over them.

“Hrmh...that tickles.” Chibs hummed in her ear.

“Hmm, sorry?” She kept playing softly with the hairs on his arm.

His eyelids cracked open, catching her eyes. “You’re not sorry at all, are ye’?” He smirked amusedly at her.

Giggling, she flipped around so she straddled him. Her hands sweeping across his chest and shoulders. His hands first settling around her hips and drifting up her torso to play with her breasts. His fingers teasing her nipples.

“Now who’s teasing who now?” She gasped.

“Witch.” He laughed, his hand moving to her arm to pull her down, capturing her lips with his.

Flipping around so he was hovering over her. His lips nipping and kissing along her neck. She groaned as his teeth sunk into the curve of her neck. Her fingers dug into his back. “God.” She grit out. Feeling herself stretch and curl around Chibs. Stretching to reach for something that she was missing.

He let go of her neck and moved down to her breasts, suckling at them. Her nipples rock hard. God, how he managed to turn her inside out so fast she had no idea. “Need you.” She whimpered.

He ripped himself up from her, his hand going to the bedside drawer and ripping open a condom. His dark eyes searching hers out once more. She drew him down over her. “Please.”

“Mother of Christ.” He groaned, sweeping her up into another soul-searching kiss as he pressed
inside her.

She clenched down on him soon as he started inside her. She was ready for him, needed him, but the speed of it all caught her off-guard.

“M ‘anam...” Chibs gritted, his muscles tense as he waited for her.

“Sorry.” She managed to say as she forced herself to relax.

His eyes caught hers again, their hands holding the others, fingers dovetailing. “Okay?”

“Yeah. Sorry. Don’t stop.” She wrapped her legs around him, keeping him from doing anything stupid and stop

He quirked a rueful grin. “Fuck, don’t be sorry.” He said as he surged inside her.

“Yes.” She hissed.

“Christ, you’re tight.” He muttered as she shifted back and forth.

“Sorry?” She wasn’t sure if she was supposed to apologize for that or not.

He glared down at her. Guess not. His expression had her huffing a laugh. “Fuck me.” He muttered with a chuckle.

“Uh...no...its a fuck me.” Quirking a brow at him, teasing him. “Unless you want to...uh...explore?”

“Don’t...even...think...I...want...to...explore...whatever...it...is...you’ve...got...running...around...in...that...d

He punctuated each word with a rolling piston of his hips.

She couldn’t help but huff and groan around the humor of their conversation.

“Jesus Christ. Let me concentrate. I’m working here.” He growled at her, trying to admonish her for joking while he was doing his darndest to get them both off. But even he couldn’t stop the grin that graced his lips and dancing eyes.

“Love you.” She pressed a kiss to his jaw, to cover her laughing fit.

Shaking his head he swooped down and caught her up into a deep kiss. Lack of air helped stop her laughing fit.

Pulling back from the kiss, resting his forehead to hers, he rolled his eyes at her while shifting her with his hands so that he was entering her more easily. That and she had relaxed a bit more and he started swivelling his hips, his cock touching as much of her as possible.

She threw her head back with a hiss when he brushed up against some small part of her that had her breathless and heart slipping and sliding as it tried to keep pumping blood through her veins and arteries.

Chibs growled proudly and proceeded to brush up against that small spot that drove her nuts. The top of her head surely had come off. Her free hand clenched at the back of his neck, his sweat-slicked body sliding against hers. His chest hairs, scratching at her breasts and nipples that shot zings of fire down to her clit that then spread across her entire body.

Twisting her legs she could feel him deep inside her. The tip of his cock pressing up against her cervix. It was painful, but with all the rest of the stimulation had her pushing past the pain. The
pain actually adding to the heat of their lovemaking. There was no part of her that wasn’t open to him. Open to what they were doing to each other. All her defenses were down and all she could do was hold on.

It was the thought that had her flying. The thought that if it weren’t for the condom there was a very real chance that she could become pregnant. He was right there. Brushing up against her cervix. So close to where life could grow. And at that moment, she was angry that they used a condom. She wanted to bear his child. The primal need and urge to that thought threw her for a loop. Never thinking she could feel that.

She knew that there wasn’t anything in the world that would stop her from protecting that child. From protecting the man that helped create that child. The idea of that caught her unawares and her body involuntarily clamped down on him when he was at his deepest inside her. Her legs and arms refusing to let him move. Holding him in place, protecting him.

“Graim thu…” He groaned, his body jerking as he let go inside her. Drawing deep breaths of air as they were locked together, flying together on their high. And part of her mourned. After all this work, the condom blocking their joining. There’d be no chance of a child this time.

He slid off her bonelessly. She followed his movement, unwilling to let go just yet. Unwilling to let go of the hope as it drifted out of her grasp, like how he was slipping out from inside her.

“Hey.” He said softly. His eyes sharpened as he looked at her. Hands brushed at her cheeks and it was then that she realized she was crying. “Hey...you okay? Did I hurt ye’?” His body tensing.

“I’m fine.” She quickly reassured him. Pressing her hand to his at her cheek, when he didn’t look convinced. “I’m fine. You didn't hurt me.” Though grimacing as her back started itching.

He frowned at her, his thumb swiping at her wet cheek again. “Then what’s wrong? Why’re you crying?”

“Sorry. It was just so intense.” She sniffed trying to get hold of herself. Freaking herself out at what a mess she must look like.

“Aye.” He said carefully, waiting for her to explain.

“It caught me by surprise is all. I was kind of pissed that you had the condom on.”

“What?” He shot her a surprised look.

“Not at you. Just the need for it. You were so deep inside me...I...I sort of...felt ready. Protective of maybe making a child. Protective of you...of us...like this. I felt...cheated, I guess.” She took a frustrated breath. “Damn it...I don’t know what I’m saying.” Her body shivering as she felt herself crashing.

“Oh, mo leanabh…” He grabbed up the duvet that had slid off to the side, wrapping the two of them.

“Sorry.” She pressed herself into his chest as he wrapped her in his arms, hushing at her. “I know we talked about this. I just got...flooded with all these emotions all of a sudden.”

“Don’t be sorry. If you truly want a child...it’ll happen. When things are more settled. Fucking love to have a bairn with ye’.”

“But with my reading…” She couldn’t help worry over.
“Hey. We’ll work it out. One way or another. We’ll figure it out when we get there.”

She quieted as she soaked in Chibs heat and musky smell that drew her to him. Relaxing in the cocoon of his arms. She couldn’t bring herself to debate his sentiments. Not sold on the idea, to look forward to something that may not work or be feasible.

“Yeah.” She sighed softly, ending the topic. “There’s too much going on with the club right now to even be thinking about starting a family.”

Chibs hummed in agreement. They lay together in the quiet of the morning, recovering.

“You okay?” She asked, glancing up to his heavy-lidded eyes.

“I’m fine. Don’t worry about me.” He pressed a kiss to the top of her head. “Ye’ didn’t tell me how Tara was.” He asked her.

“She was upset.”

“No shit.” He sniffed. “I would be too if I were her.”

“It was more than her arm.” Chibs shot her a questioning look. “Jax sold her on the idea that they’d gotten out. That they were free. Told her to take the job up in Oregon, that he was out.”

“Are you kidding me? After all this shite…”

Raising her brows at him was all the answer he needed.

Heaving a beleaguered sigh. “Christ. What an idiot.”

She shrugged. “It’s not the first time it’s happened. People wanting to prove me wrong. And Jax is so used to twisting things to his advantage, I’m not surprised he tried.”

He rubbed at his face, pushing his hair back roughly. “Fuck. I really thought we got through to the two of them.” He looked to the clock on the bedside table. “Come on. We need to get going. And my griffin is fucking itching like mad. How’s your tattoos?”

“Itchy.” She sighed thinking about the upcoming day and events. “I need to do some trading today before we get caught up in any more club business.”

He got up and held a hand out to her. “You sure you’re alright?” He asked as she stumbled to her feet.

“Yeah.”

After sharing a shower and spreading some cooling cream over their tattoos, they grabbed a quick breakfast before heading out to the garage.

She was deep in her trading, Chibs working with Dog on a particularly troublesome repair, when Wayne showed up. Walking into the garage and started picking through the tools, putting some into a bag.

“Aren’t you tired, Wayne?”

“I’m always tired.” He huffed, picking out another tool. God, she really didn’t want to know what he was going to do with them. Piney deserved better.
“Gemma couldn’t even let you sleep in a guest bedroom? Not even Jax’s old room? Stashed you on the couch. What a cruel woman.” She sighed at Wayne.

Wayne turned to look at her at that. “You don’t know what you’re talking about. Gemma’s beat up bad. Clay did it. I stayed to make sure he didn’t try and finish the job.”

She studied him as he gave her a questioning look.

“Buraku.”

“What?”

“Burakumin. They’re originally members of outcast communities in the Japanese feudal era, composed of people with jobs considered impure or...tainted by death, which have severe social stigmas. That’s what you are. For Clay, for Gemma, for decades. Digging the graves for the two of them, burying their secrets.”

Wayne blinked at her, processing what she was saying and how it pertained to him. Frowning when he got the inkling that she was insulting him.

Chibs finished washing up at the utility sink and shot her a ‘wrap it up’ look.

Standing up, she packed up her laptop and spoke to Wayne, answering his question. “And I do know what I’m talking about. I read Gemma. I know she had you sleep on the couch. Refusing to go to a hospital or press charges. I know what she has you doing. Stupid.” She shook her head.

“Hey…” Wayne pointed at her, taking offence at calling him stupid.

“Yes, stupid. Her, you...enabling her. Clay...all three of you...stupid. I warned you, Wayne. Get out of this while you still can. She didn’t even tell you...God. Don’t get swept up by this drama, Wayne. That fight between her and Clay...you have no business getting between the two of them.”

“It doesn’t justify what he did to her. No one should beat on a woman like that.” Wayne bit out with a point of his finger.

“You’re right, no one should be beat up like that. But ask Gemma why Clay beat her up. Why they fought. She gave as good as she got. If not more. She had a gun and used it.”

Wayne took a step back as she threw doubt over his misguided loyalty to Gemma. Confused by what she was telling him. The details of the fight, something that Gemma refused to discuss with him.

“You knew that she was going to get beat up? You could’ve stopped it.” Wayne threw back at her.

“Yeah, right.” She scoffed. “Gemma, refused my offer of help. I warned you when you crashed our breakfast. She and Clay are in a war, Wayne. Neither of them will give up the fight. Nothing anyone says will get them to back off now. Blood has been drawn.” She slung her bag over her shoulder.

Chibs slid his hand at her waist, looking to Wayne and back to her. “We gotta go.” He said to her.

Nodding to him, she shot Wayne a final look. “Take a shower, Buraku. You stink.”

Chibs led her across the lot and to their bike. She quickly packed her bag in the saddlebag and took her helmet Chibs held out for her. “What was that?” He asked.
“You really don’t want to know.” She sighed settling her helmet on. “Where’re we heading?”

Giving her a considering look if he should follow up on that, but decided to leave it be and steadied the bike as she climbed on behind him. “Oswald’s. Kozik is back.” Revving the motor, they roared out of the lot.

Riding to the barn she saw that most of the guys were there already. Kozik talking with a man she hadn’t met but he was wearing a Sons kutte.

“That’s Lee, from Tacoma. Helping with the escort.” Chibs informed.

“Ah...that’s right.” She recalled this part from Jax’s reading. Glancing around and saw that Jax wasn’t here yet.

“What?” Chibs asked.

Shrugging, “Doesn’t matter. Won’t be here long.”

“Any trouble getting the guns through customs?” Clay asked Kozik, drawing everyone’s attention.

“No man. Our guy pushed them through the same way as the others.” Kozik said easily.

“Thanks for loaning us the guys. Tacoma’s been a big help.” Bobby slapped a grateful hand to Lee’s shoulder as everyone moved deeper into the barn.

Lee nodded. “No problem. Need the work.”

“We hear from the Irish Kings?” Clay questioned.

“Talked to Seamus. They’re all coming. Roark, Galen, O’Leary. They’re worried about the cartel, Clay. This rival beef.” Kozik warned.

Chibs groaned next to her at the mention of the Kings.

She shifted her attention from the conversation at the sound of a bike pulling in. Jax hopping off quickly. Striding to Kozik and grabbing him into an enthusiastic hug.

“Hey, good to see you bro.” Jax greeted.


“Getting through it. Give me a minute?” Jax impressed on Clay with a head tilt.

Clay sighed, annoyed by whatever had gotten up Jax’s butt. The two of them walking out of the barn to talk privately. Jax’s body tense and jaw clenched.

She glared at Jax, but he was ignoring her. Too caught up in his fight with Clay. The two of them at a standoff as they exchanged words. Clay loomed over Jax at one point and settled the tiff. Turning back into the barn, Jax hesitated to follow, but eventually he did.

She wasn’t the only one who caught the angry vibe between Clay and Jax.

“Everything cool?” Bobby asked Jax.

“Fine.” Clay bit out. “Let’s check the merchandise.” Directing everyone to their purpose for
“Galen didn’t want anyone touching this til they get out here.” Kozik warned as the top of the crate was opened.

“Understood.” Clay said curtly.

Jax smoking, pissed off as everyone eyes the weapons.

“Long range sniper rifle, fifty cal machine gun, rpg’s.” Kozik pointed each one out.

“Real deal.” Tig said knowledgeably.

“Damn only seen guns like this in my war games. Call of Duty shit.” Juice commented in awe.

The mood was mixed between the guys. Clay looked pleased that things were moving the way he’d planned. Bobby and Tig were unnerved by the high powered weaponry.

The reality of what they were doing starting to register.

She supposed it was easy to forget about the muling, since it was just muling. Once it hit Northern California, Marcus and the Mayans took over that product, now that their production system was locked down.

The guns though, that was all on the club. For years they’ve dealt in illegal weapons. The higher grade, though, had them a bit flat-footed.

Chibs didn’t seem flat-footed. He knew what they were doing and what those guns could do. He’s probably handled weapons like those in the British Army and the IRA before he was excommunicated.

She couldn’t help her grin as she caught Chibs dark eyes looking greedily at the weapons. Boys and their toys, she thought to herself.

The rest were excited about the guns. Like little boys let loose in a candy shop. She swore she heard the sound of a collective male groan of disappointment as the crates were nailed shut once more.

She took Chibs hand in hers, giving it a gentle squeeze. “Don’t worry, you’ll get to play with them, soon.”

Huffing at her mocking tone, he pressed a kiss to her temple, leading her back to the bike where everyone was heading for church back at the clubhouse.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
My baby = mo leanabh
Chapter 109

Chapter Summary

Call of Duty, part 2

Chapter Notes

Sorry, short chapter...a chaplette. Been ignoring work for too long and have to get back into it, but needed to get the next part up. Gearing up for a lot of drama, some canon, some not. Hang in there with me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jax standing, too antsy to sit as everyone gathered for church. Chibs, too, stood looking out the newly installed glass, staring out into the clubhouse.

She had grabbed a soda from the bar when they got to the clubhouse. The carbonation fizzing out, threatening to spill. Quickly slurping the liquid so it didn’t make a mess she sat down. Clay rolling his eyes at her.

“How’s Gemma? She scratched you up pretty good. Did you clean those out?” She asked directly. No sense in not dealing with the elephant in the room.

The guys all swiftly looked at her then to Clay for his reaction. Daring to bring something up that was clearly a private matter, that none of the guys dared to. Except for Tig. But Clay brushed his concern off.

Clay stared daggers at her.

“I saw her this morning.” Jax hissed out, glaring angrily at Clay.

“So, what’d you do?” She asked Clay. “I mean, you’re bunking in the apartment, she kicked you out of the house...had to be a doozy of a fight.” She prodded. “If you want to talk about it, you can come over to the house. Neutral ground, work things out.” She offered.

“There’s nothing to work out.” Clay hissed at her tensely.

Taking a sip of her soda as she watched Clay. “Hmm, okay. Just trying to understand the implications of your fight with the business of the club. If you’re going to have an emotional breakdown, maybe its time to have Jax take over? You know, until you’ve got things straightened out with Gemma.”

Jax shot her a surprised look at what she was offering.

“Jesus.” Tig muttered under his breath.

“We never did finish the leadership vote.” Bobby reminded everyone. A round of uncomfortable
looks went around the table.

“Christ. What’s going on between my old lady and me has nothing to do with the club. I’ve got this handled. If I want your help, I’ll ask for it. Until then, shut it.”

“If you say so. Besides, we can’t finish the leadership vote. Piney’s not here.” She answered Bobby’s query.

Everyone glanced to Piney’s empty seat, but she kept her eyes on Clay. She caught the small flinch around his eyes at the mention of Piney. Asshole.

“I can go get him.” Opie offered, half-standing out of his chair.

“No. We don’t have time for that. Romeo called, he’s got a line on the Lobos.” Clay explained quickly. Opie shrugging after a second and sat back down again.

Jax shooting her a warning look for trying to spin up Clay. But she didn’t mind him, Jax toyed with Tara with his promises.

Clay relayed everything that Romeo told him, where and when to meet up so they could go after the Lobos.

She was drawn out of her thoughts as Jax spoke up.

“This Galindo deal, it’s already spilled too much blood. I don’t expect you guys to take that risk. Going after these Lobos is about Tara. It’s my shit. I’m going to handle it.” Jax declared, giving the guys an out. Noble, stupid, but noble.

“This ain’t just about Tara, brother. This is about hurting those assholes that shot up our clubhouse. And killed Armando.” Tig reminded everyone.

“Jax is right.” Clay agreed. “This cartel run has turned into one bloody ride. Nobody saw it coming. Including me.”

Fighting to keep from giving away her thoughts on Clay’s PR spin, she took another sip of her soda.

Clay turned to face Jax. “We’re in the homestretch now bro. I say we close this door. And get back to business as usual.”

“I’m not letting you do this alone.” Bobby rallied behind Jax.

“Me neither. I’m in.” Chibs added, glancing over his shoulder.

Jax looking from Chibs to her. She just shrugged.

“Yeah, me too.” Tig joined in.

Kozik nodded from his corner of the table. “Alright, let’s do it.”

“Yes, I’m there.” Happy gleefully grinned.

Clay looked down the table. “What about you Ope, you in?”

Everyone looked to Opie. Opie had this weird look. Staring at Jax like he wasn’t sure how he knew him. God damn it.
“Yeah. I’m in.” Opie agreed finally.

Everyone on board, Jax nodded thankfully for everyone’s support and help. “Okay.”

Clay banged the gavel, ending the meeting and everyone moved out of the room.

Chibs took her hand in his. “You invited that piece of shit to the house?” He hissed in her ear.

Seeing the anger in his eyes, she pushed him back into the corner of the clubhouse. Glancing around to make sure they were out of hearing reach.

“I made the offer. Just like I offered my help to Gemma.” He pressed his lips into a thin line, not liking that offer any more than the one she made to Clay. “They are people, Chibs. They have souls just like everyone else on the planet. I can’t give up on helping someone if they are in need.”

“That fucker killed JT. Killed Piney. There’s no redemption left to that asshole.” He argued.

“I know. He should be in jail on murder. Gemma should be in jail. But they aren’t. And until Clay is removed as President, we have to play stupid. The guys saw and heard me make the offer to help him, to help his relationship to Gemma over whatever it was they fought about. It will help us, help Jax when he takes over. When they learn the truth.”

“Jesus Christ. Ye’ have to keep me in the loop on this shite.”

“Sorry. I didn’t know I was going to even make the offer. I saw the opening and I took it. I’m sorry.”

He took a breath and looked back to her. “God, don’t apologize. But, ye’ can’t save everyone, m ‘anam. Come on.” He led her with out of the clubhouse, trailing behind the guys.

“Won’t matter anyway, things are in motion.” She said dourly, watching Happy slap a hand to Kozik’s shoulder at something he’d said.

They came to a halt as Elliot stepped out of his car.

“How you doing Mayor?” Clay grinned.

“I wouldn’t go counting votes yet.” Elliot warned. “Hale’s investors came together. Asian money. When this goes back to city council next week, he’ll have the funds to begin construction. It’ll pass Clay. Charming Heights is a go.”

Clay blinked at Elliot, processing what they’d just been told. Clay’s grand scheme to screw Hale is all fucked up now. “Shit! When did this happen?”

“Hale called this morning. He’s getting his ducks in a row.”

“Let me guess, you’re one of his ducks.” Jax concluded.

“I gotta roll with this. It’s the only way I’ll come close to getting even Clay. Sorry guys.” Elliot apologized before getting back in his car and drive away.

Bobby shaking his head, his long, salt and pepper hair flying. “Georgie shit all over his promise. He was supposed to dangle the investment in front of the asians.”

Maybe its time to you go remind him. We got the mexicans covered.” Jax offered.
“Me and you, Tiggy?” Bobby nods to Tig. Their ranks splitting with the dual jobs that need to be taken care of.

“Yeah.” Tig agrees.

“Georgie might be in the wind. Track down Lyla, see if she can help.” Opie offered.

Bobby and Opie walk back towards the clubhouse, Clay holds up Tig. Leaning into his SA. “Tig, if Georgie has reneged on his promise. He’s no more use to us.”

Tig eyes Clay a second, “Copy that.” Moving to join Bobby and Opie.

Everyone headed to their bikes. She hesitates a moment, looking from Kozik and rushes to intercept Tig, stopping him before he disappears into the clubhouse.

“What?” He asks, surprised to find her blocking his way.

“Forgive Kozik. Now is the time.” She said in a rush.

“What’re you…?” Tig looked at her in surprise and then rolled his eyes. “Kozik will be fine. He knows what to do.” He placated her warning, trying to move around her.

She blocked him once more, refusing to give up. “I’m serious, Tig.”

Tig huffed that she wasn’t letting it go. Jerking his head around to catch sight of Kozik.

“Kozik!” Tig yelled out across the lot.

Kozik lifted his head and looked towards them. The guys all looking curiously at what was going on.

“What?” He yelled back.

“You’re a douche!” Tig yelled.

“Oh for…” She strangled, throwing her hands up in the air. Frustrated that he was making a joke out of this.

“Blow me!” Kozik yelled back at Tig, flashing up a fuck you finger. Kozik and Happy driving off in the van.

Tig looked back at her with an amused smirk. “Satisfied?”

“You’re an idiot.” She glared at him.

Tig just snickered as he brushed past her and into the clubhouse.

The guys laughing at the whole thing, too. Ignoring the testosterone-poisoned idiots. She went to where Chibs was waiting for her, helping her onto the bike.

"Not doing so good advising us, are you?” Clay smiled at her, mocking her.

Before she could respond, Clay revved up his bike and started pulling out. Jax and the guys following him.
Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 110

Chapter Summary

Call of Duty, part 3

Chapter Notes

Taking a break from work to post this next chapter up. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Happy and Kozik were pulling open the doors of the van, handing out weapons and gear to the guys as they readied up for the upcoming fight. Romeo and Luis with their men were suitting up with their own equipment as well.

Chibs pulled out their vests from their bike. After helping her into her vest, he easily put his on and his black knit cap and black hoodie, then his shoulder holster went on after. Happy handing him a rifle.

“Ta.” He said as Happy moved on to the next person. Chibs checking the weapon, setting the safety and filling his vest with extra magazines.

Clay and Jax handshaked Luis and Romeo, the guys getting filled in on the situation. Romeo looking at her.

“You brought a girl with you to a gunfight? Does she even know how to fire a gun?” He asked dubiously.

“She’s with me, and yes, she knows how to fight. She’ll stay back here though.” Chibs said.

“I am? Thought I was your good luck charm?” She asked.

“You’re here, not out there with us. But you’re here.” Chibs said to her. By his stern look, he wasn’t going to let her argue her case to come with.

Luis leaned into Romeo. “She’s the one that knifed the puto in the balls.”

Romeo widened his eyes in surprise. “That was you?”

“Yes, that was me.” She snarked back, not liking Romeo’s disbelief of her actions. “Now, are you guys going to stand around here all day or are you going to finally take care of these Lobos?”

Romeo and Luis both glared at her. Not used to having a woman talk back them regarding their work it would appear.

“Jesus.” Chibs muttered, with a shake of his head and steered her back to the side of the massive Hummer.
“This thing is a tank, overcompensating much?” She huffed.

“She’s right. Don’t pick on the very lethal cartel, please.” He drawled with a pointed look.

“Sorry, I’m nervous. Don’t get yourself hurt or killed. I’ll kill you if you do.” She said worriedly, straightening his black knit cap. It was a look she’d never seen him wear before.

“I love you, too.” He grinned.

She snorted at his easy attitude. Giving her a kiss. Pressing a gun into her hands, checking her vest as the guys all talked and figured out formations, or the weather for all she knew.

Jax and Kozik wandered over to them. “Hey, anything we need to know?” Kozik asked her.

She looked sharply at him. “Watch where you step.”

Kozik nodded, giving Jax and Chibs a look before jogging off to join Happy and Juice.

“Should’ve brought the heavy weapons.” She said fretfully.

Chibs and Jax shared a look.

“That it?” Jax pressed. Chibs started fiddling with her vest again.

She looked up at Jax crossly. “Yes. God. I told you about this from your reading.”

Jax pulled at his beard as he glared at her. “This is really happening, isn’t it?”

“If I could, I’d whack you upside the head for that. Good going on getting Tara’s hopes up, by the way.” She admonished.

“Fuck.” Jax looked around and back to her, his jaw tense that she knew the jig was up.

“Jax...Chibs!” Clay yelled with a come hither jerk of his arm. Jax shot her a final look and jogged off to join Clay.

Her hands went to Chibs shoulders for balance as he pulled at her vest making her lose her balance.

“The vest is fine.”

“Okay. Safety on. Shoot anyone you don’t know. Stay here. Do not move until I come back for ye’.” He ordered.

“Just hurry up.” She said, leaning up for a final kiss before he had to go fight. He met her halfway, giving her a peck only to come back for a deeper kiss. Both of them trying to soak as much of each other in and delay the pain that they’d be experiencing in a few short minutes.

Jax whistled, Chibs tearing himself away from her. Jogging off with the guys, melting into the hills and rocky outcroppings and foothills.

Pacing back and forth alongside the Hummer, her headache starting to grow. The gun Chibs handed her growing heavy and useless in her hand, she tucked it into the shoulder harness.

This sucked, she thought as she listened for the guys. For anything. A short burst of gunfire erupted, jerking her to a stop. Staring off where the noise came from. A pause then single shots. Silence again.
More gunfire exploded. She could hear men yelling and a great boom going off. Fuck. She pressed her face into her hands. Praying it wasn’t one of their guys, but the nagging doubt for that hope plagued her.

Tense minutes crawled by when she heard a vehicle coming up. The tall grass whipping along the sides of the van as it drove up and parked.

Phil and Rat hopped out of the van. A few of the Tacoma guys with them on their bikes.

Phil nodded to her, “Where are they? Jax called.” He asked her.

“They went that way.” Waving towards the sounds of random gunshots still going off.

“Thanks. You okay?” He asked. “You look like you wanna puke or something.”

She glared at him. “I’m fine. Hurry up and get that stuff up there.”

Watching as they pulled out the crates of Irish RPG’s. Hauling them where the gunfire was coming from. Hell, she muttered as she pressed her fingers to her temples, trying to alleviate some of the pain.

Pacing again, taking deep breaths, trying to think calm thoughts as she waited. And waited. It was too quiet. She wasn’t sure what was worse, hearing the gunfire or this eerie silence.

Not knowing what was happening was driving her nuts. That thought brought her up short as she realized how much she sounded like Gemma and her need to know every detail going on with the club and Jax. Now, that was a disturbing thought. She heard more gunfire and more yelling. Silence again.

Her head felt like it was splitting open. She couldn’t take it, it was taking too long. Pushing herself away from the side of the Hummer, she started off up the hill. Worry about Chibs and how he was holding up with the pain flooded her.

But she didn’t get far when two very large dogs came up behind her. Forcing her to stop as they surrounded her. Licking at her hands. Their bodies pressing her back towards the Hummer, nuzzling and wriggling around her, stopping her from going to find Chibs. Her back hit the side of the tan Hummer.

“What the...Where did you two come from?” She looked around but all she saw was deserted lands. And she didn’t think the Lobos were the kind of people that’d have a couple of big dogs with them. The sheer oddity of their appearance had her forgetting her pained head and her worry for Chibs for the moment.

She’d never had a pet before. And like with her touching other people, she didn’t know what would happen if she touched a dog or cat. She’d been tempted, one neighbor had a mutt of a dog that would sometimes be in the fenced backyard. It would jump and whine at her as she walked passed the yard, begging for her to come play. But the risk of possibly passing out kept her away.

The two dogs before her now, they weren’t letting up, brushing up against her, licking at her hands tentatively. Frowning as she looked at them. Wondering how they came to be. Why she didn’t seem to fall right into them, with their insistent nudges and licks to her hands. She couldn’t resist sinking her hands into their wiry, blue-grey toned fur.

Their dark eyes rolling in pleasure as she slid her hands across their bodies, petting them. She felt herself sinking into the dogs. But it wasn’t like with another human, it was more emotions than
thoughts. No dark, painful history or dire future to drag her psyche down. They bubbled with effervescent joy and their want to aid her.

She gave a short bark of laughter at their happiness, they yipped and begged for more scratches and pets. And she herself was so over the moon, she wasn’t passing out. Holy cow. Not wanting to think on that for too long, poking at it, for fear of jinxing it.

She absently noticed one was male the other female. The female slightly shorter but still easily hit her hips. She couldn’t stop running her hands in their fur, across the top of their heads, pulling lightly at their soft ears, and down their long necks across their strong muscled shoulders along their spines. Their tails curled and whipped around, banging against the side of the Hummer.

Her head gave another crack and as the pain flared behind her eyes, her eyes teared up. The dogs pressed their bodies against hers as she nearly fell to her knees. She swiped at her cheeks and the larger dog whined when her hand stopped petting him.

Deep booms exploded with a fresh hail of gunfire grabbed her attention. The dogs tensing up, ears perking up, and the larger one streaked out across the field towards the fighting.

“Shit, no!” She yelled after the dog. But he kept running up the hill and through the woods ahead.

The other dog curling around her, preventing her from moving. She didn’t know what was going on. Worried for everyone’s safety and now the dogs. How the heck did all this happen? Why?

The dog grumbled at her, nudging her hand, encouraging her to get back to petting duties. The dog wasn’t letting her go anywhere and she gave in. Running her fingers across the muscled, wiry-furred body a word floated in her mind. A name, but it wasn’t a name she recognized.

Curious, she looked the dog in the eyes, “Sorcha?” She questioned, testing out the pronunciation. The dog hopped and nuzzled at her. Guess that’s her name.

“Hi Sorcha, you are so beautiful.” Sorcha preened.

“Who’s your friend?” She asked. “Cuchulain?” Sorcha snuffled at her hands again.

“All right, well, it’s nice to meet you. Thank you for coming. I’m scared about Chibs out there.” Sorcha whined and pressed even closer to her. “I don’t know how you came to be here. It’s very dangerous right now. I don’t want you or Cuchulain hurt.” She said to the dog.

Sorcha yawned at her, making her huff a laugh at how unconcerned the dog was about the dangers. “Yeah, okay. I really hope Chibs doesn’t mind pets.” She said to herself, grinning when she caught what looked like a dog version of a blissed out grin.

More yelling and shooting came from over the hill. She tried to go towards the fight, but Sorcha guffed at her and kept her pressed against the Hummer. “Hey, me human, you dog.”

Sorcha just leaned into her preventing her from moving. “Ugh, you’re as protective as Chibs.”

Cuchulain came running back, his large body crashing into her and Sorcha, as if he’d misjudged the distance so he’d gracefully come to a stop. But his happy excitement belied that theory, demanding pets again.

Sorcha nipped at Cuchulain for knocking into her. Ridiculous, she thought, watching the dogs interact. They had such vibrant personalities.
Sinking her hand into his fur once more, she gasped as she instantly got images of him chasing across the rugged field. Dodging obstacles and running through the Lobos ranks, scattering them from where they hid. Making it easier for the club to take them out.

Biting one man who turned his gun on him. The feel of the man’s flesh and blood sinking into his powerful jaws. Hearing the noise of men yelling and gunfire setting him off again, chasing the men who ran from him.

“Such a good dog. So brave. I’m so proud of you.” She praised as Cuchulain squirmed around her, flipping down for a belly rub. Relieved, she giggled at Cuchulain’s utter and complete joy of her touch. Sorcha not to be left out begged for attention, too. She bent down to give them belly rubs, they whined and rolled in doggy bliss.

The dogs abruptly flipped back to their feet, facing the the hill where the fighting had been going on. Still keeping her pressed to the Hummer. Her headache now a sharp pain, tears slipped down her cheeks, swiping them away automatically. She needed Chibs, fuck, he had to fight with this pain.

As if he'd heard her, Chibs came striding over the hill, walking quickly towards her. The tube of the RPG slung across his back, his rifle in one hand, pointed down. Thank God, he was alive and well. Grinning at her even. That was it, she pushed away from the Hummer and ignored the growling rebuke from the dogs, her eyes were only for Chibs.

A few steps and she started running towards him. The dogs loping alongside her. Chibs jogged towards her to meet her midway, catching her into his arms. The two of them groaning in relief, the pain snapping a blow before falling back, forcing the two of them to their knees.

“Fuck.” He groaned as his hands searched out bare skin around her hips, the vest blocking his hands. “Fucking vest.” He complained.

She huffed a laugh, as he pulled her into a deep kiss. Her bones went to jelly, her fingers seeking purchase around his neck and shoulders.

“You’re okay? You’re not hurt?” She asked in a rush as they pulled back from the kiss. Leaning back a little to take stock of her man.

“I’m fine, m ‘anam.” He reassured getting the two of them back to their feet, pulling her into another hug once they were standing again.

She gripped him tight. “There was so much gunfire. Sounded like cannons were going off. I was so scared.”

“It’s okay, mo gràidh. I’m fine.”

“Don’t leave me behind like that again. I can’t do that again. To only hear what is going on and not see you...or what’s going on.” The last of her nerves shaking out of her.

Chibs looked into her anguished eyes and held her tighter. Pressing a kiss to her temple. The last of their headaches eased off.

They broke apart abruptly as Cuchulain thrust his head in between them. Tail wagging and looking for more pets and attention. Sorcha circling around them.

“Oy!” Chibs breathed out, looking down at the dog in amusement.
She chuckled as she let go of the last of her worry.

“Care to explain these two, m’ anam?” Chibs quirked an amused brow at her. His dark eyes taking in the dogs.

She flung her hands up in exasperation. “I don’t know. They just showed up out of nowhere.”

Chibs shot her a curious look.

Shrugging, “I was heading up the hill to find you when they rushed at me and pushed me back to the Hummer.” Chibs glared at her but then back down to the dogs. “Sorcha stayed with me while Cuchulain ran off to where you were.”

“Sorcha? Cuchulain?”

“That’s their names.” She shrugged again.

He shot her a questioning look. As he resettled the RPG and slung the rifle over his shoulder, as he looked at the dogs and back to her.

“I’d never felt a dog’s mind before. They are just so beautiful. I was petting them and I was getting...I don’t know, emotions and images from them.”

“Ye’ didn’t pass out did you?” He asked worriedly.

“No. It’s weird, its like they know what I’m saying. I have no idea where they came from. There’s no tags on them.”

“There’s no collars on them, they might be micro-chipped.” Chibs said, staring at the dogs.

Sorcha growled at Chibs, his brows popping up at her reaction, as the dog talked back to them.

Cuchulain was nudging at her hand and she sank her hand to his neck. Her eyes widening at what he and Sorcha were snippy about.

“What? Sorry. We’re just trying to figure out who you belong to.” She spoke to the dogs.

Both Cuchulain and Sorcha stilled and looked up at her. The emotions she got from them threw her for a loop. Had her gasping, trying to control herself under their absolute determination of where they belong and to whom.

“What is it?” Chibs asked her, shooting her a worried look.

“They didn’t like it when I mentioned the tags. Annoyed at us for thinking they were owned.” She shrugged. “I can’t sense any history or future with them. It’s all very here and now...emotions. But they’re absolutely sure they belong with us.”

“Interesting. You never had a pet as a kid? Played with a dog or cat?” He asked.

“No. My father was allergic. And I was always scared to touch one for fear of passing out.”

“You’re not allergic?”

“I don’t seem to be. I’ve been petting them for awhile now, don’t seem to have any reactions.”

She looked at Chibs, momentarily dropping subject of the dogs. “Sorry, how did the fight go?”
Pulling her into another hug, dropping his head into the curve of her neck and shoulder. The dogs whining around them. “There were land mines, Kozik didn’t make it.” He said softly.

She gripped him tighter at the news. “God. I... I’m so sorry. He was a good man. I liked him.”

He pulled her tighter to him. “There’s nothing ye’ could’ve done. Juice and Clay, couple of Galindo’s were caught in the field. Could’ve been any one of those guys.” He kissed her, leaning his forehead to hers as they simply looked to each other. “You did what you could. Graim thu, m ’anam.”

“Love you, too.”

“You keep surprising me, mo chridhe.”

“Good or bad?” She bit at her lip, waiting for his answer. Knowing that things are pushing at him, at both of them. Changes happening to them, that maybe he was at a breaking point.

“Good, always good. Confusing but good.” He said with a soft smile, brushing some strands of hair that blew into her eyes.

“Yeah, well, at least we haven’t gotten any more tattoos lately. Knock on wood.” She said nervously glancing up at the sky. As if the Gods might be listening in.

Chibs started laughing. The dogs circled around him, sniffing at him. Wanting in on whatever had him laughing. Nudging at his hands, encouraging him to pet them. “Oh Christ in Heaven.” He shook his head, giving in and gave the dogs the affection they were demanding.

She grinned and joined him in petting the dogs. The dogs swooning under their attention.

Chibs crouching down a little so he caught the eyes of the dogs. “I’m glad you came to, m ’anam, your help was much appreciated if unexpected.”

She snorted at what he’d said to the dogs.

The dogs looked at him for a serious moment, as if they actually understood what he’d said. Only to flop down for belly rubs.

The two of them grinned in unison at the dogs antics, giving in and rubbing their bellies.

“Oh Christ, I can feel their happiness.” She looked to Chibs with a giggle, Sorcha’s hind leg jerking as she hit a sensitive spot. “So freaking giddy.”

Chibs caught her eye, his lips curled with a smile. Leaning towards her, she met him halfway and kissed each other. Breaking for air, their foreheads leaning on each others as the last of their headaches faded away. “Did you have fun playing with the big guns?” She asked breathlessly.

He huffed around a smile. “Oh, aye. Jackie can’t aim for shit, though.”

She laughed at his derisive tone.

The dogs sat up abruptly, their bodies tense and alert. Their swift change in mood had them looking for whatever it was that had them upset. Seeing the rest of the guys come down the hill, Luis and Romeo with their guys.

The dogs growling threateningly at the intruders, stiffly stepping between her and Chibs to the rest of the men.
“Mary, mother of Christ.” Chibs muttered, helping her up to her feet.

The guys slowed to a halt, wary of the dogs.

“Jesus Christ, what the hell is this?” Clay growled in frustration.

“Uh, Chibs?” Jax eyed on the dogs. Making sure he didn’t make any sudden moves.

Chibs frowned looking from Jax down to the dogs, to her, and back to Jax again. “I don’t know how to explain it. They came to Nancy when we were fighting.”

Jax’s brows raised, listening to Chibs.

“You’re right, we sound like complete idiots.” He admitted to her.

“Told you.” She shrugged helplessly at him.

Chibs rolling his eyes at her.

“I was worried and was going to come check on what was going on. The next thing I know the pair of them came out of nowhere. Pushed me back up against the Hummer.” She added to Chibs explanation.

The guys looked from her and the dogs to the Hummer, and back to her once more. “And well, I can feel them in my head. And they seem to be able to understand me. Chibs too, maybe.”

There was dead silence as everyone stared at them dumbfoundedly. “Errr, this one’s Sorcha and this is Cuchulain.” She added in the stunned silence, but by their blinking reactions it didn’t help much.

“How do you know their names?” Luis asked. “I don’t see any tags.” The dogs shifted their menace to Luis, who took a surprised step back, the dogs taking a tense step forward.

“Err, I wouldn’t mention tags to them. They don’t like that. And well, they told me their names, of course.” She shrugged.

Clay’s forehead crinkled. “They told you? Of course, they told you.” He mocked.

She started pacing. The dogs whined and turned to her as she was getting frustrated. “I don’t know. God! I’m barely keeping up here. Tattoos, visions, and freaking hell, that stupid song is constantly stuck in my head, and now this. What do you want me to do? I’m in the dark about all this as you are.”

Sorcha moved circling her, whining at her. She was forced to stop her frenetic pacing because she was going to trip over the dog if she didn’t.

Looking down at Sorcha. “I know, I’m sorry, I’m confused. And Cuchulain, stand down. They’re friends…yes…pack.” She talked back to the dogs.

Cuchulain relaxed and came loping to her, nudging her hand for another pet. Groaning, “Good lord, you two are going to be so spoiled, especially you Cuchulain. Beggars, that’s what you are.”

The dogs rolled their eyes at her again, question came from them.

“Yes, they’re pack. It’s okay. Okay, do what you need to do.” She waved a hand towards the guys.
“What’s going on?” Jax asked, as the dogs started towards him.

“Umm, don’t move. Let them come to you, they need to smell you. I’ve told them you were pack. They need your scent.” She explained.

Her explanation sent Chibs into a hysterical laughing fit. She stared down at him with a frown, one glance at her had him in tears, hunching over trying to catch his breath. “Oh God. The looks on their faces. Fuck. Fucking classic.” He managed to sputter.

“Pack?” Rat asked.

Jax grinning as he pet Cuchulain after he’d been properly sniffed by both the dogs. Sorcha already moving on to Romeo next. Cuchulain grunted and started making the rounds.

“Yeah, their thoughts are more basic than ours. They don’t understand friends. Pack, they know.”

She watched as the dogs circle through the guys, stopping and smelling each one of them, even Romeo and Luis. Cuchulain sneezed on Clay after getting a whiff of him. Sorcha grunted and moved on to the next person. Clay rolling his eyes went to strip off his fighting gear. Guess he’s not a dog person, she thought. Chibs had gotten hold of himself, wiping at his eyes with the cuff of his hoodie. Giggles still erupting every once in awhile as he watched the guys interact with the dogs. Snorting at the dog’s reaction to Clay.

“You okay?” She asked him sarcastically, his arm automatically wrapping around her.

“Aye. Fucking hell.” He said catching his breath.

“Sorry for my melt down, let’s just chalk this whole thing up as learning curve for a while.” She sighed as Chibs snorted again.

“I leave you alone for fifteen minutes.” He groused playfully, his dancing eyes and grin spread. “You should have seen yourself. Stomping back and forth, waving your arms around. Sorcha circling you, you talking back to her. The guys faces. Classic. Only you, m ‘anam, only you.” He huffed a laugh, detailing the display she’d made of herself.

Knocking her head to his chest, letting him has his fun. “So, you like dogs?” She asked.

“Love ‘em. Especially ones that will protect you.”

“Well, good. Cause we got two of them. Big ones, too.” She qualified, looking at the dogs who were leaving Juice and starting back to her.

“You got good taste, Scottish deerhounds.” He said with pride.

“Is that what they are? And hey, it’s not like I special ordered them. They just showed up out of the blue.”

The dogs came back and leaned on her and Chibs’s legs, their eyes begging. “Aye. You’re right, they are spoiled.” He joked.

Jax joined them, lips curling into an amused grin. Eyeing the dogs. “I have no clue what to say.” He shook his head and lit a cigarette.

“Welcome to the club. I’m having t-shirts made.” She joked sarcastically.

Jax snorted, but turned serious. “We need to do something about Juice. He’s making me very
nervous.”

“Aye. I’ll talk to him again.” Chibs nodded.

She pondered, looking at the dogs with a curious thought. Sorcha and Cuchulain perked up looking at her. “Go.”

They watched the dogs surround Juice, keeping him corralled. Juice absently petting them.

“What did you do?” Jax asked.

“Just asked them to keep close to Juice. We’re going to clubhouse right?”

Jax nodded.

“They won’t let Juice out of their sight. Make sure Juice doesn’t run off again. They’re hounds, they have his scent and will track him if he wanders off. At least, that’s the idea.” She explained with a shrug.

Chibs grinned at her. “That’s fucking brilliant.”

“Well, I wasn’t sure if it’d work. The dogs seem to have ideas of their own.”

“Juice, take the dogs with you in the van to the clubhouse.” Jax ordered.

Juice didn’t say anything just started moving, or rather the dogs herding him along. It was debatable which was which.

“Fuck, this has potential.” Jax said, his eyes gleaming with plots and schemes regarding her new dogs.

She gave him a pointed glare.

“Hey, I was just thinking the boys would love them.” Jax defensively raising his hands in the air.

“That better be what you were thinking. I don’t know where they came from, they might have just been put here by the God…the powers-that-be…. Let’s not anger them.” Jax just smirked at her, walking backwards before turning around to go pack up his gear.

“God.” She breathed.

Chibs took her hand, their fingers weaving automatically. “Come on, m ‘anam.” He led her towards the bikes and the vans. Happy taking the weapons Chibs handed over.

The guys moving to secure the weapons and gear, and getting back to their bikes. Romeo and Luis shaking hands with Clay and Jax before they left with their entourage. Romeo shooting her a grin and a salute as he climbed into the Hummer.

Clay glaring at her before he turned to oversee the packing of the crates into the van. Rat and Phil shut the door of the van, and they were off back to the barn with the Tacoma guys.

Juice held the side door of the second van open for the dogs. The dogs easily hopped inside, the door shut behind them, Juice jogged to the drivers side. Happy in the passenger seat. Clay lead the way back to Charming, everyone falling in line behind him, the van behind the string of bikes.

She breathed a sigh of relief as they got onto the highway. Her hand flat against Chibs abdomen.
His hand pulling her closer, resting the side of her face to his reaper, she watched the landscape flow past as they rode back to the clubhouse.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I love you = Graím thu
My heart = mo chridhe
My darling = mo gràidh
My soul = m ‘anam
Walking into the clubhouse, Bobby, Opie, and Tig were already at the bar. The three of them looking down at the dogs as they roamed the clubhouse and back to Juice again, making sure he hadn’t wandered off as per her request.

“They’re good looking dogs, man.” Tig grinned as Cuchulain gave him a sniff with a grunt, Tig scratching him behind an ear.

“They just showed up?” Opie asked.

“What Nancy said.” Jax nodded. “This one even ran into the Lobos line, scattering them from their positions.”

She shrugged at their looks, taking up two of the shot glasses and went to Chibs who’d slouched down in a chair. He smiled at her, his hands helping her sit in his lap while she did her best to keep from spilling the shots, handing him one of the glasses. Juice and Happy filling in on what happened at the gun fight to Opie, Bobby, and Tig.

Clay the last to enter the clubhouse, Opie passing him a shot glass.

“Shit. Did he go fast?” Tig asked.

“Yeah, he was dead before he felt it.” Jax confirmed.

“Everyone else whole?” Bobby asked.

“Yeah Lobos are finished.”

“Where we at with Georgie?” Clay asked, looking to Bobby. “What?” He demanded further when nobody answered his first question.

“Oswald was right asians are on board. Georgie couldn’t stop it.”

Clay swiftly downs his shot with a grimace and storms off to church. Slamming the door behind him.

“Georgie confessed to Luann. It’s done.” Bobby said.
“Go see Otto tomorrow. Give the poor guy some closure.” Jax told him.

“Yeah.” Bobby said, looking like he’d eaten something bad.

Everyone drank their shot to Kozik. She grimaced at the bite of the alcohol. Chibs grinned at her, brushing her hair back. Looking into his warm eyes, he winked at her as she traced his jaw with her fingers. She gasped as her heart skipped a beat. “I love you,” she whispered to him. He meeting her half-way for a kiss. He hugged her close as they relearned how to breath.

The guys started moving off to their various jobs, she got up to let Chibs up. He caught up to Juice and clapped hand to the back of Juice’s neck, steering him towards the apartment. Jax following behind them. Cuchulain loping excitedly ahead of them, Jax shooting her an amused look.

Rolling her eyes, she set her glass down on the bar. “Tell Otto I said hi.” She said to a nervous looking Bobby.

“Yeah, sure.” He replied automatically, caught up in his own thoughts.

Seeing that he wasn’t really listening to anyone or anything, she started for the apartment. Sorcha at her side. Before she could turn down the hall, Tig stepped in front of her.

“You knew. Knew about what would happen to Kozik.” He accused.

She crossed her arms and looked into his angry, blue eyes.

“Why? Why didn’t you tell me? Or someone? We could have pulled him off the fight. Have him come with me today?” He questioned her. His anger turning outward.

“Because it might not have happened. All of you knew it was going to be a firefight. All of you voted to go to battle. All of you knew it was a risk. It could have been anyone else. Happy, Clay, Jax, even you if you hadn’t been pulled to deal with that idiot Georgie. It’s possibilities, Tig. I told him to watch where he stepped.” She had leaned into Tig, glaring at him that he was accusing her of blithely sending Kozik to his death.

Taking a breath, she rocked back on her heels. “I liked Kozik. He was nice and did his job, despite your animosity towards him. I told you to make peace with Kozik earlier, several times. But you turned it into a joke. Turned my advice into a joke.”

Tig shifted on his feet, rocked back by her own anger.

“I can’t believe you.” She waved her hand at him. “You had opportunities to make peace for so fucking long, Tig. I told you to do it. To forgive him over Missy. It wasn’t his fault. She would have died if she was on your watch just as easily. Yet you’ve held a grudge over it for years, blaming Kozik. Now you want to blame me.” She shook her head at him. “Look in the mirror, Tig, the one who deserves your anger is yourself.” Her head squeezing on itself.

“Still...” He pressed, breathing hard.

“Changes are coming, Tig. You need to decide what you stand for. Who you can trust and rely on. I and nobody else can make that decision for you. I’m sorry you lost your best friend.” Tig’s head jerked sharply, blinking hard.

“M ‘anam?” Chibs came back looking for her.

“I have to go.” She swept past Tig.
“We aren’t done talking.” Tig threatened mildly behind her.

“I know.”

Chibs took her hand and the two of them sighed as their pain leveled off.

“You okay?” He asked, as she watched Tig turn away and head out of the clubhouse.

“Yeah. Tig’s grieving.” She reassured.

“Do I need to talk to him?” He asked, looking off where Tig disappeared from.

“No. Things are moving fast, things are going to break soon.”

He regarded her and kissed her. Brushing her hair from her face. “Okay. Juice and Jax are waiting for us. You still up to this?”

“Yeah. I’m fine, so long as you’re here with me.”

“Always, m ‘anam. Always.” He grinned to her, giving her another kiss. “Come on. Let’s get this done. Gotta feeling we’re going to need as much sleep and rest as we can get before all hell breaks loose.”

She snorted. “You forget, we’ve got two dogs to look after.”

He grinned at her with a chuckle, both of them looking at Sorcha who looked up at them expectantly. Knowing that they were talking about her. “Aye. Need to get food and supplies for the beasties.”

“But first, Juice.” She said, dragging him with her into the apartment.

Jax smoked as he sat on the desk, his legs sprawled out. Juice sat at the edge of the bed, looking nervous.

Cuchulain were laying at Juice’s feet. Well, laying on his feet. Every time Juice tried to move Cuchulain would growl at him.

“You need to read this idiot. If he says he’s fine to me one more time....” Jax said when they walked in.

Juice looking at her fearfully. His eyes bugging out, begging her for a way out of this.

Chibs engaged the lock on the door as he shut it, pulled a chair around and sat down, pulling her into his lap. His hands warm as they caressed along her waist, making her shiver.

Juice gave her a hunted look. “You’re going to read me, aren’t you?”

“I’m probably going to end up reading everyone in the club, eventually.” She muttered with a sigh, starting to mentally prepare for that.

“I’m dead either way.” Juice gave up easily, too easily.

“Why do you say that?” Jax asked. Everyone’s attention fully on Juice and what he’d just said.

“What the hell was that today? Another attempt to swing from a tree? You told me you were
okay.” Chibs started them off.

“I am. I was just trying...Kozik man. Shit.” Juice broke down crying.

“Jesus Christ.” Jax swore under his breath at the sight.

“What’s going on with you boy? Huh? Tell us.” Chibs demanded.

Juice sniffled, wiping his hand over his face. She mentally sighed watching Juice, a classic move to buy time to try and think up an answer that would satisfy them.

“Sheriff found out some shit when he was digging into my profile. Now he’s threatening me with it.”

“Threatening you how?” Jax questioned.

“He says he’ll tell the club unless I start giving him intel.” Juice admitted.

“Tell the club what? What does he have on you?” Chibs questioned.

“My dad. He’s black.”

Jax and Chibs shot each other ‘what-the-fuck’ looks.

“So?” Chibs and Jax said in stunned unison, turning back to Juice.

“The rules. He tells the club, I’m out.” Juice’s eyes widened, shocked at how uncaring Jax and Chibs were at the news.

“What does your paperwork say? Your birth certificate. Under race, which box is checked?” Chibs questioned.

Juice looked confused why it mattered at this point. “Its Hispanic?” He answered as if he wasn’t sure himself and didn’t want to give a wrong answer.

“Hispanic. Then that’s what you are. Half of us don’t know who the hell our fathers are. The paperwork is the only thing that counts.”

She frowned at that answer. Her thought that the measure of a man meant more than some data point on a piece of paper.

“Shit. This is why you tried offing yourself?” Jax shook his head at the stupidity going on in Juice’s head.

“Jesus Christ, boy.” Chibs laughed in relief. “You’re an idiot. All of this is going to be okay. Listen to me. Tell that sheriff, next time you see him, he can go and suck your daddy’s big black cock and there’s not a thing he can do to you.”

“Yeah.” Juice half-laughed in relief. But the tension was still in Juice’s eyes.

“Juice, those rules, they were written nearly thirty years ago. It was a different time then.” Jax said.

“If Roosevelt is leveraging that over ye’, then what is he wanting from ye’?” Chibs asked.

Juice looked down in shame or guilt, she wasn’t sure. He was hiding still. Not telling them everything.
She held her hand out to him. Juice looking at her hand like she was holding a gun to his head.

“The only way out of this pain Juice is to be honest. And you haven’t been honest with us for a very long time.”

“There’s no forgiveness for me.” Juice said dejectedly.

Shaking her head. “I am the Seer, all paths lead to the divine.” Juice looked at her, like he wanted to believe her. A shred of hope. “Take my hand. Let us help you back to the truth, to your own redemption. We’ve already lost...Kozik. Don’t let us lose you, too.”

Juice hesitated still. Her hand waiting for his.

“Juice. Take her hand.” Jax prompted. Juice gulped, recognizing the order from his VP.

“Whatever it is, it’s killing you, Juice. And the only way to fix it, is to know just how bad it is.” She said softly.

His eyes pained. “I’m sorry.” His hand taking hers.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 112

Chapter Summary

Call of Duty, part 5

Chapter Notes

Wow. I really didn't mean to go so long in not updating. But work has ganged up on me and my main laptop is dying a gruesome death. Plus, working on this part of the story took a lot out of me. I had a lot to get through, I thought and debated through my assumptions and conversations I've had with a few of my readers regarding Juice. I'm not sure I worked everything through as much as I could but it's close. I'll probably revisit this chapter later on and tweak it, or not. I don't know. Let me know what you think.

Anyway, here we go, enjoy...

She gasped for air, yanking her hand out of Juice’s. “Answer it.” She ordered Juice, the taste of cherry pie and blood thick on her tongue, as Chibs hands tightened around her. His strength pulling herself back into herself. Deciding she didn’t like cherry pie anymore. Sorcha pushing her head into her lap, as if sensing her distress.

“What?” Jax asks, confused by her command and the lack of evidence of what needed answering.

“Aaaarrarge.” Chibs voice low and concerned. Jax sitting silent, watching and waiting. Juice looking at her with tears in his eyes. He gulped as she glared at him, fighting to keep a hold on the hot rush of anger that flooded her through her.

“What?” Jax asks, confused by her command and the lack of evidence of what needed answering.

“Answer it.” She said again.

A phone rings and Juice jerks, a guilty, panicked look washes over him. Cuchulain growls at Juice for moving.

She sets her hand to Sorcha again, “Guard.” Sorcha’s ears prickle up and Cuchulain stands, the dogs on alert at her command. Juice glances at the dogs nervously, his face paling.

“Nancy?” Jax questioned, his voice tense as the phone rang again.

“Give the all clear.” She hissed at Juice, refusing to give way from his hunted eyes. “We need time.”

The phone rang again.

“Answer it.” Jax ordered harshly.
Juice pulls out the phone from his pocket. “Checking in. Yeah.” His body slumps in defeat and he snaps the phone closed.

“How much time until your next check in?” Chibs asks angrily.

“Four hours.” She answered, pressing her hands to her face for a moment.

“God damn it.” Jax seethed.

Bringing her hands down to her lap she looked at Juice. “Take off your kutte.”

“Nancy, if you could explain what’s going on?” Jax said harshly. “Because if I think what it is…”

“One moment, Jax.” She held up a hand at Jax, holding him off. “Take off the kutte. Now.” She demanded.

Juice giving Jax and everyone a look, he slipped off his kutte sheepishly. Holding onto it, staring down at it in his hands. Holding her hand out for the leather, Juice hesitates a moment only to hand it over. Twisting the leather around and laid it down on her lap.

She took another breath as the tension settled down slightly, and her anger settled a little as well. She wanted to kick Juice’s ass to kingdom come and back.

Glancing at Jax, “If you looked up the word gullible in the dictionary, his face would be on it. You…” She swung her gaze back on Juice, “…have managed to put everyone in the club at risk. It’s only by sheer luck you have survived this long.”

“I thought I could fix it…” Juice blinked at her as he tried to explain his actions.

Her hand was moving before she could stop herself, the sharp crack echoed as Juice’s head snapped to the side. Her palm stinging and her powers whiplashing inside her, cursing at herself as she shook her hand out. Juice’s cheek stained red where she hit him.

The dogs growled at Juice at the harsh slap. Chibs took her hand in his, checking her palm only to massage it. “Calm down.” He eased in her ear.

“Fuck.” Jax muttered, his eyes checking her and looking back at Juice. Chibs gripped her tighter, pulling her further into his lap, further away from reaching Juice again.

“God damn it! What the fuck were you thinking?!” She railed at Juice. Okay, maybe she wasn’t as calm as she had thought herself to be.

He looked to defend himself from her but she cut him off at the pass.

“No. Don’t answer that. I know what you thought and you are a goddamn idiot. You never should have made it past prospect. You knew you were in over your head. Someone who’s run up against the law before, you know you should have demanded a lawyer. But you thought better. Thought you could fix it. Jesus Christ!”

“I only thought to protect the club. They said if I helped…” Juice rushed to explain.

Chibs was swearing in gaelic.

“Shut the fuck up! I’m talking, not you!” She pointed at him angrily.

She’d never felt this angry before, it rose up inside her. A hot ephemeral dragon-like being inside
her that wafted through every cell of her body, to swirl around her as Juice kept trying to explain away why he did what he did. And it wasn’t just Juice trying to negotiate with the cops on his own that had her so angry.

“Chibs went to Clay requesting that you take a step back from the cartel business. He trusted you and tried to help you. Thought you were worth his time and effort to save.”

She felt Chibs still as Juice glanced at him only to drop his eyes from everyone.

“You’ve been lying to him and to everyone here for weeks. Even now, you’re lying to us, giving us half-truths.” Juice looked back up at her. “I warned you that the only way out was to admit the truth. But instead of taking responsibility like an adult…. Instead of admitting your mistake, you keep making it worse by trying to fix it all by yourself.”

She leaned back against Chibs, his hands curling around her waist as she shook her head at Juice. Her anger abating as she felt more tired. Tired of the lying, tired of trying to lead these men towards a future that didn’t lead to everyone’s destruction. She knew that things were changing, but the real change won’t happen until Clay was taken out of power. And they needed to be ready to take control so it didn't spiral out of their grasp.

“The wreckage you’ve created...and trying to kill yourself so you didn’t have to deal with it... You are weak and don’t deserve to even be a member of this club.”

“I’m sorry…” Juice pleaded at her.

“You should be. But your words mean nothing right now.” She corrected Juice.

“Nancy, mind filling us in?” Jax interrupted.

“Tell them what really happened with that missing brick. And if you skip an ‘and’ or ‘but’, I will make you start from the beginning. I can sit here all day and night if need be, course by then, Clay’ll be in here wondering what the hell is going on and I can’t guarantee your safety from him. So start talking.”

“Juice?” Jax prompted.

“No, do not call him that. It’s a child’s name. His name is Juan. An adult name he needs to embrace and grow the fuck up. The time for babying you is over.” Juice paled as she stripped him of his nickname.

“Tell us the truth.” Jax ordered.

Juice gulped nervously but the brief moment of weighted silence broke him.

“Roosevelt, he needed proof of the drugs...wanted me to get him a sample. I went to the warehouse and do a walk through. Phil told me Rat had gone to get coffee, Alvarez’s guy was around back. I grabbed a brick and started to pull the sample, but Phil started calling for me. The noise brought Alvarez’s guy into the warehouse. I panicked and hid the brick under my shirt. Walked out with it into the woods.”

“Oh my God.” Jax muttered softly.

She felt Chibs breathing carefully, she rubbed at his hands around her waist to help calm him.

Juice’s eyes went wide in fear as Jax and Chibs reacted to what he was admitting to.
“I meant to wait a couple of hours and do another check to put it back.” His breathing hitching. “I fucking fell asleep out there. Woke up and heard you guys coming up the road. Hid the brick under some brush.”

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs swore lowly...dangerously.

Jax seethed at Juice, shaking his head. “You took it. You killed Miles.” He put together. “We made Phil and Rat put a gun to their heads and pull the fucking trigger, when it was you all along!”

She snorted, looking to Jax. “Too bad your order to the prospects that no one gets into the barn didn’t also include anyone from the club. Too bad you balked at having Marcus’s men watch over the barn that night.”

Jax twisted his head around at her, his lips pressed in a flat line at her rebuke for his part in allowing Juice to take advantage of the situation. There was blame all around for what happened.

“I know. I’m sorry.” Juice apologized again.

Both Jax and Chibs glared at Juice’s apology.

“Keep going.” She reminded Juice that they weren’t done with his confession.

“You were called away back to the clubhouse. With most of you gone, I went to put the brick back. But, Miles caught me with it in my hand. We fought. I killed him.” Juice flicked a guilty look to Chibs. “I heard you and Happy and put the brick on Miles. Told you I caught him with it.”

“Try again.” She stopped him. Juice looking at her in confusion to what he missed. “You took a sample out of that brick. Didn’t you?”

Juice nodded. “Yeah.”

“Fucking piece of shite.” Chibs swore.

Jax shook his head again, taking deep breaths.

“Roosevelt arrested me with the sample. That’s when he took me to see the war room.”

“Hold it. Try that again. Explain that...for them.” She demanded with a nod to Jax and Chibs.

“Roosevelt told me where to meet him with the sample. He promised me that the guy who could make a deal would be with him.”

“But it was just you and Roosevelt, where you...eagerly handed a cop a couple of grams of pure, uncut cocaine. Grinning and nodding at him as he tested it. Proud of yourself for how good the coke was, given how surprised Roosevelt was when he tasted it. Weren’t you?” She pressed.

“Oh my God.” Jax groaned softly, as Juice gulped at her again.

“He said the guy would be there. That if I brought the sample, I’d be done. That the club would be safe.” Juice explained, his voice still hurt that Roosevelt lied to him.

“But the guy wasn’t there, was he?” Chibs spit out. She pressed a hand over his at her waist, offering her silent support and offer of patience.

Juice wilted. “Roosevelt arrested me, instead. He lied to me. He said he’d bring the guy with him.”
“Yeah, no shit.” Jax huffed harshly.

“Keep going.” She said simply.

“Roosevelt booked me and then introduced me to the guy running things, Lincoln Potter. Took me up to the second floor of the police station. He’s running a RICO case against the club.” Juice looked hopefully to Jax, information that he thought would save him. “He used Roosevelt to get to me. I saw the pictures on the wall, Galindo, the Irish, us...all of it.” Juice shook his head when none of them reacted to the threat of RICO.

“When I saw what was really going on...the lying...leading me on...forcing me to...to do things I didn’t want to do. I lost it, jumped Roosevelt for lying to me this whole time.”

Jax looked to her and Chibs, they looking at him. Juice watching their silent interplay.

“You have to believe me, I didn’t want to do any of it. But they told me I had to. Threatened to out me to the club. I was in too deep, I didn’t know what to do. They promised to not go after the club so long as I gave them what they wanted. I was just trying to protect the club.”

“Rat bastard.” Chibs snarled. “Even when I was pressed by that uptight bitch, Stahl...my ex and daughter's lives at risk...I came clean to the club.”

“Fucking...God damn it....” Jax muttered. "You could have stopped it by telling us what was going on! Even demanding a lawyer like Nancy said."

“The Feds lied to you, Juan. What makes you think for one second that they aren’t lying to you about keeping the club safe from RICO? Why the hell would the Feds keep the Sons safe from RICO when they have evidence of the club’s involvement. No thanks to you. They lied to you in order to hook you in...and you fell for it. I want to puke from how Roosevelt gleefully rejoiced how he was able to twist you up. God. And you continue to defend your actions that the Feds promised to protect the club from RICO. You thought you had it all figured out. Well, you don’t.”

“What’s going to happen now?” Juice dared to ask.

“You killed a member, betrayed us to the cops...what do you think is going to happen?!” Jax yelled as Juice huddled in on himself. Cuchulain and Sorcha turned to watch Jax, keeping him from rushing at Juice.

“Jax...take a breath, sit down.” She instructed.

Jax shaking his head at her, his blue eyes flashing at Juice’s crimes. “You can’t deal with him like you normally would.” She reminded him.

“Well, something has to be done about him.” Jax argued frustratedly.

“Sit down and let me work this out.” She countered back at Jax.

Jax gave her a weighted look but leaned back on the desk.

Seeing that Jax was under control somewhat, she turned her attention back to Juice. “Clay gave you this Men of Mayhem patch. A patch that you know you don’t deserve. In fact, you don’t deserve this kutte. You would rather die than have the club know about your betrayal. And if you did manage to get yourself killed, you might’ve been given full honors. An honor you didn’t earn, because you put the club in danger with your infinite wisdom. You didn’t learn when the guys dressed you in a diaper and you didn’t learn now. But you will learn it from here on out.”
“Jesus Christ.” Jax said. She felt Chibs breathing down her neck.

Keeping herself focused on Juice and not on the guys’ anger, “The Feds are on your ass every four fucking hours. How...convenient for you.”

Her eyes going to Jax. Jax set his lips tightly, running a hand over his head, understanding what she was saying. They couldn’t do anything to Juice because it’ll tip off the cops.

“And it all started so innocently.” She continued. “You are gullible to believe that the club would care your father is black. You didn’t think for one moment that your years of being a full-patched member held any weight. You were in a position to know that you were in over your head, you should have called for a lawyer. Instead what started as an insignificant thing has become this mountain of guilt that your solution was to kill yourself or get yourself killed. But that guilt weighs a soul. It follows you, your survival from your hanging and the landmines should have clued you in that you are meant to work through this. There is no easy escape for you. This is your path to walk, to make right.”

“Wait, hold it,” Jax held up a hand, “what intel are you supposed to give the Feds?” Jax asked, remembering what Juice had discussed.

“Time and place for the meet with the Irish and the cartel. Potter, he promised that the club would be protected. I thought I had to go along with it, to protect the club.”

“Shut up!” Jax exploded. “Protecting the club would have been telling us from the very beginning what was going on! You betrayed us.”

“She knew, too! It wasn’t just me! She read Roosevelt!” Juice waved at her wildly.

She felt herself smile dangerously at Juice's attempt to deflect his guilt. “Juan...I read Tig. I read Gemma. Did you really think I didn’t know about the RICO before Roosevelt? Your betrayal would have come out sooner or later. I’ve been after you to admit the truth for weeks now. Hoping that you’d come to the right decision on your own, like how an adult would. How a full-fledged member of the mother charter of the Sons of Anarchy would. Your failed attempts at killing yourself...this was your path to walk, not mine. But after today, your continued lies is the last straw. I will not let you twist Chibs or anyone else up because of your betrayal. I will not let anyone else die because of your lies.”

Juice started crying, bent over, his hands hiding his face and swiping at his tears.

“Fucking Christ.” Chibs swore at how broken Juice was.

“I need your knife.” She asked Chibs.

“Yes, it will require your trust in what I’m doing. Or are you still going to fight me over what we’re up against here?” She snarked back to Jax.

Jax rolled his eyes but nodded to her.

She smirked, “Well, finally, someone is starting to listen to what I’m saying. How refreshing.”

“M ‘anam…” Chibs warned softly, handing her his knife, pulling her back from verbally smacking Jax around some more.
Turning the kutte around in her lap she cut the Mayhem patch off. Handing the knife back to him when she was done. Holding out the newly freed patch to Jax.

“He turned in his patch to you, his VP. Tell Clay that Juan here isn’t up to the task that this patch requires. I don’t think it’ll be hard to convince Clay, since he did his suicide walk through a landmine field.”

“Yeah, is this all we’re going to do with him?” Jax took the patch, questioning her over Juice’s punishment.

“No.” Turning back to Juice. “You will answer that phone every single time. You will give the all clear every single time. And when the time is right, you will feed the Feds the intel that we decide you can share.”

Juice looked utterly confused. “What... Why?”

“That is for us to know and you not. What we’ve discussed here, your betrayal stays between the four of us. You live through our grace. Do you understand?”

Juice looked at Jax and Chibs. But he didn’t look convinced that the guys weren’t going to try and kill him.

She frowned at Jax and Chibs. “Fine, my grace. You two can’t touch him. Death is too easy for him.”

Jax and Chibs shared a dark look that they didn’t like where she was taking this. She stood up out of Chibs lap and glared at them. She wasn’t going to let them kill Juice, not now. Things were still up in the air and she couldn’t talk to them fully with Juice still in the room. And she was tired of people dying. “Let me handle this.” She emphasized once more.

Another considering pause and the two of them gave curt nods.

Twisting around to face Juice once more. “Now, there will be rules. We cannot trust you on your own. So you will move into the bunks here. You will work in the garage unless you are in church or runs for the club. You will not drink alcohol or take any drugs. You cannot atone for murdering Miles and betraying your brothers with drinking and drugging yourself into oblivion.”

“Next,” She didn’t give anyone time to get all up in arms again. “The weed shop, you will sign over your ownership of it to me.”

“What? But all my money is there?” Juice spluttered.

“The shop is a distraction from the club. You’ve been too distracted from the club. That freedom has allowed you to stray. No more. You know without your hacking, you never would have been allowed to even buy up that share of a weed shop, not with your record. You’ve opened yourself up to the Feds by buying that shop. And with you in lockstep with the Feds, you’ve put the club at risk. You helped bring the wolves to our door. Sign it over to me, the only person in this club that doesn’t have a criminal record.”

Jax nodded his agreement to what she was saying and Juice hung his head, knowing that there was no way out of it.

“To the four of us, you are back at square one, you are a prospect again. You will do what we tell you to do. You will work with Phil and Rat in their duties. You’ll work out in the ring or the weight room. If and when you have proven to me that you are in a better emotional state and that
the risk of the RICO has passed, I’ll pay you back for what you invested in the shop.”

“He doesn’t deserve it.” Jax muttered.

“And yet, he has a part to play in all this.” She returned coolly, annoyed that Jax was interrupting her again.

“I can’t imagine what part that is. Nobody’ll trust him, I can’t trust him.” Jax threw his hand at Juice.

“He can’t just get off like this, not after him killing a member.” Chibs seethed.

“And he won’t. He’ll earn and pay for it. Him breathing right now is unbearable to him. The guilt haunts him. Which brings me to my next rule,” turning back to Juice, “Miles was buried out in the woods somewhere, unmarked. You will buy him a plot at the cemetery, headstone included.”

“But...I don’t know where he’s been...”

“Well, you’re going to be spending a lot of time with Phil and Rat. They were the ones that buried him. I’m sure you can figure out a way of asking them where Miles was buried.”

“And finally, you will back any plays Jax makes at the table. There will be no hesitation on your part. You will continue to act as you have been with the cops and with everyone out there.”

“You want me to keep spying on them, on the club. Why?” Juice thrown by the turn of events.

Good, the more confused Juice was the better. The less chance of him knowing exactly what was going on and thus blurt out something to the wrong people.

She leaned into him, staring right into his confused eyes. Her gaze so intense that Juice leaned back from it. “You don’t get to know. If you want to atone, then you will do what I tell you. What Jax and Chibs tells you. You will not question us. You have weakened this club, you don’t get to question us why on anything anymore. You will not divulge your betrayal to anyone. Your lips are sealed. That includes Clay, Bobby, Tig, the crows, Chuckie, and even Gemma. If anyone orders you to do something for them, you will find me, Jax or Chibs and run it by us first. We will tell you if it’s okay to do something. Your betrayal to the cops tells us that we can’t trust you with anything. You think you’ve hit rock bottom, but you haven’t. Things can get so much worse for you. Do what we tell you. Keep your mouth shut and stop trying to kill yourself. Because you’re too stupid to even do that right. Do you understand me?”

Juice stared at her fearfully, the whites of his eyes flaring as he gulped at her. Finally, nodding that he heard her.

Standing upright, “Take your kutte. Know that this is your cage...your shame. There is no more running away like a child. Time to be an adult and prove to us that you can be trusted.”

Juice took the leather from her.

“Get out. Go pack your shit and move into one of the dorms.” Jax said harshly.

She could feel the anger coming from Jax and Chibs behind her.

“Get out of here before I decide to beat the shite out of you.” Chibs growled.

Juice gave the guys another fear-filled look as he settled into the yoke of her rules, walking out the door before Chibs or Jax could make good on their threats. Juice failing to shut the door behind
him, she collapsed back in the chair as Jax and Chibs paced.

Chibs shutting the door on one pass. Her head squeezing at her temples. The dogs relaxed and went to her, pressing themselves at her legs, nudging at her hands for pets. Absently running her hands through their fur, she delayed in dealing with the guys’ fear-fueled anger for just little bit longer.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My heart = mo chridhe
Chapter 113

Chapter Summary

Call of Duty, part 6

Chapter Notes

Again, sorry for delay. Had work and needed to set up my new laptop. Not sure what to tell you for this chapter, a bit transitional. Emotions running high after learning about Juice’s betrayal.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jax glared angrily at her as she winced from her pounding headache. Chibs paced along the doorway, running his hands through his hair in frustration or anger, thought it better to leave him alone to his own thoughts.

“You better be fucking sure about him. About this RICO…” Jax said as he passed in front of her, waving his hand at her.

“You know…it’d be nice if you’d trust me just a smidgen. I know its hard but try, won’t you?” She snarked as her stomach churned warningly. Swallowing back the rising gorge of blood and that stupid slice of cherry pie. It even wasn’t good pie, it had an artificial tasted to it as if they couldn’t be bothered to use real sugar or something to sweeten it.

Damn it. It was just a vague memory, a future memory that refused to let her go. She had to stop thinking. But, of course, her mental order to herself only had her thinking more about the taste and utter futility Juice was enduring.

“There’s not much we can do right now, Jackie.” Chibs sighed as he leaned against the door.

“Fuck, I know. How much longer is this going to go on?”

“Soon. Very soon.” She said, looking up at him, her stomach rolled again and thought she could fight it out but her headache flared that had her rushing into the bathroom, nearly tripping over Cuchulain in the process.

“Shite. Back off Jax.” She heard Chibs say. Crashing to her knees as she heaved into the toilet. The dogs following on her heels, whining worriedly as they pressed around her. Sorcha able to reach to lick at her cheek, Cuchulain leaning on her back. She had to brace her elbows to the edge of the seat as he leaned his weight on her. Perfect, she thought ruefully, puking up once more with the added bonus of two hundred pounds of dog leaning on her while her skull was sliding around her brain. Just perfect.

“Jesus Christ. Sorry.” Jax swore behind her as Chibs laid a firm hand to her tight neck, hushing and butting the dogs back a little. Groaning as her headache settled down abruptly as she spit out the
taste of the acidic bile.

“Fuck, sorry.” Chibs said to her, his other hand running a washcloth under the faucet of the sink. Crouching down next to her he ran the cloth over her face, his worried, whiskey brown eyes searching hers.

She patted at his hand, letting him know she was getting better. He gave her a slight smile, wiped at her face again, sneaking a kiss.

“Okay?” He asked her. She leaned into his strong hands, she felt chilled and the heat of his skin was like a furnace that had her swaying into his arms.

“Tired. Trying not to think too much.” Was all she could manage at the moment.

She blinked and felt the weight of Jax leaning in the doorway, staring down at her and Chibs. “Anything else you should tell us about Juice?” He pressed.

She stiffened under his frustrated question. Chibs even hissed at the tone. The dogs whirled around to face Jax, growling at him. Jax backed up a step under the dogs sudden protectiveness.

They looked at the dogs curiously for the moment, but trying to figure out their reaction was just beyond her reach at the moment. She looked up at Jax, his eyes turning confused as the rest of them.

She took a second to decide if standing was beyond her or not, but given their location and time, she couldn’t camp out here in the bathroom forever, not when Clay was bound to show up. Yeah, that was it, she gripped the seat of the toilet and the edge of the sink she heaved herself upright. Chibs quickly helping her up, steadying her as she swayed a little as her head swam.

“God.” She breathed after swishing her mouth out and washed her hands thoroughly at the sink.

“You sure you’re okay?” Chibs asked again.

“Yeah.” She answered him. Frowning a little at the dogs, who were still guarding her from Jax. Rolling her eyes, “Hey, relax.” She said to them as she dried her hands on a towel that looked to be clean. The dogs turned their heads to check her, giving Jax another unfriendly look but they visibly relaxed. Sorcha pressing up against her legs.

“That’s interesting.” Jax simply said, watching the dogs.

She huffed dryly, catching Chibs eye roll. “Yeah, cause everything else going on hasn’t been interesting this whole time.”

Taking a breath seeing that Jax nor Chibs was going to let her get away with not explaining things further. “As far as Juan goes, the RICO, it’s all in motion. Killing him right now will not solve anything, or stop it from happening. Whatever action you take against him will only tip everyone off, the cops, the club, you’ll...we’ll have to tell them about the RICO. And we can’t with fucking Clay and Gemma still running the show around here. I’ve been trying to steer everyone on the right path, to start thinking more critically, all if it cryptic as hell because I can’t just tell them the future, because again, it’ll lead to questions that we can’t answer yet. But I see that I haven’t been harsh enough.”

“Fucking Juice.” Chibs said harshly.

“Look, he’s good for his computer skills, working in the garage, voting even. But when he’s put
onto a task that requires thinking beyond his skill set he doesn’t know what to do. His choices are all wrong compared to what you or anyone else in the club would do. He’s like a child that wasn’t taught how to act in a nice restaurant. Being woken up by Hale in a diaper with that stupid sign stapled to his chest didn’t teach him his lesson. He doesn’t understand that when he screws up that there are real consequences. The guys...toying with him for his screw-ups only perpetuates his childishness. He thinks this is all fun and games. He’s never really been on the wrong end of the club until now. There’s a part of him that truly believes that everyone’ll thank him for his work on handling all this by himself.”

“Are you fucking serious?” Jax asked her astonishingly.

She just cocked her brow at him as an answer.

Jax threw his head back, running his hand over his hair and down his beard, as he moved back from the doorway.

Chibs took her hand and led her out of the bathroom. “I put rules on him because he needs them. He knows that we know his sins. We’re going to be on him like a hawk. I’m sorry if they don’t seem harsh enough for you two, but given our situation...there really isn’t much we can do at the moment. It’d be good for Juice...Juan to be moved into another charter.”

“Shit, where? Whatever charter we send him to will question us over the transfer. They won’t trust him if he can’t cut it here.” Jax said.

“He’s betrayed us, he’s a rat. He doesn’t deserve to fucking breath. We know what has to be done about him.” Chibs seethed.

“Look, you’re upset, both of you. You should be. But circumstances aren’t right yet. Let’s think about this and see how things shake out. We move on him now and it’ll raise too many questions.” She placated.

“Yeah. Okay.” Jax relented. “I’ll have the guys make sure Juice is kept busy with the garage and shit.”

“Aye, work the shithead to the bone so he can’t fuck up anymore.” Chibs reluctantly agreed.

“Why the no drugs or drinking?” Jax asked curiously.

“He’s chatty when he’s high as a kite. Talks to people about things he shouldn’t.” She said with a wave of her hand.

“Jesus Christ.” Jax muttered.

“And no leaving him with Clay, Gemma, or Bobby...he’ll roll over on them. Anyone that has seniority...he’ll crack. Especially Clay...”

“What’re you saying?” Jax’s eyes sharpened on her.

Before she could explain, Clay walked abruptly into the room. His suspicious, blue-eyes taking the three of them in and the sudden halt to their conversation that he wasn’t part of. “What’re you doing in here?” He gruffly asked.

The three of them looked to each other in silent communication. Jax giving them a slight head tilt in agreement that he’d take point on talking with Clay over Juice. He had to anyway.
“We were talking with Juice.” Jax said.

“How?” Clay demand of Jax. Turning to look at her and Chibs when Jax didn't say anything. "Did you read him?” He demanded.

"No. I didn't have to." She said curtly.

“We’re heading out.” Chibs chimed in, before they could get quagmired into a tête-à-tête with Clay and Jax.

He firmly took her hand and lead her towards the doorway. Clay moving out of their way. Cuchulain pushing Clay out of the way as he rushed out the door and down the hall.

Jax smirked, trying to keep from laughing. Clay scowling as he caught his balance, she looked back at Jax. “What next, Seer? Unicorns?”

She looked down at Sorcha and back at Jax with a shrug. “Beats me. Your guess is as good as mine.”

Jax’s grin widened in amusement.

“Come on. Let’s get you home.” Chibs pulled at her.

“Yeah, okay.” She murmured as she let Chibs guide her down the hall, his arm wrapped protectively around her. Sorcha right on their heels. The sound of Jax and Clay talking behind them.

It was dark out when they stepped outside. The crisp air felt good against her heated skin, only after a few seconds she was starting to shiver from the cold.

They were at the bike and automatically grabbed their helmets, and in tandem, realized that they had the dogs now. Getting home with the bike presented them with a logistical flaw.

“Shit. How’re they going to get home?” She started, looking up at Chibs to see if he had a solution.

His dark eyes tracking the dogs as they milled around them. “Well, they could stay here overnight, I suppose.”

She knew it was a reasonable idea, but instinctively she didn’t like the idea of leaving them behind. And by the tone of voice, Chibs wasn’t keen on the idea himself.

“They’re deerhounds, they’re built to run long distances. Can ye’...I don’t know...tell them the way home? Or have them follow us alongside the road?” He suggested.

Shrugging she leaned down and ran her hands over the dog’s fur, taking a breath as she sunk into their minds once more. They weren’t as giddy as when they first showed up. More settled with their place with her. She didn’t waste time dwelling on it. Asking them mentally if they wanted to stay or come home with them. Her fingers digging deeper at their fur at their immediate and definitive response that they wanted to come home with them.

She wasn’t sure how she did it, but mapped out the route home. Soon as she pictured the front of the house they leapt from her and raced out of the lot and down the dark street. Chibs caught her as she nearly fell over at the suddenness of their movement.

“Okay?” He asked her.
“Yeah. They’re going to meet us at home.” She shrugged as Chibs looked in the direction the dogs ran off and back to her.

“Well, we’d better get moving, then.”

“I suspect if we don’t get a move on, they’ll come back wondering what’s taking us so long.” She joked.

“Jesus.” Chibs muttered as he cranked on the bike, while she settled behind him. Her hands coming around his waist as they pulled out of the lot and headed home.

Sure enough, soon as they pulled into the driveway, the dogs came rushing towards them where they’d been waiting at the front door; having somehow beating them home.

“Oy, back off the both of ye’.” Chibs grumbled as he navigated parking the bike without running over the dogs.

Getting off the bike was another feat of gymnastics as the dogs pressed them for pets.

“Good Lord.” Chibs huffed as he managed to unlock the front door. The dogs rushing inside and started exploring the house even before they had a chance to turn the lights on.

She laughed at the whole ridiculousness of the situation they found themselves in. Tiredness and exhaustion starting to hit her. Chibs shaking his head as he tossed his keys onto the counter, rummaging through the cabinets.

“Here, fill these with water, put them down in the mud room. I’ll find something for them to eat.” Handing her the stainless steel bowls. Doing as he directed, the dogs followed her and quickly started lapping up the water messily.

Squeezing her out of the way, she went back to the kitchen. Chibs was heating up some leftover beef stew, handing her the joint he’d lit. The kitchen soon smelled of the spiced beef, the dogs surrounded Chibs at the stove, pushing their heads closer to the pot.

“Fuck me. Oy, you two over there and wait til it’s ready.” Chibs huffed with a point of his finger where he wanted the dogs to wait.

The dogs regarded Chibs for a moment, realizing he meant business, they grumbled and moved off to the outer edge of the kitchen. Sitting down and waited...wiggling a little closer as Chibs turned back to the stove.

Shaking her head, sharing her amusement with Chibs, she pulled out a couple of beers, setting his next to him. He couldn’t help but crack a smile back at the antics with the dogs. Leaning against the counter top, she slid her free hand around his waist smoking the joint and taking sips of the beer.

When the stew was heated up, he scooped a couple of small bowls for the two of them, and the rest went into a couple of larger bowls for the dogs. She took their servings and beers to the dining table, listening as Chibs spoke to the dogs.

“All right you two, here ye’ go. Don’t be expecting first-class grub all the time now. We’ll get proper food for ye’ tomorrow.” He hushed at the dogs, setting the bowls down next to their water.

He’d joined her at the table after washing his hands. They tangled their bare feet under the table as they silently ate their late dinner, listening to the dogs finish their own dinners and started
wandering around the house.

“You sure you’re okay with them?” She asked with a point of her fork.

“Aye. Better than the Yorkies my ma had when I was growing up. Just strange to have so much activity in the house after so long being alone here.” He shrugged, taking a sip of his beer.

She nodded, forcing another bite of the stew down her throat. “Been a long day, hasn’t it?” She mulled, setting the last of her stew down on the floor for Cuchulain who’d wandered over and begged her.

“Aye.” He sighed with a frown. “Don’t be thinking you can pawn off your leftovers to them. You need to keep eating.” He admonished.

“I know.” She smiled gently at him, taking in how tired he was. “It’s late, why don’t you get the shower started. I’ll clean up here, let them out for a potty run.”

He mulled over her suggestion, heavily leaning his forehead to hers. “Aye. Okay. Hurry up though.”

Pressing her palm to his cheek, she twisted around to capture his lips with hers. Their kiss deepening and lack of air forced them apart once more.

“Go on.” She prompted him with a nudge.

He gave a incomprehensible grunt and moved out of his chair and started down the hall. Cuchulain trying to follow Chibs, but the dog came back to the kitchen with her and Sorcha. “Don’t worry...he’s just tired.” She explained to the dog.

She quickly picked up the plates and rinsed them off in the sink. Leaving the pot to soak, she opened the patio door, shushing the dogs out to do their business. Going to replenish their water and clean out their food bowls, tidying as she went. By the time she was finished cleaning up, the dogs were scratching at the door. Her head was killing her as she let the dogs back in, giving them another round of scratches and pets.

Leaving the undercabinet lights on in the kitchen she left the dogs to sort out where to camp out for the night.

Shutting the door, she saw Chibs sitting on the edge of the bed. His body frozen in exhaustion and stress. She silently went to him and ran her fingers through his hair, scratching lightly on his scalp. He sighed and leaned into her, resting his head to her stomach. His hands coming to her hips, holding her. Offering him the comfort of her touch. It had been a long day and the truth coming out of Juice today was a blow.

She slid her hands down and pulled his kutte off, setting it aside. She stripped him of his gun holster and pulled his t-shirt off. Her hands rubbing along his shoulders and arms. Kneeling down she worked his worn leather belt from its buckle, her fingers unsnapping and unzipping his jeans. His whiskey eyes watching her as she stripped him. She stood up and quickly took her own clothes off. Her hands on his arms, pulling at him. He stood at her urging, her hands sweeping around his waist, stripping his jeans and boxers off.

She kissed him gently. He made to deepen the kiss but she pulled away. Taking his hand, she led him into the shower. Where she grabbed the lavender-scented soap and began washing him. Taking care to reach between his toes and various nooks and crannies. Remembering when he did this for
her a few short weeks ago. She loved how tender he was in taking care of her, and now it was her turn to take care of him.

Turning him around, she washed his back. His griffin moving as she lathered the soap across his back. Her hands sliding over his cute behind. She leaned the front of her body into his back. Her hand wrapping around his cock. Gently washing and methodically twisted and pulled along his length. Her other hand coming to his chest to tweak at his nipples. He groaned as his cock became hot and heavy in her hand.

He tried to turn around, but she held firm, keeping him in place.

He moved his hands to the wall, giving his body over to her. Kissing his shoulder blade and his nape she felt his body tense and relax under her administrations. His cock hard in her hands as she kept massaging and twisting around him. She felt him tense again as she increased her motions. Driving him to his orgasm. He yelped and jerked as he climaxed, his come shooting out of him, to be washed away by the pounding of the spray.

Her hand gently held his cock as it twitched and softened again. His body loose, letting her hold him securely in her arms and hands.

Feeling him stand more on his own and she released him, letting him turn. They didn’t speak, they didn’t need to. He kissed her. Taking the soap from her, he washed her. But she didn’t let him linger, turning the shower off once they were rinsed off, she grabbed a towel and dried him off. Twisting the towel to pat at her skin before he could take it from her and return the favor.

His eyes never leaving her, she led him back into the bedroom and flicked the sheets back, putting him into bed and sliding in next to him.

“I love you.” She said simply, no other words were needed. Tangling their legs and hands stroking each other in comfort.

After a few moments in their deep well of silence, “I knew he was having problems. I asked him what was going on. Thought we’d talked it out. That he just needed time to get his head on right. I should have known. Should have pressed him.” He said thickly.

She let him talk, letting him get it out of his system. His body tensing again as he spoke, beating himself up inside.

“It’s not your fault.” She reassured him softly.

“Aye, it is. I thought he was just in shock from shooting Miles. When I found him at that tree. I wanted to kill him. God, I was so angry with him. That he would do something like that. Fuck. Told Jax, I’d keep an eye on him.”

“It’s not your fault what he did. You were helping him to the best you could. Juice failed to tell you what was really going on. Your actions would have been completely different if he had. Wouldn’t they?”

“Aye, would have had to take him to the table. The club would have voted. He killed Miles, a brother. It’s a death sentence. Juice knew it. He knew the rules when he joined. Should have known when he brought up the rules at the barn. Fucker.”

“But he didn’t tell you, he kept his secret. And now he’s put himself into a place where he can’t be killed or it’ll tip off the Feds. Put the club at risk with Rico. Very Murphy’s Law of him. He had chance after chance to come clean. He’s been piling the guilt on himself, he knows he screwed up.
As a prospect whenever he screwed up, he took the hazing you guys dished out. Thought it was just like a frat hazing. He never learned that his actions have very real consequences and now with him a full member, he still is trying to hide. Like a little boy caught with his hand in the cookie jar.”

“I know, its partly our fault to that. After a shitty day, we’d all come in and Juice would be there like a bouncy, happy puppy that we played with. We should have been more diligent with him when he was a prospect. Tell him the consequences if he screwed up like he did if...when he became fully-patched.”

She soothed a hand over his heart, her thumb circling gently. Letting him process.

“I thought about it once. It was my first hit. Was ordered to take out a peeler. Shot him in the back of the head, never saw it coming. It haunted me for a long time; almost took a swing myself. Questioned if I could handle it, what they wanted of me. Realized I wanted to live. Live and try to make things better. When I saw Juice with that chain. I saw myself.”

She drifted her hand to his temple, cupping his cheek. Chibs looked to her, his emotions flooding over him. He nestled his face into the curve of her neck. She shifted to cover as much of his body with hers as his hands grabbed at her, holding her as he broke down and wept. His hot tears hitting her skin.

“It’s not your fault. Hear me. It’s not your fault. You did everything you could. You are a good man and I love you.” She hushed starkly into his ear. His hands clenching at her as his body shook with the deep-seated emotions that flooded him.

His body finally gave up the fight, the storm passing as he relaxed in her arms. She twisted her head to his cheek and kissed him. “I love you.” She repeated once more. “Go to sleep. You’re okay. Everything will be alright, you’ll see.”

He gave her a wry look as she took his line and used it on him.

“I love you too, mo ghaol. Fuck, I’m so tired.” He sighed. “I wasn’t hallucinating the dogs, was I?” He questioned. His voice unburdened from his earlier upset.

She smirked. “Nope, They wanted to climb into bed with us and cuddle. But I shut the door.” She teased gently.

“Oh Christ. Thank God. I have a feeling those two are bed whores, we’d end up hanging off the edge of the mattress the whole fucking night.” He whined.

She snickered at his description, knowing he was probably right on that.

“You were such a sight to see with them. It was amazing.” He drifted.

“Shhh, go to sleep.” She shushed him and drifted off herself, curling into his side.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My love = mo ghaol
Chapter 114

Chapter Summary

Burnt & Purged, part 1  
Chibs pov

Chapter Notes

Jimeny Crickets.

Sorry I haven't posted in a long while. All I can say is that life got in the way. Had to unplug to get some massive amount of work done, still more work waiting for me but found some pockets of time to plug away at this.

My original version of this scene had us in Nancy's pov. It wasn't really working for me, decided to try it in Chibs pov. Worked much better, but basically had to re-write it.

This is just a short update, I'm gearing up for some big chapters coming up. Big in length and big in character/plot development.

Enjoy ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He blinked lazily as the morning glow of the sunlight filling the bedroom. Nancy had shifted beside him, her face burrowing into her pillow; an unconscious attempt to keep the coming day from forcing her to wake. Watching her come out of her defensive shell from when she was trapped in that basement, he never realized that she’d turn out to be a non-morning person.

The light made her skin glow and the red of her hair flare as if it were on fire. His heart stopped for a beat at the sight. Fuck, she was beautiful. He couldn’t believe anyone so beautiful would exist. Testing that she was next to him, he gently traced the curve of her cheek and jaw, down across her clavicle and arm. Careful not to wake her just yet.

He remembered last night, coming home and crashing. Feeling hurt, angry, and in the end, exhausted by all the energy he’d spent the last few days, weeks, worrying over Juice. Only to find out the shithead had been lying to him the whole time. It only showed that they had to fix the club even more. If this was just one person who’d screwed around behind the club’s back, God only knows what everyone else was up to. Fuck.

Nancy shifted once more, her arm smacking across his chest. He caught her hand, massaging it gently. Her face scrunched for a second at some thought that raced through her dream.

He was so thankful for her. If she wasn’t around, he wondered how long he would’ve sat on the edge of his bed, staring off into space. Unable to break free of his thoughts that he couldn’t even
get undressed by himself.

It was Nancy gently stripping him bare. Washing him. Even jerking him off in the shower. Fuck, that was hot. Letting her take control of him like that. He wanted to reciprocate, but she wouldn’t let him. Hustling him off to bed like a toddler. He tried to fight her on it, but as soon as his head hit the pillow, there was no way he could perform. Sleep was a dark wave that dragged him into it’s heavy weight.

Nancy stirred again, drawing his attention from his thoughts and to her blinking, glittering, purple eyes.

“Hey.” She breathed thickly as her eyes tried to focus. Watching her had him smiling at her. “You okay?” She frowned when he didn’t say anything.

“Uhm, hummm.” He hummed, brushing a lock of her hair back from her face.

She blinked again at him. “Why’re you staring at me like that?” Nestling herself closer to him.

“You’re amazing.”

She stared at him a moment, then rolled her eyes, stretching like a cat. “I’m just me, don’t be putting me up on some pedestal.” She argued through a deep yawn.

Snorting, he pulled her into his arms, the move making her look him in the eye. “No pedestal needed. You’re amazing and I’m a fucking lucky bastard to have you.”

She snickered as he playfully kissed her, her laughter infectious. He pulled up and eyed her with sudden mock seriousness. Her brow quirked as she waited for him to say what was on his mind.

“I didn’t get a chance to...tend to you, m ‘anam.” His grin growing again as he saw the thought spread through her mind.

It took her a moment for her to figure out what he was talking about. Frowning at him again, “I didn’t expect you to.” Her eyes searched his. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

He rubbed at his face and goatee as he thought about it. “Aye. Eventually. We gotta fix this club. If it can’t be done, we need to look into what we’re going to do.”

“I know.” She pressed her hand to the side of his face.

They regarded each other, testing their silent promise to each other. He smirked at her and leaned in for another kiss. “Aye. Eventually. We gotta fix this club. If it can’t be done, we need to look into what we’re going to do.”

“I know.” She pressed her hand to the side of his face.

They regarded each other, testing their silent promise to each other. He smirked at her and leaned in for another kiss. “Now, where was I? Hmmm?” He teased as he caught her laughing lips in a sudden toe-curling kiss.

He felt her melt under him as he rolled on top of her. Dragging his lips along her jaw and down her soft neck. Latching onto her sensitive curve of her neck and shoulders. Her scent invading his senses.

He drifted lower, spending some quality time with her breasts. Marvelous things, he mused. Nancy’s legs had wrapped around his body, holding him close.

Her nails scratching along his back that raised goosebumps along his spine. “What?” He questioned, the sharp pain drawing his attention.

She pointed towards the door, confused and still caught in his passion he looked where she
It took him a moment, but then, he heard it. The press of the door, an outside force trying to get into the room. Deep, huffing grunts starting to grow in volume. And he remembered.

“Fuck me. The dogs.” He groaned, collapsing over her. His face buried into the crook of her neck as he tried to will himself to calmness. His body primed and cock hard arguing with his head.

“You better tend to them first. Before they break down the door.” Nancy started giggling, her hands patting at him in commiseration, as he glared at her for twisting his words.

“Mary, mother of Christ.” He gave up.

The dogs seemed to be aware that they were awake and increased their scratching and pushing at the door. The soft grumbling became louder.

He raised himself up, giving her a harsh warning, “Don’t you dare move.”

The dogs scratched at the door once more and he was up. Pulling on his discarded jeans from yesterday and swiftly went to the door.

Soon as he opened the door a crack, the dogs pushed their way in. The force of their strength rocked him back and the dogs took advantage running into the room.

“Fuck me.”

The dogs scrambling about the room, leaping up onto the bed when they found their mistress. Licking and smelling at her skin.

“Ack! Get off!” She laughingly yelled, pushing at the dogs while fighting to keep the covers about her.

He slapped a hand to this forehead at their antics. Effectively ruining the mood he and Nancy had been in just mere seconds ago. Fucking cock-blockers, he mentally swore to himself.

“Alright, ye’ muckers. Let’s go.” He ordered at the dogs. Nancy helped by pushing them off the bed.

He got them moving back out of the room and down the hall. Opening the patio door for them so they could go out and do their business. He grabbed the cereal and set some in their bowls along with fresh water.

The dogs rushed back inside and went right to their bowls. Giving him questioning looks.

“I know. We’ll get you some real food later.”

As if they understood him, they ate what they were given. Lapping messily at the water. His headache increasing, he rolled his eyes and went back to Nancy while the dogs were occupied. Shutting the door again.

Nancy had left the bed. Tracking her location in the bathroom.

She was dressed already, washing her hands at the sink. Her eyes met his through the mirror. A smirk graced her lips at his obvious disappointment.

“You moved.” He accused, sliding his arms around her waist.
He didn’t want to do anything except hang around the house. He didn’t think he could face Juice, his gut churning in latent anger towards the idiot. Maybe he could convince Nancy to play hooky with him, so long as he didn’t let her go...it might work, he mused.

“Sorry. Bobby called, reminding us of the meeting with the Irish.” She explained, grabbing up her comb.

Fuck. So much for playing hooky. Nancy gave him an apologetic look, knowing what he’d been hoping for. Only to see it dashed to pieces.

He took the comb from her and distracted himself from his disappointment by braiding her hair for her.

When he’d finished, she turned to face him, her hands cupping his cheeks. “Put some clothes on, I’ll get breakfast together.” She kissed him and escaped out the door.

Fuck it. Nothing to do but get ready for the day. He washed up and threw on some clean clothes. Walking down the hallway, he shrugged on his shoulder rig, setting it to sit right.

Nancy was eating a bowl of cereal while working on her laptop with one hand, petting Sorcha with the other in between spoonfuls of cereal. Sorcha’s head resting in Nancy’s lap. Cuchulain was half-under the table, perked up when he walked into the room.

“There’s hot tea ready for you.” Nancy directed without looking up from the laptop.

“Thanks.” Cuchulain was up and following him into the kitchen only to turn and follow him back to the table, where he dived into his own bowl of cereal that Nancy had set out for him. Cuchulain sitting next to him, watching every movement he made eating and drinking.

He finished his cereal and leaned back in his chair when he caught Nancy looking at him. The questions and worry in her eyes. “You sure you’re okay? What happened with Juan?” She asked noticing that he’d caught her look.

“I don’t know...I’m fucking pissed as hell at him. He betrayed the club by helping the cops. But more than that...he fucking betrayed me. I went to bat for him to Clay and this is what he’s done. Fucking bastard.”

She made to speak, but he looked harder at her. “Don’t, I know all the reasons for why we have to do things the way you laid out. I get it. I don’t like it, but for right now, I’m hating him...hating it...this whole situation.”

“Okay.” She gave a short nod, letting him wrestle with the betrayal on his own. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you.” Biting at her lip.

He frowned at her, he wanted to admonish her for not trusting him. But he knew that she had her reasons. That she was trying to teach Juice a lesson. Teach him and everyone. And he mentally scoffed at his knee-jerk reaction that at his age he still needed to be taught. Taught by a girl nearly half his age. He could be a bastard about it, but he knew she was only trying to do what was right.

He must have taken too long to answer because she stood up and gathered the dishes in the awkward silence. Her eyes pointedly not looking at him. Fuck. His arm caught her around her hips, stopping her from escaping into the kitchen. Her hands full with the bowls, she looked down at him.

“I’m sorry. I know you’re balancing the weight of all the knowledge you’ve learned. Trying to
give us the space and time to figure shite out on our own. Watching us stumble around like fucking blind men in the dark. Just promise me that you won’t let us fall off the cliff, aye?”

She bit her lip and gave another nod that she heard him. But she didn’t seem to be better. Shite.

“You’re going to need to help Clay and Jax with the Irish today. Just a heads up.”

“Huh?” His brain tripped at her warning.

She shrugged with a sigh, “The Irish know that you’ve used the weapons that they didn’t want used. They’re going to be bitchy about it.”

“Christ.” He groaned.

“It’ll be your words that’ll get through to them. Reminding them that the guns are all going south of the border. And remember, it’s the Kings who hold the power. Galen doesn’t despite his taking point on the meeting. He’ll defer to the Kings.”

“He fucking better.”

She grinned at him ruefully. “It’s going to be a busy day.”

He glanced at his watch for the time, letting her loose to clean up and pack her stuff for the day.

Meeting her at the doorway, “Got everything?” He questioned as they both shrugged on their jackets and kuttes. The dogs circling around them, waiting for the door to open.

“Yeah.” She answered as she slung her bag over her shoulder.

He set his hands around her waist, catching her eye, “Graim thu, m ‘anam.”

Her shoulders relaxed as she smiled up at him. He couldn’t resist, leaning in where she met him half-way kissing her. She kissing him. After all the drama that had been played out the last twenty-four hours and whatever drama was waiting for them, it all came down to just him and her. Them, together. Going out to face the world, knowing that they were in this together. Whatever shite that was waiting, it didn’t matter, none of it mattered so long as they had each other.

Fuck, he never thought he’d be in a relationship like this. It was something that you dreamed to have. Never expecting to happen. Something that fucking romance writers wrote about to perpetuate the dream to find a person that you could always count on. One who would look out for you just as much as you’d look out for them. When he was with Fiona, he thought he had that. But it didn’t even come close to what he was feeling right this second. Felt like he was falling in love all over again.

He felt it, standing here in his foyer, the dogs starting to whine at them to get a move on, and all that mattered was her smiling at him, letting him hold and kiss her. Fuck, he was a lucky bastard.

He jerked the door open before he started bawling like an idiot. Nancy just smiled at him, holding his hand, stepping outside with him. Knowing, somehow, knowing what he was feeling. And it was fucking glorious.

Chapter End Notes
Translations:

I love you = Graím thu
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 115

Chapter Summary

Burnt & Purged Away, part 2

Chapter Notes

Ugh, work is stealing away my time to work on this story. I'll tweak bit and pieces for about five, ten minutes before my brain turns to mush. Sorry for the delay in updating. It's a bit rough, struggled to get the right tone for the big meeting with the Irish. Plus, I'm building up towards some big drama coming up. Have big plans for that.

Thanks for your patience,
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chibs caught hold of her as she stumbled a little, the dogs streaking down the drive. Tails wagging, yipping at each other as they raced towards the barn where everyone would be congregating for the meeting with the Irish. She’d just mapped out the location and they were off.

“You sure it’ll be okay bringing them to the meeting?” She worried.

“Aye. It’ll be fine. Come on.” Handing her helmet, he steadied the bike as she climbed on behind him.

Most of the guys were there already when they pulled in. Opie and Jax the only ones absent. Soon as the engine of the bike cut off, she could hear the dogs barking as they made their way through the forest.

“Jesus. I don’t know how they get here so fast.” Chibs said, helping her off the bike as the dogs broke through the brush. Cuchulain picking up a stick as Sorcha raced to where she and Chibs were standing.

She merely shrugged, just as bewildered as he was.

Cuchulain mouthing the stick as he loped through the gaggle of guys. Tig starting a game of tug-of-war and after managing to wrestle the stick away from Cuchulain’s jaw, threw it, Cuchulain racing off to catch it.

It didn’t take long before the rest of the guys started grinning and cracking jokes at the antics. Cuchulain, stick firmly stuck in his jaw, running circles around the guys as they all tried to grab the stick from him.

Clay glared at them over the dogs, detracting the importance of the meeting with the Irish. She and Chibs settled to lean against the bike. Sorcha sitting next to her, her hand resting at her scruff.
“What the hell are you doing bringing the dogs here?” Clay accused. “We’re doing business here, not hanging out at some fucking dog park.”

“What were we supposed to do with them?” Chibs shot back with a dark frown.

“Fuck, Clay, they’re fine.” Tig said with a grin as he wrestled Cuchulain with the stick.

Clay glared at Tig’s betrayal. Turning towards Bobby and Juice for support next, she guessed.

Bobby shrugged with a comical grin. “They aren’t cops.”

“Get rid of them.” Clay ordered.

“No.” Chibs contradicted. “It’s not as if the Irish won’t meet because of a couple of dogs.”

“They’re a distraction.” Clay argued. “This is a serious meeting.”

She huffed a laugh as Chibs groaned softly next to her.

“What’re you laughing at?” Clay shifted his angry eyes to her.

She switched her feet lazily, as she leaned against the bike and Chibs side. Sorcha pressing closer to her as her body shifted slightly. “Studies have shown that petting a dog or pets can help reduce the person’s blood pressure. They’re healthy to us humans.” She spoke simply, giving Clay an inscrutable look.

“And I would think you would like having Cuchulain and Sorcha around the club. Especially, when Cuchulain helped save your ass when you were trapped in a land mine field.” She added pointedly.

Clay shot everyone an annoyed glare that nobody was listening to him. The guys rubbernecking back and forth as she and Clay sparred.

Time is running out on Clay and it can’t come fast enough in her opinion.

“Just keep them under control. I want this meeting to go without a fucking hitch. And keep your mouth shut around the Kings.” Clay spit at her.

“Wow, you’re in a mood. Maybe Jax should take point on this meeting.” She suggested.

“I’m not in a mood. I’ve got this covered.” Clay rounded on her.

“Then why’re you all pissed off?” She poked. “This is just a meeting to set a time and place for everyone to meet with Romeo and Luis, finalize the deal. Although, why everyone needs to meet is beyond me. It’s a win-win all around.”

“It’s the first time the club will be selling big guns for the Irish.” Bobby reminded her.

“So? The Kings opened their warehouse to the club...why the need for hand-holding?”

“It’s a level up for them.” Chibs said. “Trusting us with this type of inventory.”

She shook her head. “If they don’t trust the club by now, they never should have been put the offer on the table in the first place.” She countered.

“It was reward for taking out Jimmy.” Tig added as Cuchulain dropped the stick to join her, Chibs,
and Sorcha.

She took a joint out of Chibs jacket pocket, biting her tongue. Jesus, she wanted to rip them a new one. “Yeah, sure.” She dismissed. “But, something stinks about this deal.”

“The deal is good.” Clay hissed.

She didn’t say anything, leaving Clay twisting in the wind with his overly-repeated ‘how good this deal is’ spiel. Chibs flicked his lighter on, cupping it so the wind doesn’t blow it out.

The guys shooting questioning looks towards Clay in the silence. Clay seething under their unspoken questions. She took a deep pull on the joint, letting the smoke waft through her senses before handing it over to Chibs.

Standing up from the bike, she started walking into the barn. Sorcha between her and Clay as they walked. She wound her way absently through the guys, Cuchulain loping after her.

“I guess we’ll find out won’t we.” She said over her shoulder, entering the cool shadow of the barn.

Sorcha leapt up onto the bale where she sat down, curling her large body around her back, her head settling into her lap. Her hand automatically going to pet and scratch at her scruff, pulling lightly along her ears as Sorcha settled down.

Cuchulain eyed the seating arrangement, whined a little that there wasn’t room for him, too. Eventually sitting down, nudging at her free hand for some attention, too.

Chibs not far behind her, gave her a bemused grin as he absently passed the joint to Tig. The guys fanned out as they wandered inside, too. The dogs eyed everyone, checking out their movements.

Chibs managed to sidle around Cuchulain to lean against the hay bale. His hand brushing back a bit of loose hair that had escaped her braid.

“What?” She asked as everyone kept staring at her.

“Mo bhanrigh.” Chibs sighed as he kissed her temple, his hand wrapping around the back of her neck. She didn’t know what that endearment meant. She’d been asking him the meaning of some of what he’s been saying in gaelic, but this one was new, maybe. She couldn’t be sure. No matter, the sound of the thick brogue melted her bones somehow.

“Fuck.” Tig huffed. “All you need is one of those sceptre things and a crown to complete the picture.”

His comment confused her, frowning she looked down at herself. She was wearing her usual jeans and boots. Her top was the purple silk she’d gotten on their trip to Berkeley. Dressing up a little for their Irish guests. Chibs had braided her hair so it circled her head, pressing a hand to the braid she guessed that the style could imply a crown. The way the dogs were draped around her, everyone standing while she sat. She supposed her look was a bit regal. But she was just her, nobody special. Certainly not wanting or deserving the guys to treat her any differently.

They guys laughed a little at Tig’s observation.

Rolling her eyes. “Yeah right, Queen Nancy. All of you, bow down before your Queen.” She played back with an airy wave of her hand.
Everyone snickered as the tension from earlier eased off. Of course, it helped that Clay was busy greeting the Kings outside. Jax arriving not long after. Frowning at the sound of the biting strain in Jax’s voice at something one of the Irish said. God, here we go, she thought to herself.

Shooting a commiserating look towards Chibs before he went to greet the Kings. Juan and Happy drifting off to the other side of the barn, letting the senior members take lead. She gave Juan a hard look as everyone moved around, he silent and hugging the wall, ducked his head and dropped his gaze submissively from hers.

Clay ushered the Kings and Galen inside. Jax right behind them. His eyes widened at the sight of her with the dogs. Quirking a small quick grin towards her before turning his attention back to their guests who were looking around.

Clay all smiles and happy-go-lucky tone of voice, set her teeth on edge. Distracting herself by petting Sorcha and Cuchulain. The dogs eyed the newcomers. She felt their muscles tense up, readying themselves to attack anyone who dared to hurt their mistress. She sent calm thoughts to them, no need to attack. Cuchulain huffed, nudging closer to her.

The Irishmen were all wearing suits, one even wore tweed. Sweaters were involved, too. She grinned at how out of place they looked amongst the guys. Heck, even in California. They looked like they were expecting the usual weather back in Belfast. She wondered if they even brought shorts or a t-shirt to wear in the warmer weather here in California. Mentally cringing at the idea of them donning swimsuits. That’s a bit too far, letting her imagination running wild on her.

“It’s not just the cartel that has us worried, Clay. Rumors of the girl running with you are all over Belfast. Claims to be a seer of all things. Doesn’t prove to us that you have things under control. Not one bit.” One of the Kings said.

Dear God, what have Fiona and Maureen been saying? She itched to pull out her laptop and send them a very pointed email demanding answers.

Everyone looked at her in varying degrees of amusement to outright hostility. “What?”

“You the one claiming to be a seer?” Galen moved towards her. She didn’t need an introduction to know who he was.

Cuchulain stood up, a deep growl rumbled threateningly as Galen came too close. Sorcha also tensed up, her muscles ready to take flight into whatever melee that was brewing.

Chibs hand coming up under her kutte, sliding up her spine. The heat of his hand making her shiver. His other hand coming to rest at his holstered gun. Galen’s eyes taking every minute move, recognizing the threat. The guys all shot each other looks as to what to do if things got any more out of hand.

“Claim, no. Just am what I am.” She shrugged to answer Galen, doing her best to remain passive and not get drawn into a fight.

Jax choked a laugh at her response and she didn’t know what she said was funny.

“Jax won’t let me have business cards made up.” She added as punishment. Jax rolled his eyes at her as she threw him under the bus. Shrugging at everyone else.

Tig looked amused and confused all at the same time. Bobby was fighting to keep from busting out laughing. She was sure the Chibs would be laughing but with the threat of Galen and the Kings, he wasn’t letting his guard down. Happy and Juan glancing at each other in shared astonishment. Clay
shifted on his feet and shot her another napalm-infused glare.

Galen gave her a hard look, his eyes moving over her body. It was close to how her father made her feel when he would stare at her and she fought to stay still under his eye. Galen looking at her tattoos. Him smirking. “You think giving yourself triskele tattoo on your forehead makes you a seer?”

She kept her eyes on Galen as Chibs answered the question, feeling light-headed. Feeling something pressing over her. It was distracting, this invisible weight pushing at her. Her triskele throbbing slightly.

“Galen, she never went to a tattooist. They appeared all on their own.” Chibs warned.

She felt herself floating, separate from any rational thought. Her lips moving by some unknown source. It wasn’t her.

“Et elegit fatum meum. Est vox Domini, per Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.”

“What the fuck?”

“Her eyes. Shit.”

“What’s she sayin’?”

“O mi Jesu, remítte nobis peccátá nostra, salva nos ab igne inférni, perduc in cælum omnes ánimas, præsértim eas quæ misericórdiæ tuæ máxime índigent.” Her hand moved of its own volition. Up, down, and across. Palm facing outward, encompassing the men that fanned out from where she sat.

Chibs grabbed her hand from the air, tucking it close to his chest.

She felt herself woosh back inside herself. “Ugh.” She clutched at her head. The dogs crushing at her, whining and licking at her.

She caught the Kings crossing themselves from the corner of her eye, Galen unsure what to do as he kept staring at her.

Chibs was gripping her tight, she wasn’t sure if she was going to puke or not. Waiting to see what her body decided.

“You okay?” Chibs asked softly.

Turning to look at him, she saw eyes widen as he looked her over.

“I don’t know. Trying not to puke. Why? What happened?”

“What the fuck was that?” Galen demanded.

The heat of his question had her looking at him again. “Huh?”

Chibs stood up and gathered her up into his arms.

“Gah.” She moaned as Chibs jostled her into his arms, carrying her out of the barn. The guys moved out of his way, the dogs trotting alongside. She caught the Kings looking at her, their faces pale. But they were pretty pale to begin with. She doubted they could tan if their lives depended on it. They looked scared.
“Galen, does it matter? We have a deal to work out.” Clay drew everyone’s attention back to the whole purpose of the meeting. God, he’s going to be cranky with her if this meeting falls apart because of her little interlude. Fuck.

Chibs whispered into her ear, his voice low and lilting with the gaelic that she couldn’t figure out what he was saying as he carried her outside.

The sun chased away whatever it was that came over her. She took a deep breath and turned her face towards the sun. Chibs set her down at the bike. Quickly pulling out a bottled water for her from one of the saddlebags.

“Here, drink this.” He held the bottle to her, twisting the top off for her.

She took a sip of the water, careful not to press her luck. The first sip seemed to settle okay, she went for a second and third. The cool water refreshing.

Chibs pressed a kiss to her cheek. “You okay, mo bhanrigh?”

“Yeah, better. Thanks. What happened?”

“You...spaced out. Started talking, in latin.” He said.

She rubbed at her eyes, frustrated. “I told you, I took French in school. I don’t know Latin. Or Spanish. Or Gaelic. Which, by the way, I want to know what it is you’re saying. It sounds fantastic and makes me all melty and gooey, but for all I know its just a grocery list or things we need to do around the house.” She groused.

He easily took her admonishment. “Aye, maybe I’ll tell ye.” Grinning slyly at her.

She hugged him close. “You better.” She threatened, softening it with a kiss.

“So what was I saying?”

He shifted on his feet, hemming and hawing on how to answer her. At her look he shrugged. “It’s been a long time since I’d attended mass. Mass where much of the service was in latin. Reminded me of Kellen. You said a prayer.”

She narrowed her eyes at him, he wasn’t telling her all of it.

He huffed. “Something about choosing fate. I chose my fate...something like that.”

“Annnd?”

“That was it. A prayer, choosing fate, and voice of God. I’d have to look it up or go see a priest for the exact translation. But the way you said it. Christ.”

“What?”

“It was subtle. Doubt the boys know what it was. The Kings picked it up, though. Galen probably.”

“What was subtle?”

“The prayer. It was a threat. How you said it...” He shrugged.

She stared up at him, completely flummoxed. Wracking her brain as to how or why she said what she did. Or was it someone else, borrowing her again. Chibs mentioned Kellen. She saw Chibs
thoughts mirroring her own.

“I know we should be trying to figure this out, but my brain is feeling fried at the moment and we need to get back to the meeting. So, later? Over a pint of chocolate chocolate-chip ice cream?” She pleaded playfully.

He huffed, his lips curling into a smile. “Aye. Later.” Holding his hand out to her. “You up to this?”

“Yeah, no way am I scared of old, pasty, white Irishmen who can’t seem to dress for the California weather. What’s up with the tweed? Seriously?”

Chibs cracking up next to her as the walked back to the barn. The dogs following them dutifully. “Gods, don’t. This is a serious meeting.” He chided, echoing Clay’s assertion of how important this meeting was.

Shrugging at him, “Okey-dokey. I’m mentally writing an email to Fiona and Maureen, by the way.”

“Fuck, good luck.” Chibs snorted.

Tig and Bobby eyed them as they maneuvered next to them. Center stage was Galen, Clay and Jax butting heads.

“We understand the need to shed the Russians. Selling the Mexicans our small arms was a reasonable risk. But everything that’s happened since...not very reasonable at all.” Galen declared.

“The bloodshed was an internal cartel beef. Its been handled.” Jax explained.

But Galen wasn’t impressed. “Handled by the guns we specifically told you not to use.”

She had to bite her cheek to keep from reacting to such a childish accusation. Even moreso when Clay oozed, taking over dealing with Galen away from Jax.

“Those RPG’s saved my life, brother.”

Ick, that was a wrong move. Trying to imply that he and Galen were more than business. And by Galen’s reaction, Clay was starting to realize that Galen wasn’t as much his friend as he’d thought.

“Jax doesn’t make that call, we’re not standing here right now.”

“If we weren’t in bed with those dirty wetbacks we wouldn’t be standing here either. I’d be at home resting comfortably. So would your girl.” Galen spit out towards Jax.

“Look, you trust me, I trust Galindo.” Clay changed tack.

She crossed her arms when Clay started with the whole trust angle. Nothing turned people off when you started talking about trust. The more someone says to trust them, the less you should do so, in her opinion.

Clay must’ve sensed his tactics weren’t working. “We’re talking about a once in a lifetime opportunity here.” He enticed, switching gears towards the money to be had by all.

She wanted to puke just on principle.

“Romeo understands the need for discretion.” Jax explained.
“Hard to be discreet with RPG’s, 50-cal sniper rifles.” One of the Kings pointed out.

Chibs huffed as he listened to the arguments being made, sliding her a knowing look. She gave him a small nod and he took a step into the conversation.

“Look all these big guns, will be used south of the border. None of this shite will blow back on the Cause.” His brogue thickening once more.

She sighed dreamily at the sound. Seemed whenever the conversation turned anything Irish or Scottish his voice dropped and rolled off his tongue. It sent shivers down her spine, he could read the phone book and she’d probably melt in a pile of goo before he got half-way down the ‘a’s’.

There was a heavy pause in the conversation as the Kings and Galen eyed each other in silent conference. Ending with the Kings nodding to Galen. Decision made. Whether the Kings or Galen knew it or not, the Rí Claíomh has spoken.

Galen, annoyed, wasn’t completely on board. But with his bosses there, he caved. “I need assurances.”

Clay turned up the skeezy charm again. “We’ll meet with Romeo tomorrow. He’s going to answer all your questions. I’ll address all your concerns, I promise.”

Galen looked once more to his bosses. They give the nod once more.

“Meet needs to be neutral ground. Bring him a sample of the weapons. If it works out...bring ‘em back here, do the exchange.” Galen took over the procedure.

“There’s an Indian reservation ten minutes from here. Very private.” Clay assured.

“Three o’clock.”

“Good.” Clay nodded and shook Galen’s hand as they walked out. Escorting the Irish back to their cars like a good host.

Everyone relaxed as the meeting was finished. She wandered over to where Juan had parked himself, on the outskirts of the group. She didn’t look at him, keeping her gaze back to the guys as they chatted with each other.

“You have the time and place...send it to your friends.” She said softly to him.

Juice bobbed his head. “I don’t understand...why?”

She looked harshly into his soft brown eyes. “Just do what I tell you to do.”

Chibs waved for her. She stared down Juan a moment longer making sure he understood she meant business. Walking to Chibs, his arm sliding around her waist. Juan disappearing into the bathroom, pulling his phone out.

Clay and Jax already heading out as the rest of them waited for Juan.

“Yo, we’re heading out Juicy!” Chibs yelled towards the bathroom.

Bobby sighed in thought. “Maybe we’ll get out of this in one piece.” He pondered as everyone moved towards their bikes, Juan jogging to catch up.

Chibs clapped a hand to Bobby’s shoulder. “Yeah, shit’s in the rearview now boys.” Sliding his
eyes towards hers, the both of them knowing that things aren’t behind them at all. It’s only getting started.

She laced her fingers with his free hand, offering her support. As long as they’re together, they can get through anything. And, hopefully, drag the club with them by their ears if need be.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My queen = mo bhanrigh
King’s Sword = Rí Claíomh

Latin:

I chose my fate = Et elegit fatum meum
She is the voice of God = Est vox Domini
by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit = per Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy. =
O mi Jesu, remítte nobis peccáta nostra, salva nos ab igne inférni, perduc in cælum omnes ánimas, præsértim eas quæ misericórdiæ tuæ máxime índigent.
Chapter 116

Chapter Summary

Burnt & Purged Away, part 3

Chapter Notes

I swear, I'm doing the best I can to update. Somehow, I've gotten myself into a side-business that's been encroaching on my writing time. Plus, I had to go back and read what I've written myself to remind me what I've done so far and help get back into this world and frame of mind.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

O'Malley’s Feed and Tack delivery van followed them onto the garage lot. They’d already dropped off the bulk of their purchases at the house, but a smaller second batch of food and supplies for the dogs would be left in the clubhouse.

“You two, get all this inside the clubhouse.” Chibs ordered with a point of his finger at Rat and V-Lin. The prospects didn’t hesitate and jumped in to help. She took up one of the smaller shopping bags as she followed everyone inside. The dogs sniffing and nosing the bags as they caught scent of the goodies inside.

As Chibs and the guys figured out where to store everything, she sat down on one of the leather chairs, pulling the wrappers off a couple of large elk antler bones. Sorcha and Cuchulain watching her with avid intent, their tails wagging and noses dipping close to get a whiff of the treats.

Finally getting the wrapper off, she held them out to the dogs, who immediately grabbed them and hunkered down happily gnawing away. Chibs joined her, as they watched the dogs determined attention.

“Those’ll keep them busy.” He said.

“After cereal this morning, I’d think they’d go to town on anything at this point.” She grinned up at him, setting the bag to the side on the floor.

He huffed, running a hand along her nape. She leaned close as he bent down sliding into a heated kiss. Drawing herself up onto her knees so he didn’t have to bend over so awkwardly, chasing after him. By the sly curl of his lips, he was enjoying the closer contact.

“I fucking love this shirt.” He groaned. His hands sliding under her kutte, His fingers tangling with the ties. She felt the bottom tie untie and she wasn’t sure if he did it on purpose or by accident.

“God.” She gasped as his strong hands played along her spine, making her sway.

“Let’s go find someplace a bit more private, m ‘anam.” His goatee brushed across her cheek as he
whispered huskily in her ear.

“Now?” She leaned back, brows raised at his suggestion. It was only eleven o’clock.

“Oh yeah.” He laughed throatily, winking at her.

She slid her hands around his lower back, pulling him close to her. “You have a one-track mind, mister.” She joked with him.

He snorted. “With you? Was there any question of that?” He stood up, pulling her with him. Her free hand holding the front of her top in place to keep from flashing the room.

He turned towards the apartment, but she yanked him the other direction towards one of the bunks. “Ah...nope...Clay-cooties.” She explained at his questioning look.

“Fuck.” He winced remembering that Clay’s still bunking in the apartment. Swiftly turning the other direction, leading her towards the closest bunk. The door crashing shut as he twisted her around into the room, lips searching her out once more. Hands yanking clothing off.

“Mhmph, careful. This is new.” She managed to warn, his hands pulled at her top and sliding her kutte back off her shoulders.

He pulled back, his dark eyes blown wide. Twisting her around, he pulled the ties at her neck letting silk top fall in a soft hush to the floor. She leaned against the door as his lips and teeth gently bit at the base of her neck. He was purring that sent waves down her spine.

Luckily, his hands had curled around her, massaging her breasts. Holding her into the hard line of his body. Her knees turned to jelly as she leaned against him and the door. Her head rolling back as his hand slid down her front and eased down into her jeans. Fingers finding her slick folds, circling her clit.

“Fuck.” She gasped. “Oh, god, love you.” She pressed her hips back, feeling him hard against her. She grinding into him.

“Don’t worry, m ‘anam. I’ll take care of ye’.” He growled harshly. His lips sucking at her ear lobe only to trail down her neck to settle in the curve of her neck. Goosebumps flared across her entire body.

“Gah.” She jerked as his finger hit a sensitive spot that got her all discombobulated. Next thing she knew she was facing him again. His hands jerking at her jeans. She thought she should be helping, her fingers finding his belt and quickly jerked the buckle open that had him lose his balance a little.

“Impatient, aren’t ye’?” He huffed crazily.

“Look who’s talking.” She retorted. Her jeans were down to her knees. “Damn, boots.” With a grunt he twisted her around and pushed her down onto the bunk, making her giggle as she bounced on the squeaky bunk. He grabbing first one foot then the other, dropping her boots off with a careless toss over his shoulder. Once the boots were off he stripped her jeans off, her underwear caught in her jeans.

Grinning wolfishly at her as if he’d climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro in under an hour, her jeans a flag he was about to plant. So proud of his accomplishment she reached for him, dragging him over her.

Her hands curling around his thick cock. He gasped at her touch, but quickly dug into his jean
pocket for a condom. While kicking his own boots and jeans off.

His hands shaking a little as he tore the packaging off as she stroked him. His body shivering under her touch, making him fumble a little.

“Fuck.” He swore. “You keep doing that and we won’t be needing this at all.” He warned.

Ignoring his warning, she stretched up to kiss his adam’s apple. Sliding down to his chest, her tongue teasing his nipple.

Brushing her hands off him, he rolled the condom on in quick furtive movements. His hands grasping hers, pulling them up over her head and down into the mattress. “Witch.” He threatened with a wicked grin.

She wrapped her legs around his hips, encouraging him.

“Well, what do you expect when you get me all hot and bothered? Ooohh.” Her body arching as his cock slid home inside her. It was always a little bit of a fight to fit him in. Her muscles tensing at first only to relax and allow him inside.

“God. How is it you’re always so tight?” He groaned, his face buried in the curve of her neck. His lips and teeth sucking and gently biting at her racing pulse. And she knew that she’d end up with a hickey.

“Guh.” Was all she was able to say as he pulled back and forth, seeking to drive her insane.

Rational thought fled her grasp. Her fingers curling tight around his, her ankles crossing, preventing him from pulling out too far. His hips swiveled, pressing into her clit that shot through all her nerves. The tip of him running along that small patch of nerves deep inside her.

The top of her head exploded off her. Her body spasming around him.

His voice a distant echo as she shot off.

“Aahh. God…” She gasped. Fighting for air that seemed to have completely escaped her.

Her hands found themselves at his waist, nails scoring across his back.

“Love ye’. Love ye’.” He chanted. His body jerking and she felt him spill over into his own climax.

She dragged in air as she clutched at him. He collapsing on top of her as he finished. His breath hot and harsh at her ear. His hand holding her around her head.

She heard a low buzz coming from the pile of clothes on the floor. It stopped only to start again.

“Fuck.” Chibs groaned, disentangling himself.

“Huh?” She asked still trying to catch her breath and bearings. “What’s happening?”

“Phone.” He said, snapping off the used condom, tossing it towards the trash can as he reached for his jeans.

“What!” He yelled into the phone. Clearly unhappy with the interruption.

She shivered with the loss of his body heat, the sweat across her skin freezing in tiny bites of ice.
Grabbing up the blanket, she curled around what body heat she still had.

“Hold on. I’ll get him.” Chibs bit out, hitting the mute button.

“Who is it?”

“Galen. Wants to talk to Clay.” He looked over at her. Regret that they lost their moment of intimacy, work dragging the two of them back into the real world.

She sighed and gave him an accepting shrug. He leaned down and kissed her.

“Go on. Must be important.”

“Fucking Irish.” He swore heavily, but got up and donned his clothes once more. He twisted around and she saw the marks she’d left across his back.

“Oh, god.” She blanched at the sight. The red scratches made the griffin look like it was bleeding.

He turned back to her, brows crossed in confusion. “What?”

“Your back. I scratched you up pretty bad there. God, I’m sorry.” She sat up, taking hold of his elbow, twisting him around so she could check them more closely. She didn’t break his skin, but it had to hurt.

He looked over his shoulder and grinned.

“Why are you grinning? They’ve gotta hurt.”

Bending down, looking her in the eye. Brushing a loose bit of hair back, cradling her head. “They’re fine. Love that ye’ lost control, like that. It’ll remind me how much ye’ want me.”

She thought to argue with him over her hurting him, but he didn’t really seem to mind them. And Galen was on hold. “Sorry. I don’t want to hurt you.”

“Ye’ didn’t. Wear these stripes with pride. Means I did my job good.” He kissed her before she could argue with him some more.

She let it go with a confused sigh. “I don’t get men sometimes.”

He just snorted with an amused grin. Standing up, his hands finished zipping and buttoning himself up. “I gotta track down Clay.”

“Okay. I’ll be right behind you.”

He leaned down for another kiss. “Don’t be long. Graim thu, mo bhanrigh.” And he swept out the door, leaving her to collapse back onto the bed. Wanting nothing more than to just stay here a bit longer, but her head started twisting up on her. Damn it.

The tile floor was cold against the bottom of her feet as she rushed to the bathroom and cleaned up a little at the sink.

Putting on her clothes for the second time of the day. Maybe she should pack a bag of clothes and leave them here at the clubhouse. Her head was cracking open by the time she started putting her boots on, the pain making her hands shake.

Opening the door, she nearly tripped over Sorcha who had planted herself on the floor in the
doorway. “Ooomph...good god.” She caught herself in time before she smacked her face into the wall. Sorcha quickly popping up to her feet with a quick whine.

The door to the bathroom down the hall opened and Happy stepped out. Great. Catching Happy smirk taking in her klutzy moves.

“When, didn’t know you were right there.” She apologized to Sorcha, scratching her just under her ear.

Happy shaking his head as he stepped closer. “Did you just apologize to a dog?”

“Uhh...yeah.” She said simply, there was no use in lying about it, he saw her do it. Happy snorted and continued into the bar. She looked back down to Sorcha who simply looked back at her with a wag of her tail. "Come on. Let's find Chibs." She told Sorcha, taking the same path as Happy.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam  
I love you = Graim thu  
My Queen = mo bhanrigh
He glared at the phone in his hand as he stepped into the bar. Annoyed that he was being dragged away from Nancy after some fantastic sex. Fucking Irish.

Looking up, he saw Tig on the sofa. Cuchulain practically on top of Tig, rolling and squirming as Tig vigorously scratched Cuchulain's belly. Cuchulain waving his long legs akimbo in the air, yipping airily, Tig egging the dog on. But as the two of them saw him enter the room, Cuchulain hopped off the sofa loping up next to him. Tig giving him a sour look that his play time was cut short.

One of the bones on the floor was in half already. Jesus, that didn't take long.

Tig’s eyes lit up. “Enjoyed a nooner with your girl?” He grinned lewdly at him. “Sounded like it.”

“Ye’re just jealous.” Refusing to get baited into some bullshit Tig was trying to start, absently petting Cuchulain. “You know where Clay’s at?”

“Garage with Bobby and Jax. Why?”

“Galen on the phone for him.” He replied, already moving towards the door.

“What happened?” Tig questioned.

“Don’t know.”

Crossing the lot he saw the dark shapes of Clay, Bobby and Jax. Cuchulain striding ahead of him.

As he moved closer, he could hear bits of the conversation the three of them were involved in. Looked intense, and by the set of Clay’s shoulders he didn’t look happy.

“You really going to do this?” Bobby questioned Jax.

“I love this club, but I love my family more.” Jax twisted around and saw him coming, he turned back to Bobby. “I gotta put some distance between the two. Look, we gotta close this deal before I tell the rest of the club. I don’t want my exit pulling focus.”

Fucking idiot, he steamed. Jax still had his get out of Charming plan in the works. Mary, mother of
Christ...

The three of them turned at his approach, he held out the phone to Clay. “Galen.”

Clay took the phone from him and turned deeper into the garage, listening.

Cuchulain wandered around the garage, stopping by Dog and Lowell. He turned his attention back to Bobby and Jax, noting the uncomfortable look in Bobby’s eyes and Jax’s shifting ones, refusing to look him in the eyes.

“What’s going on?” He prompted.

“Just sorting out the day.” Jax said.

“Otto reached out. Going up to Stockton.” Bobby added.

“Good. Let him know we cleaned up Georgie. Put Luann to rest.” He said, not believing a word that this was what the three of them were talking about before he came up on them.

“Yeah, sure. He’ll be glad to know it’s done.” Bobby said.

“Alright, we’ll be there.” Clay said into the phone. Turning back to their group, he snapped the phone shut, handing it back to him. “Galen needs some backup. I gotta connect with Romeo.”

Jax nodded, “Alright, I got it. I’ll take Chibs with me to translate the Catholic.”

He grimaced at how he’d gotten roped into shit, turning to follow Jax anyway. At least it was cloudy, the air cool with the anticipation for rain.

“Take Tig and Happy just in case.” Clay called out after them.

“You do realize that you’re Catholic, right?” He couldn’t help snark back at Jax.

Nancy stepped out of the clubhouse, he nodded to her and she bee-lined to him. Sorcha next to her. Cuchulain ran past to join them. Tig coming out next.

Jax rolled his eyes. “Sorry, if I ruined your plans.”

“What’s up?” Nancy asked. He pulled her into a hug. He sighed in relief as his headache backed off.

“Galen needs our help. Tig grab Hap, we’ll all go.” Tig jogged back into the clubhouse at Jax’s order.

“Where?” She asked.

“Too far for the dogs.” Jax said, looking down at them.

She eyed Jax a moment. "Galen..." She said flatly. "...needs our help?" Her voice dripping in disbelief, challenging Jax.

"Yeah." Jax replied with a shrug.

"Okay." She said, her amusement leaking at whatever thoughts were running in her head. Setting her hands to the dogs. Cuchulain snorted and backed off angrily. Sorcha whining and circling, not liking whatever she'd told them. “We’ll be back later. Hang out here.” She explained to the dogs.
He shared an amused look with Jax.

Jax shaking his head at the whole production.

Tig and Happy came back out of the clubhouse. Their eyebrows rising as they watched Nancy leaned down, taking hold of Cuchulain and Sorcha once more. “We’ll be back before you know it. I promise.” Rubbing at their ears.

Cuchulain relaxed and sneezed. Sorcha nudged her hand for a pet before letting her go. Which Nancy complied.

“Okay, we can go.” Nancy said standing back up. The dogs roaming over to where Nancy's desk was, curling up on the floor.

Jax smirked. “Really? You sure?”

“God.” She rolled her eyes, letting him lead her to the bike. The guys laughed, mounting onto their own bikes. "Let's just get this over with already. Freaking waste of time." She muttered as her hands linked around his waist.
They pulled up in front of a large house in an upscale neighborhood. The rain had petered off again, leaving the driveway and roads wet. Looking up at the quiet house it reminded her of her father’s house in Naperville, wondered if it had a concrete basement.

Chibs fingers lacing with hers as Tig and Happy joined them.

“What kind of business does the Irish have here?” Tig asked.

“Don’t know.” Jax said. “This was Clay’s play.”

Galen pulled up in his black SUV. He didn’t look like a man that needed help. Not one bit. His smirk turned sour a brief moment when he realized she was with them.

“I didn’t realize that you boys needed your hands held.” Galen slung the insult at them.

She couldn’t help but bark a laugh at that. Everyone looking at her in surprise. “They don’t need their hands held. You’re the one that called for backup. So, really, who’s hand is being held?” She flung right back before she could stop herself.

Tig swore behind her, Jax and Chibs looking at her to shut her up.

Before Galen could say anything, Jax joined Galen, walking up the drive towards the house. Diverting everyone back to the business at hand.

The rest of them falling in line, trooping up the sidewalk.

“Anything we need to know here?” Jax asked Galen.

“Our American colleagues put profit before protocol. Just here to enforce decency.” Galen informed.

“And we’re the enforcement.” Jax concluded.

“Stay close and look tough. Should be all we need. Understand?” Galen’s brow rising.

Satisfied by their silence, Galen turned and led them into the house.
“Wait here.” Galen ordered. Shaking hands with an older couple who took Galen into another room for their meeting.

The guys looked around the parlor, curiously. The interior had white walls that were covered with Catholic and Irish themed drawings and artwork. Multitude of crosses, you’d think one would be enough but she counted at least five. The wood floors squeaked under their feet.

A man was behind a desk littered with papers and an older computer set-up. The monitor taking up a corner of the desk. Where, yes, displayed another cross.

A grandmotherly woman went up the stairs with a baby in her arms. It was quiet. Too quiet. “No guns.” She warned. The soft cry of the baby fading as the woman disappeared upstairs.

“What?” Happy asked.

“What the hell is this place?” Tig asked.

“I’m going to look around.” Jax said.

“Jax…” She checked him. He glanced over to her a moment but continued on up the stairs.

Tig wandered to lean over the piano, clanging the keys without regard for actually playing, just banging random keys. The clashing notes setting her on edge.

She was about to tell him to quit it when a girl came rushing down the stairs in tears. Escaping out a french door to the backyard.

“That ain’t good.” Tig said.

The guys rushed up the stairs.

With a sigh, she wandered to the side of the piano. Her headache growing and the sound of the rising and strident choir of babies crying wasn’t helping. Nor the sound of the guys yelling and the thuds of body throws and punches.

The man behind the computer glanced at her and the noise upstairs, but remained silent and continued his work.

The noisy ruckus brought Galen and the people he was meeting with out of the other room, heading up the stairs towards the sound of the fighting. They only got up a few steps when another man was tossed down the stairs.

“Mother of Christ.” He swore, unwittingly echoing her own thoughts.

She shrugged. “You did want muscle.” She said at his scowl.

It took a bit of time for everyone to settle down. Injured men taken off to get patched up. Tig called Clay.

Even Chibs was shaking in anger as he folded her into his arms, his dark eyes shifting and watching the Irish. She patted at his hand, trying to distract and calm him down.

Tig and Happy still alert, ready to jump in and keep Jax from attacking anyone else.

And when Clay arrived, standing in the middle of the room between Galen and Jax, taking in the situation.
Jax smoking angrily in the doorway, looking out over the backyard. It had started raining again. A few of the babies were still crying but it wasn’t as loud during the fight.

“I told you to stay here.” Galen seethed.

“Yeah, well you didn’t tell us we’d be strong arming the US half of your black market baby ring.” Jax spit out towards Galen.

“Catholic placement for unwanted children.” Galen spun the PR line.

Chibs growled behind her, his hands fisting as he listened to Galen.

“Call it whatever you want. You’re selling babies for cash.” Jax’s nostrils flaring.

“Easy, this ain’t our business.” Clay checked Jax.

“Jax. It’s Phil. Says its important.” Tig held out a phone to Jax.

Jax grabs up the phone. “Yeah.” Stepping outside to listen into the phone.

With Jax distracted, Clay and Galen moved to the far side of the room. Conversing with each other in low voices. The pitch and roll of their tones, sounded like Clay was smoothing things out with Galen. Galen shooting dark looks where Jax had disappeared, only to turn back to Clay. His face relaxing and smirking at something Clay said. Clay grinning widely.

Galen snorted and smirked at Clay. “Don’t push it, Clay. See you at the meet tomorrow.”

“Galen,” Galen hesitates in the doorway at her call out to him, looking back at her. “…make sure you bring your wallet.” She told him. “You’re going to need it.”

Galen sending her a dismissive look as he walked out of the house.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs muttered.

“Told you. He wanted this. Jax losing it like this.”

“Fuck.”

Jax finished with his call as Clay moseys towards him.

“You should have told us.” Jax accuses Clay.

“You’re right. Just stay clear of these guys.” Clay shrugs off Jax’s accusation.

“Not a problem.”

“You want to see Tara?” Clay asks.

“Later. Have to bounce somebody’s head off twelve steps.”

“Christ.” She swore softly. Jax was so amped up he wasn’t seeing what was going on.

Tig and Happy follow Clay out of the house. Clay mounting his bike and riding off. Tig and Happy waiting on the rest of them.

Soon as the door closed behind them, she whirled around on Jax. Stopping him in his tracks. “What?” He jerked back.
“Are you happy now?”

He frowned at her. “What're you talking about? No, I'm not fucking happy. Jesus.”

“I told you...I told you to keep your cool around Galen.”

“They’ve got every room in that house filled with kids!”

“And I told you about this. Didn’t you see Galen’s expression? He wanted you to lose it. He played you and you let him. Both Galen and Clay. The two of them talking all by themselves while you were on the phone. What was that about? The twelve steps?”

Jax breathed hard at her. “Wendy fucking showed up at the hospital. Told Tara wanting to get back with Abel. Tara fucking had to have her arm reset again. Had to go back into surgery because she busted up the plates and screws. All because that junky threatened her.”

“Shite.” Chibs swore.

Jax shooting Chibs a satisfied look that he was right and Chibs was agreeing with him.

“I told you and Tara several times that Wendy was going to come back.”

Jax made to interrupt her.

“No! I’m talking here. I told you to figure out what to do about Wendy. By your reaction, I can tell that you haven’t. You’re letting yourself get distracted by Wendy. Clay knows you’re going to ‘deal’ with Wendy right now. That you aren’t going to be around Tara. Tara who’s alone right now except for Phil.”

“Fuck.” Jax breathed, finally catching on to what she was saying.

“Shite, ye’ gotta go to hospital.” Chibs rushed.

“I gotta go. I have to get to St. Thomas.” Jax concluded on top of Chibs.

“No. You don’t.” She stopped them once more.

“What are you saying?” Chibs questioned, shooting her an astonished look.

“What the fuck? Of course, I have to go.” Jax challenged, waving his hands around.

“Gemma will swoop in and save Tara. She’s on her way there now. Tara’s fine. She’s stronger than you think.”

Jax paced back and forth in front of her. Not liking what he was hearing. The impulse to go racing to Tara’s defense was knee-jerking him hard. “Call the hospital and ask them to have a couple of security guys go to her room if you want. You don’t have to be there.” Chibs and Jax stared at her blankly.

“Or call Phil. Ask him what’s going on right now. Come on, what was the point of me reading you if you're just going to do the same things as before? Don't fall into the same behaviors. Think. Be smarter than what everyone expects of you. You're better than that. Call Phil.”

Jax whipped his phone out, his blue eyes flaring at her, testing her.

“Hey, what’s going on over there? Yeah, he was.” Jax said flatly, his eyes flicking to her and
Chibs. “Put Tara on for me.” Another pause. “Hey, you okay?” He rocked back at whatever Tara was telling him. “They’re letting you out? Already?” Jax sliding her a mysterious look.

She looked to Chibs and shrugged. Returning to watch and listen to Jax.

“Yeah, okay. Have Phil drive you home. No, Phil. I’ll check in later. Hand the phone back to Phil.” She breathed a sigh of relief.

“Hey, soon as Tara’s set, drive her home. Stay with her, I’ll be by later.” Another pause. “Yeah, put her on.” Jax’s tone darkened.

“Phil is going to drive Tara home, Gem. And did you really think I wouldn’t hear about Wendy?” Jax blasted into the phone.

She pressed a hand to her forehead, realizing Jax was talking with Gemma now. Chibs swearing, he flicked his lighter on, thrusting it in front of Jax.

“I don’t care what you or anyone thinks.” Jax glared at Chibs and swerved out of the way of the wild flame. “Stay out of it, ma! It’s between me and Tara, you don’t have a fucking say in it at all. No. No! Phil is going to take her home. I’m heading back to the garage.” Jax snaps the phone shut, tucking it back into his pocket.

“Well?” Chibs asked in the bout of silence, snapping his lighter off and tucking it into his pocket.

“Fuck me.” Jax uttered, taking several deep breaths.

“You’re so pretty.” She quipped wryly.

“Jesus.” Jax snorted with a shake of his head. Chibs pulling her closer.

“See? Your presence wasn’t required. And the earth didn’t implode. Not yet, at least.” She continued to poke fun at Jax.

Though Jax didn’t seem to like her attempt at humor at the moment. Well, she tried.

“Hey, what’s going on?” Tig and Happy had wandered over, confused at what was going on.

“Just organizing the rest of the day.” Chibs said quickly, shooting her and Jax a warning look. “Come on, let’s get back to the garage.” He prompted everyone, turning and leading her back to the bike.

She stood staring at the bike, Chibs pride and joy. He held out her helmet to her. “What’s wrong?” He asked when she hesitated. Tig and Happy already mounted up, waiting for the rest of them. Even Jax looked at her, noticing her questioning look.

Biting at her lip, she absently took the helmet. “If you had to order a new bike, how long does it take for it to show up?”

“What?” Jax asked. He looked like he was whiplashed from the seesaw of emotions and events so far today.

“Well, thanks to your performance here,” she waved back towards the house, “Galen’s going to retaliate. I’d suggest you start stripping any parts off the bikes that you want to save.”

Jax and Chibs looked to each other, to their bikes, back to the house and back to her again.
“Fuck.” Jax swore heavily.

“Jesus Christ.” Chibs muttered. “Come on, m ‘anam. Let’s enjoy another ride before shite hits the fan again.” He grumbled.

“Don’t worry, you’ll love the new one better.” She soothed. “Besides Galen’s paying, even better.” She said brightly, hoping it would alleviate his concerns.

“Not the point.” Chibs growled back, helping her onto the bike. Revving the engine, they followed Jax back to the garage.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 119

Chapter Summary

Burnt & Purged Away, pt 6

Chapter Notes

Hope everyone is having a good weekend! Enjoy, change is about to happen.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She felt Chibs snort as they approached the turn into the garage lot. Twisting her head she caught sight of what had him laughing. Huffing a laugh herself, the dogs were both standing in the middle of the entrance. Excitedly half-stepping and heads bobbing as they rode closer. The speed of their wagging tails went on hyper-warp. Thankfully, they didn’t run out into the road, as if held back by some invisible fence.

The dogs decided it was okay to move out of the way as they slowed to make the turn. Jax shaking his head as he swerved slightly to avoid Cuchulain. Sorcha trotting alongside them, Chibs maneuvering the bike carefully to avoid paws.

Parked, the dogs immediately stuck their heads in her lap. She leaned back from Chibs to give them room. Chibs pressing forward, swiveling his head to look at the activity going on.

"Crazy muckers.” Chibs swore. The guys had gotten off their bikes, eyeing them with smirks of amusement.

“Alright, yes. We’re back. Just like I told you.” She gave in. Scratching and petting them both. Their eyelids narrowing in doggy bliss, heads twisting as her nails found just the right spot. Gruffing at her. “Now, back up so we can get off the bike.” She pulled her hands back at her order.

They huffed and snorted, but backed off as she climbed off the bike. Chibs giving her an amused look as he slung off the bike. “I think I'm starting to feel jealous, m ‘anam.”

She laughed, wrapping her arms over his shoulders. He winked, his hands falling to her hips he met her half-way for the toe-curling kiss she planted on him. The dogs mingled with the guys.

Breaking the kiss for air, she leaned her forehead to his looking into his warm whiskey eyes. “Hi.”

“Hi back.” He grinned the expected response. “You sure about Galen?”

She smirked and grabbed up her bag out of the saddlebag. “Better get busy.”

“Fuck.” He sighed heavily, but started emptying out the saddlebags and other hidey holes. Tossing garbage out onto the pavement.

“Litterbug.” She snorted as he gave her the stink eye.
“What’re you doing?” Tig asked, the rest of the guys noticing Chibs cleaning out his bike.

Glancing up at their audience, “You might want to do the same. Anything you want to keep and save.”

“What? Why?” Tig asked, his eyes moving from Chibs to her and back to Chibs. Who had pulled out a thick wrap that held some tools she saw when he’d opened the wrapping up. She didn’t realize he even had that in the saddlebag.

“Galen wants to punish Jax.” She explained.

“What, for beating up on his guys?” Happy questioned.

“No, for the priest in Belfast. He’s seeking revenge.” She explained further.

Jax, Tig, and Happy watched Chibs as he’d moved onto actual parts of his bike now. The three of them looking to her, testing her warning. She just smirked back at them. “It’s your bikes…”

“Shit.” Tig whined, but went to his bike and started cleaning it out. Happy returning to his bike, as well.

“There any way out of this? Salvage the bikes?” Jax asked with a frustrated huff.

The guys pausing to hear her answer.

“No. Sorry. Galen’s itching to test you. Just as you want to go a few rounds with him. Don’t you?” Giving him a pointed look.

“Jax, did you not see Galen’s face when you confronted him. He wants you angry. He set that whole thing up just to get at you. And you let him, you need to learn to think before reacting. That was a Tig move.” She knew she’d said this to Jax earlier, but it bore repeating. And the guys could stand hear it as well.

Tig yelled a “Hey!” at her backhanded insult.

Jax dropped his head when he realized she was right. The guys groaned and went back to their work.

“We’re going to need transport when this happens.” She reminded them.

The guys shared another look swearing in defeat, as they dived into the work of cleaning and salvaging of parts. She grinned to herself, shaking her head at how pissed they were over their precious babies.

Jax giving her a hard look. “You better be fucking right about this.” He finger pointed to her.

“Told Galen to bring his wallet to the meeting. He’s going to need it. And…” she looked Jax up and down, “Galen’s faster than he looks, keep your left up.” She repeated her warning to Jax once more. God, didn’t he even listen to her at his reading? Rolling her eyes as Jax’s eyes lit up with an anticipatory gleam.

Crouching down, she gave Chibs a quick kiss before leaving him and the guys to their work. Chibs already had a spread of various tools he was grabbing and tossing one for another.

The dogs followed her as she walked to her desk, set up her laptop and slipped her jacket and kutte over the back of her chair. Seeing that she was settled down in one place the dogs laid down next
to her on the floor.

She could see the guys moving back and forth for tools behind her by the reflection off her screen. Tig glaring at her as he’d pulled all the chrome bits and bobs from his bike, dropping them into a deep drawer of one of the tool chests with a loud clang.

“Don’t give me that look.” She admonished, twisting around to face him. “Jesus, I’m saving you hundreds maybe thousands of dollars.”

“Sorry.” He apologized.

She appraised him a bit, the space where his SA patch used to reside contrasted with the leather that had been exposed to the elements over the years.

“You okay?” She asked.

Tig looked at her from the tool in his hands. “Huh?”

“About turning in your patch. You okay?”

He frowned down at his kutte, then shrugging back at her. “Yeah, doll. I’m fine.”

She sighed sadly, knowing that he wasn’t, despite his assertion. “You did the right thing, Tig.”

“Whatever. It wasn’t right what Clay did to Gem.”

“That the only reason you stepped down?” She questioned him.

Tig shifted on his feet, his eyes not meeting hers. “Yeah.” He answered.

“Okay.” She let up on him. “I’m here if you want to talk.”

“Yeah, sure.” He acknowledged before going back to his bike. Watching him walk, she knew that he was going to be challenged. Challenged soon. His loyalty to Clay just couldn’t be shut off overnight. Not with the history he has with Clay. And his reasoning for stripping his patch for Gemma only showed he didn’t know the full truth yet. But it was a step.

Chibs had cruised back for another tool and to her for one of their reconnecting breaks, pulling her from her musings. Giving her a kiss before going back to his bike.

Gemma had climbed down out of her office, curious by all the odd work going on. She was surprised at first that Gemma was even here. Thought she’d be glued to Tara, but Jax’s order must’ve sunk in. Then remembering Jax had told her he was heading back here. God. Shifting closer to her screen she did her best to ignore her looming presence and focus on her trading and an email from Kerrianne and Trinity.

“What the hell are they doing?” Gemma asked, her dark eyes tracking the back and forth of the guys. Their voices low as they cracked jokes to each other. Rat had been roped into picking up their garbage and making the odd run for a tool for them.

She stifled an eye roll at Gemma’s question. It was quite obvious what the boys were doing. “Spring cleaning.” She told her flatly, not breaking her eyes away from her screen.

“Spring cleaning? What the hell is your game?”

Her head was pounding again, she frowned up at Gemma. “No game. But why do you care what
they do with their bikes. They doing something without your written authorization?” She couldn’t help the dig.

She braced herself as Gemma stiffened giving her a death glare.

Thankfully, Chibs walked back into the bay, dropping a greasy, suspicious looking bit of machinery on her desk with a heavy thud. Leaning down and giving her a kiss. Her hand going to his neck to draw him for a second kiss.

Gemma continued to stare at them.

“Okay?” He asked softly, side-eyeing Gemma.

“Yep, so far.” She breathed softly, taking in his spicy scent. God, how does he smell so freaking good, she questioned to herself. His dark eyes catching her, he smirked. Amused that she was so wanton for him.

Leaning back in her chair, she eyed the mysterious part on her desk. “Ummm, the bike still in rideable shape, right? The rate you’re going it’ll lose all molecular structure of a bike.”

He laughed at her observation. Pulling her up and sat in her chair and bringing her back down into his lap. “Don’t mock my pain, mo chridhe.” He said melodramatically.

Rolling her eyes at him, she looping her arms over his shoulders, her fingers tangling in his hair at the back of his neck. They sighed as their headaches pulled further back.

“Hey, Gem.” Chibs greeted, acknowledging her presence, finally.

“Chibs.” Gemma nodded tightly.

“Kerrianne emailed.” She piped up, diverting Chibs attention from Gemma.

“Aye? She okay?” He asked.

“Yes, Just wanted to say hi, complain about trigonometry some more, and send me some more links for clothes she’s searching for. Trinity’s been drafted into her quest to outfit me.” She informed him.

Chibs grinned with a snort at her report. “Anything more from Maureen and Fi’s research on druids?” He asked.

“What the hell are you two talking about? What’s this about Fiona and Maureen?” Gemma burst into their little bubble with her strident questions. The pitch had Sorcha and Cuchulain sitting up from their sprawl.

Chibs giving Gemma a cross look at her interruption. “What the fuck? What the hell are you going on about? Of course we talk about Fi and Kerri. Not that it’s any of your business.” He said dangerously.

Gemma unwillingly wilted under Chibs unspoken threat.

Unfortunately, Jax walked into the bay searching his tool chest for a specific item, she couldn’t begin to imagine what. She and Chibs snuck warning glances over to Jax as Gemma stalked after her new prey.

Gemma standing practically on top of her son, her hands settling on her hips. Talking, well, more
like interrogating him. Jax looked up at them, a growing anger settling around his eyes. She mouthed a sorry to him.

“Ma, drop it.” Jax slamming a drawer shut with a bang.

“Jackson…” Gemma annoyingly whined.

“Jesus! Just let it go already. I have work to do, just back off.”

Jax started back across the lot, tool in hand, when he paused and pulled his cell phone out. His stance stiff for a moment, shoving his phone back in his pocket as he hurried to his bike. Tightening something up quick, jumping on and pulling out of the lot in a hurry. The guys all watching Jax take off without a word of where he was going.

Gemma watched Jax leave with an angry look. Not happy that her son wasn’t listening to her sage advice. She turned and saw that she and Chibs had witnessed the whole thing.

“You have no idea what I’ve done to protect this club.” Gemma started at them.

“Don’t I?” She whipped back. “Where’s Opie, Gemma? Piney’s been missing, too. Tara’s just out of the hospital. Who else has slipped through the cracks of your supposed protection?”

“Fucking gash...how dare you?! You don’t know anything!”

The dogs stood up, moving between her and Chibs facing the threat of Gemma. Happy riding off the lot, Tig still working on his bike.

“Go home, Gemma. The garage is closed, you have no business here.” Chibs whipped hotly at Gemma, who looked like she was about to burst a blood vessel.

Gemma looked to Chibs at his order. Settling back on her heels with a smirk.

Some thought running through her head had her feeling righteous. Good Lord.

“Yeah, sure. Okay.” Gemma agreed too easily, going into the office and coming right back out with her bag slung over her shoulder. Climbing up into her SUV, she drove off, her tires squealing.

“Christ.” Chibs said, as she slumped into his lean frame. His hands running along her bare back.

“You ready to go home?”

“Oh, just need to shut this down.” She gathered her things and took the hand that Chibs held out for her, walking to his newly stripped down bike.

“You sure it’s okay to ride? You didn’t need to put that mysterious part back on or something?” She teased.

He rolled his eyes at her. “Questioning my mechanical skills, darling?”

She couldn’t keep up the teasing, her giggles escaping.

“You okay, Tiggy?” Chibs grinned, checking on the guys before they took off.

Tig looking up from his bike, a grease stain on his forehead. “Yeah. I’ll lock up with Rat.”

“Right, then.”
She gave the dogs a soothing stroke, mentally telling them they were heading home. They streaked across the lot and bounded around the corner, out of her sight.

She waved as they rode past Tig.

Apparently, they didn’t need the mysterious part after all as they pulled up their driveway. Having made it without incident.

The dogs were waiting for them once again. “Fuck, how the fuck do they get here so fast?” He asked with a shake of his head.

“I don’t know.” Shrugging back, just as bewildered as he was. “How old do you think they are?”

“Given their energy level, pretty young. No sense of their age when you touch them?”

“No. I get overwhelmed by their emotions. Like there’s no past for me to see.”

They eyed the dogs who circled around them, looking to each other. The dogs history still a mystery.

Chibs unlocked the front door and the dogs rushed inside, nearly toppling him. His shoulder brushing the side of the doorway. “Aye, ye’ muckers. Jesus.” He swore.

She couldn’t help her amused huff at the antics. Chibs rolling his eyes, catching her.

As Chibs made up dinner, she poured out fresh water and food for the dogs. They’d already tossed a couple of dog beds in the family room.

After a quick dinner, they settled down watching some news and another episode of The Sopranos. Sorcha claimed one of the dog beds while Cuchulain sprawled out on the floor in front of the sofa she and Chibs were camped out on.

Chibs borrowed her laptop and pulled up the Harley website. Comparing and contrasting various bikes. Muttering to himself over prices and specs of each bike, making notes on a pad of paper. Showing her his picks, which amused her because she had no idea what he was talking about. But he was so enthusiastic about his research, she wanted to be a supportive girlfriend.

Setting down her book to look at what he was pointing at on the screen, “It’s very pretty.” She nodded.

His eyes popping open. “Pretty? Harleys aren’t pretty. They’re works of art.” He extolled. “It is a finely-tuned machine, m ‘anam.”

Looking at the picture again, trying to find the art in a motorcycle. “Does it come in blue?” She asked. “Oooh, yellow would be pretty.”

Chibs jaw dropping as she teased him.

His eyes narrowed at her. “There is no way on this God’s green earth, I will ever...ever own or ride a bike that’s yellow or blue. Black is the only acceptable color.” He declared.

“Black isn’t a color, its the absence of color.” She instructed. “But according to chemists it is a color by mixing all three of the primary colors. It won’t be a true black unless you mix in like charcoal or iron me...”
“That’s it.” He cut her off, setting the laptop to the side with one hand and grabbing her with the other.

She started giggling, he was so cute, getting all worked up over her lesson regarding black being a color or not.

“Come ’ere you.” He grinned, as she straddled over him.

Her hands resting on the top of his shoulders, his landing at her hips. One hand giving her butt a playful smack.

“This is serious business here, m ‘anam.” He tried for a straight face but he was struggling, which only made her giggle harder.

“Yes, yes. Choosing the right color for a bike is absolutely, positively serious business.” She laughed.

“Gods, what am I going to do with ye’?” He shook his head mournfully at her.

Smirking at him, “I can think of a couple of things...” she leaded as her heart raced and feeling him harden under her.

“Fuck.” He swore, his eyelids fluttering.

“Hmmm, yessss.” She hummed, as his hands gripped her harder. Pulling her down to grind into his hardening cock. She leaned and latched onto his earlobe, pulling and teasing at the tender bit of flesh with her lips and teeth.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck...” He chanted.

She yelped as he stood up and swung her over his shoulder in a swift rush, gripping her tight around her thighs as he strode purposefully to their bedroom. Cuchulain and Sorcha’s heads perking up a moment only to settle back down.

Laughing as he dropped her to the bed. Bouncing on the mattress, her head swam from her blood rushing from her head.

Their hands reaching for each other, pulling at their clothes, tossing them in a messy pile to the floor.

Her head swam as he came over her like a storm. Her arms and legs gripping him as he rolled and pushed over top of her. Her nipples rock hard as they rubbed against his chest, his necklaces rolling and shifting between them.

Feeling herself quicken and his answering groan when he felt how wet she was. His brogue thick, making her bones rattle.

His lips slamming down over hers, swallowing her scream as his cock hit that one spot that always tossed her into a maelstrom. Her climax knocked his control down and dragged him into his own.

His hips jerking as he rode the euphoric ride. Only to collapse on top of her, dragging in deep draughts of air. Their skin slick but quickly drying to a sticky seal.

“Have ye’ learned ye’re lesson, m ‘anam?” He managed to tease.

“Don’t know, may need a repeat just to make sure it sunk in.” She huffed back.
He chuckled a deep laugh as he flopped off to the side, snapping off the condom and tossing it to the small trash can. She worked the sheet free and fluffed it over the two of them as she settled back into his side. His arms curling around her.

Her back started itching but she was too tired to get up.

“Fuck.” Chibs frustratingly swore.

“Your tattoo?” She asked.

“Aye. Hang on.”

She was impressed that he was able to get up and walk. Well, stumble, to the bathroom and back again. Not only with the cream but also a damp cloth. She sighed as he rubbed the cloth over her skin, letting him wipe her down. Turning to her stomach so he could reach her back. The anti-itch cream working it’s magic, making her groan in relief. He briskly used the cloth to clean himself up.

“Lemme.” She took the cream and when he’d laid down, she spread it over his griffin to his deep sigh.

Dropping the tube over the side of the bed, he pulled her close. “Thank ye’.” He drowsed.

“No problem.” She yawned.

“Sleep, m ‘anam.” He instructed needlessly. Her mind and body crashed into the dark.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
My heart = mo chridhe
Chapter 120

Chapter Summary

To Be, part 1

Chapter Notes

Oh my goodness, first, Happy Memorial Day weekend!

Second, I'd like to welcome any newcomers to my story. Welcome, welcome, we've got an array of beverages available. Please, help yourselves.

And thirdly, this whole part is huge and had to break it up. Been building up to this chapter for a long time. I'm sure that you, my readers, know what's going on in canon. It's here, time for a major break in fixing the future.

And I've been working on this section for awhile now, can't seem to keep my focus on it, so any grammar or typo mistakes are mine. might come back later and tweak a few things. Just so excited to get the beginning of this up.

So, settle back, read and enjoy. And please, do leave me a comment. Love to read your thoughts on this and upcoming chapters. Thanks!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She woke sitting upright with a hard rush, gasping for air, her fist at her chest. Heart pounding so hard it felt like it would break free from her rib cage.

“Wha…” Chibs blinked blearily at her. “You okay?” His voice thick from sleep.

“Get up. It’s time.” She didn’t wait for him, climbing out of the bed and rushing to the closet.

Before he could question her, his cell phone started ringing. The chime breaking the heavy silence of the house.

Chibs grabbed the phone behind her as she zipped up her jeans. “Aye?”

She threw a pair of jeans and a random shirt at him over her shoulder. Paying no heed to his annoyed huff as the clothes fell over his head. Rushing to the bathroom, instead.

The dogs wandering into the bedroom wondering what all the ruckus was about.

“He alive? Okay, we’re on our way.” The sound of Chibs getting up followed her as she combed her hair out quickly.

Chibs yawning as he walked in, clothes in hand. Taking his turn relieving himself before pulling his clothes on. She brushed her teeth and ran her hands over her hair one more time. No time for
brading it.

“Hurry up. We have to go.” She pressured. “I’ll settle the dogs.”

“Christ. Okay. Give me a minute.”

The dogs trailing her at her heels as she rushed through the house. It was too early for this much activity. It was always like this, she thought. Moments in a person’s life suddenly changing in an instant. A phone call in the middle of the night where the rest of the world slumbered, yet your life was taking a major turn.

She opened the front door, looking down at the grumbling dogs. “No, you can’t come with us. Go to the garage. V-lin or Chucky will be there. There’s food there. No. It’s a people hospital, no dogs allowed. I know, but you can’t. You’ll get kicked out the moment you step inside, that’s why. Please, just wait for us at the garage.”

They gave her an unhappy look, but she didn’t give in. There was no way they could be with her in the hospital. Seeing she wasn’t budging, they huffed and loped outside and turned down the street towards the garage.

Chibs came tumbling out, fastening his thick belt. “Okay?” He asked.

She took his phone from his pocket and called V-lin.


“V-lin. Get over to the garage. Feed and water the dogs. They’re on their way now.”

“How? Do you know what time it is?” He asked like she was out of her mind.

“Yes, I know what time it is.” She bit back, as Chibs helped her into her jacket and kutte. Shifting the phone from one hand to the other. “Just get a move on. Now. That’s an order.”

“Okay, Jesus.”

She hung up on him, handing the phone back to Chibs as he took her hand in his, leading her out of the house and to the bike.

Quickly firing the bike, they turned towards St. Thomas.

They moved quickly through the hallways of St. Thomas. This was becoming a habit, she thought. Starting to know the layout of the hospital wasn’t something she really wanted to know at all.

They spotted Tig first. He was pacing in the small waiting area. Happy in one corner, Rat was off in his own corner, silently watching everything and everyone. His eyes tight with secrets.

“How is he?” Chibs asked.

“Doc’s still working on him. His lung was hit, those fucking cigars.” Happy reported.

Wayne casting nervous looks at them as Roosevelt with a couple of him men came into the waiting room.

Chibs shot her a knowing look and led her to the coffee table. Pushing the well-thumbed magazines out of the way, he sat down, pulling her down with him.
She rolled her eyes at him, there were perfectly good chairs, yet he picked the table to plant themselves. She didn’t get him sometimes. But she let it go to watch Tig and listen to Wayne spin his tale.

“Heading over to get a new starter for the truck. Roll up to the gate, see a black SUV speeding out. Yucon, I think. Looked like two african-american males. Tinted windows. Didn’t get a real good look. Pulled into the lot. Found Clay laying there.” Wayne explained to Roosevelt.

With every word Wayne said, she saw Tig get more and more worked up. His rage had a target now. And she was getting a bit angry herself.

She wanted to slap the shit out of Wayne for his lie. Protecting people who didn’t deserve it. Her anger set her teeth on edge. The truth, was a seething pit that roiled and burned inside her. And she knew she couldn’t say anything, not yet at least.

Chibs ran a hand down her back, sensing her anger.

“Did he say anything about the shooters?” Eli followed up.

Wayne shrugged. “No, he was barely conscious. I called EMS.”

Roosevelt swept a prejudiced eye over the rest of them. “And there was no one else on the lot?”

“No. We split.” Chibs said shortly.

“So Clay was by himself?”

Such crack deductive reasoning she thought snidely. Taking a deep breath, trying to calm down. Tig’s pacing wasn’t helping though.

“He was keeping the garage open late for me.” Wayne saved the guys.

“What about security cameras?”

“They don’t record.” Happy informed darkly.

A knowing smirk spread across Roosevelt’s face. “Of course they don’t. All right, I want to speak to Clay when he’s conscious. Rest of you just stay available.” He warned as he left the room.

Her eyes shifted to Tig as he rushed at Wayne.

“Hey. So they were black. Niners?” Tig pressed the old man.

“Had to be.” Happy agreed.

Wayne backed up a step, trying to ease Tig down. “Not sure, I didn’t see colors.”

Tig wasn’t happy with that answer, but Gemma walking down the hallway caught Wayne’s attention. She nudged into Chibs side, nodding towards the brewing drama.

“Hey, Gemma…” Wayne called and jogged after the older woman.

“Fuck me.” He muttered. “Maybe she really cares?” He added hopefully.

She shot him an amused look.
He heaved a sigh.

Tig halted his pacing as a sudden flurry of activity started up. She and Chibs stood up to get a better look. Doctors and nurses pushing a gurney towards the elevator. Clay hooked up to a multitude of IV’s and a plethora of monitors. Gemma in the middle of the hallway, watching the men and women working to save her husband’s life.

“Where’re you taking him.” Gemma questioned one of the doctors. “I’m his wife.” She reassured, overriding doctor-patient confidentiality.

“We’re prepping him surgery. Follow me and I’ll get you up to speed.” The doctor invited Gemma.

Her lips pursed as she looked darkly at Clay lying unconscious, dying right before her eyes and she decided. “That’s okay, just keep him alive.”

The doctor stared at Gemma like he couldn't believe he’d heard her right. But the urgency to get Clay into surgery had him rushing into the elevator just as the doors were about the shut.

“God damn.” Chibs said under his breath.

“She did that exact same thing to JT.” She said to him softly.

She felt his shock at Gemma’s behavior.

Gemma turned, her eyes hard on Wayne as she headed back down the hallway to the exit.

“Really, Gemma? Your husband’s on death’s door and you’re leaving? What could possibly be more important?” Chibs mocked after Gemma.

Gemma turning back to them, her eyes blazing.

“He doesn’t need me. He needs the doctors. And he’s not my family, not anymore.” She shot at Chibs, before spinning out of the hospital. Wayne following her.

Tig staring after Gemma in shock.

“Jesus.” Chibs swore.

“This is on me.” Tig shook his head.

Everyone turned to look at Tig.

“No. No, brother.” Chibs and Happy said on top of each other.

But Tig wasn’t hearing it, shaking his head in denial. “Clay wanted me to stay. He had a feeling something was going down.”

“We don’t know anything, Tiggy. Okay?” Chibs said again. Turning to Happy and Rat, “Where’s Bobby and Juice?”

The Rico Suave lyrics started up in her head again. God damn it. This is not happening, she swore to herself. Her eyes never leaving Tig as she ran her hands through her hair, pulling at her scalp trying to pull her building headache out of her skull.

Rat shrugged, his lips sealed. “I called their cells. They aren’t picking up.” Happy said.
Chibs swore and dialed his phone. “Last I heard, Bobby was going to Stockton to see Otto.” He said to Happy as he listened to the dial tone. “Fuck.” He hung up and dialed again. “Call Rosen or Lowen. See if they can find out where he’s at.”

Happy pulled out his phone to do as Chibs ordered.

As the boys were trying to track down Bobby and Juan, she kept her eyes on Tig. Watching him, waiting, hoping that he’d see the bigger picture. To not fall back into old behavior. But the more Tig paced, the more worried she got.

“I do. I do. Brother asked for my help. I turned my back.” Tig answered Chibs question, but Chibs was so caught up with Happy trying to track down Juan and Bobby he didn’t hear Tig.

Her eyes tracked Tig’s pacing. She foresaw this, Opie’s life, Dawn’s life...everyone in danger. This was it. God. Why can’t she be wrong. She hoped that Tig would stop and listen to the guys. Perhaps learned to see the bigger picture from reading JT’s book. From her many discussions with him over his thinking process. To learn patience.

Tig picked his head up suddenly and she could see the flare of decision in his eyes. The set of his face and shoulders. Fuck.

He rushed out of the waiting room and into the hallway, turning for the exit.

And she didn’t hesitate, her feet moving before she even thought about it. She can’t let this happen. No. She didn’t know exactly what she was going to do, but she had to try and stop him.

Stepping in front of Tig, catching him before he could move too far down the hallway.

“Don’t.” She hissed lowly at Tig. Part of her was telling her she was crazy. Crazy that a skinny girl like her had any chance of stopping a man of Tig’s size and strength. It was no contest, so what the fuck was she doing?

Tig tried to move around her. But she stepped in front of him again, her arms outstretched like a basketball player. ‘Chibs! Guys!’ She called out for help, not daring to break her eye contact on Tig. Watching his center of gravity, readying to counter whatever move he’d try next.

Tig’s hands curling into fists as he glared down at her, frustrated that she was preventing him from leaving.

“He snarled at her.

“No!” She growled back, keenly aware of their surroundings. “Don’t do what you are thinking of doing. You will regret it for the rest of your life.” She warned as she kept blocking Tig. Staring up into his angry eyes, looking for a sign that he was listening to her. But not finding it. God damn it.

Tig snarled at her. “Move or I’ll move you. Seer or not.” He warned, his husky, pale eyes beamed down at her.

“No.” She reiterated.

He quirked a snide smile, stepping right into her personal space, using his size and strength to try and intimidate her. But this wasn’t new to her. She’d gone up against so many others. She was used to getting run over.

She knew Tig was a good person, knew that he’d regret if he hurt her. Regret what would befall the
club...his daughters...But he wasn’t thinking at all. Just filled with rage and a need for justice, fueled by his guilt. Guilt for thinking that he’d refused to aid his President when he’d been asked to help. Turning his back to a man he’d followed and spilt blood for. “It’s not your fault Tig. What happened to Clay, wasn’t your fault.”

“I know who’s fault it is. Now move out of my way, last warning.”

He took another half-step, she could smell his anger. A rising tidal wave of energy, erupting from deep within her, flowing up her spine and the top of her head. It happened so fast she didn’t have time to scream. Her hands burned. She couldn’t think, thinking was beyond her control. Her ears rang under the loud sounds of deep horns blaring.

Tig rushed to get past her. Her feet planted to the floor, her tree tattoo flared to life.

The roots that tangled around her hips shot down her legs and down through the soles of her feet down into the floor. Seeking and reaching the rich loam of earth below her. The crown of the tree stretching up behind her, spreading wide overhead.

She wasn’t in the hallway anymore. She was transported to some distant land. A land that dwelled inside her this entire time.

A small part of her was screaming at her to run. But her feet refused to move. She was planted. Sparkling energy ran from the ground up the trunk to the crown above, shooting back down again. An endless cycle of feeding life and she was part of the circuit. Her panic eased back a little when she realized whatever was going on wasn’t hurting her.

Her arms raised up without a thought, grabbing Tig, stopping him from leaving. Her hands cupped the sides of Tig’s head, his baby-fine curls wrapped around her fingers. Even his hair didn’t want to let go of her, she thought with a bit of amusement.

But, her hold on Tig...she instantly felt his rage, pulsing inside him...rushing at her. Rushing to eat at her...to devour her and anyone that dared to stand in his way.

She gasped as it crashed into her, the tidal wave inside her flared like a nuclear bomb. But the weight of the tree held her. The leaves rustling overhead. Instinctively, tightening her grip on Tig, refusing to release him. The fire of his anger shot through her and into the tree.

The tree, she, she didn’t know what, but whatever it was took that rage. Absorbed it...adding it to the energy that shot back and forth, sending that anger down...down into the earth. Drawing up cool water in its place, sending that water through her arms and into Tig. Meeting the scorching fire of Tig’s anger and overpowering it, dousing his rage cold in its tracks. The truth stronger than any misguided notions that was running through Tig’s head.

She felt disjointed from her body as the powerful energy flared and flowed through her body.

Her hands fused to Tig’s head. Her eyes holding his in her gaze. It felt as though she lifted Tig up off his feet. Which she knew couldn’t possibly be, she thought hysterically. Tig had at least seventy pounds and half a foot on her.

She felt like she was a hundred feet tall. How she managed to fit in the hallway she didn’t know. Focused on Tig, she vaguely sensed movement in the room, Tig gasping under her hands.

“Stop.” She ordered him. Tig’s eyes wide in shock. “Stop, you fool.”
She vaguely heard people swearing at whatever it was they were witnessing. But, she had Tig’s attention and she wasn’t going to give it up yet. Not yet.

“Listen.” She shook Tig harshly. “Witness.”

She didn’t recognize the sound of her own voice, she just felt power, bristling just under her skin. She had a fleeting thought that the power would rip her skin off of her from its raw strength; if she had a body at this point.

“Oh God! Let me go!” Tig cried out. “What are you?!” He fought her hold in a wild panic. Unable to free himself he collapsed to his knees before her.

Her hold true, she stared down at him. “I warned you. Witness what you will wrought.”

Tig’s tanned face paled as he stared up at her.

But she wasn’t seeing him anymore, but through him. Sifting through his mind and soul like an well-read book. He thought her abilities were cute and entertaining, no more. Time for games is over.

She didn’t know how she was doing it, but the images started flowing from her and into Tig. She fed him the images and sounds of the future memories. This was his future if he proceeds with what he was planning. The fool. Her anger raising her power and pushing the images hard and fast at him. Slowing down for the most critical parts, making sure he saw it.

The analytical part of her was curious with what she was doing. Trying to figure out what exactly was happening. But even she got caught up in the future memories for a path he was intent on following.

Tig failing to kill LaRoy, instead killing a young woman. LaRoy and his crew racing after him. Skipping forward to Tig chained up like a feral dog. His daughter, Dawn, in a metal pit. Realizing what was happening. Begging from the depths of his soul to take her place. ‘Know my pain.’ The scorching heat as the flames roared to life, Dawn’s screams as she burned alive. The smell of her burnt flesh lingered in his nose.

He, broken and weeping, knowing that he failed to protect his daughter. Blaming Pope for all that’s happened, still not learning that his actions brought her destruction.

Then again the memory's skipped ahead, bringing them to County. The sinking knowledge finally getting through that all of this was his fault. Jax’s rage scared him.

The guttural yells from Chibs and Jax as they banged on the window separating the rooms. Crying out for Opie. Witnessing the men who were chosen to kill their brother. Opie slack-faced from the sharp blow to his head, spinning him to his knees. The rise of the pipe had Tig turning his back, unable to watch Opie’s murder.

“Turn and witness the price of your actions.” She hissed, angry that Tig should at the very least be man enough to watch the sacrifice Opie was making for the club.

Even with Opie’s head split open on the concrete floor, the large, hulking men swinging the pipe over and over on Opie’s body. Their primal savagery reminded her of large apes that attacked.

The pained cries of Jax and Chibs wailing and banging against the glass, tore at her soul. The sight of Jax’s glacial-blue eyes fill with grief and rage, directed right at Tig. His fault that his best friend had to pay for the price for his stupidity, again.
“No. It can’t be.” Tig wailed at her. “Why?” He demanded, grabbing her wrists.

She couldn’t tell if he was fighting to rip her hands off him or simply hold onto her at this point. It mattered not. He wasn’t going anywhere until she made sure he learned this lesson.

“It was not black.” She sighed, through the tidal rush of the energy still running through her. “Hear me. Your daughter’s life, your brother’s life, your club’s life is at risk because of you, because of what you’re deciding this moment. I warned you.” She breathed, part of her feeling that she was starting to get the hang of this energy rush. Or getting used to it. She wasn’t sure if that was a good idea. Not at all. But it was something to think about later.

Tig staring up at her with tortured eyes.

She felt a cool presence next to her. Shifting her eyes to the side she saw Piney standing next to her looking down at Tig. Her heart skipped a beat as she saw slightly through him. Knowing what it meant, that he was on the other side. Sadness ripped through her as she grieved for him.

Piney looked at her, giving her a slight smile. “Don’t worry about me, doll.” He said.

She shook her head at him. “I can’t help what I feel.”

“I know. But I was willing. I can’t be hurt anymore.”

“Piney? What’s going on?” Tig asked, confused.

His question had her and Piney looking down at Tig again. She still had his head in her hands. The energy was still flowing between them. Surging as her attention turned back to him.

She wasn’t ready when Piney put his ghostly hand on her shoulder. Gasping as she felt herself expand out again, the top of her head was gone as the tree shivered over and through her. Adding Piney’s touch spiked the energy and she didn’t know what to do with it.

She was breathless with the power. A dam broke and information rushed inside her and it didn’t seem to have an end point. Fuck. Her mind and body screaming at her, making her ears ring.

Choking a cry, as Piney flooded her with the harsh memory of the fight that killed him. She didn’t know how to contain it, instinctively pushing it into Tig before she could stop herself. Afraid that her brain would implode under the stress.

Tig gave a harsh cry as the burning power flared from her and into him. And she was sorry for it, but she didn’t know how to stop it.

The memory became clear. Hearing Clay yelling at Piney...Clay tossing the cabin. Piney gasping in labored pain for air. His panic that Clay was really going to kill him.

“Where are the letters⁉️” Clay demanded furiously as he pressed the gun into Piney’s chest. “Tara’s still got them, doesn’t she?”

Piney’s scared eyes as he realized he’d put Tara at risk with his power play. “Leave her out of it.” He begged.

Clay’s steely eyes hardened. “Too late.”

Piney’s legs crumpling out from under him, as he fell to the floor. His life seeping out as the blood filled his chest.
She drew in a sudden draw of air as she left the heavy constraints of flesh and bone. Drifting from above, they watched Clay dip his finger into Piney’s pool of blood. Drawing a crude ‘Lobos’ on a black and white photo of the First Nine. Desecrating a proud moment for Piney...for the club.

She looked to Piney next to her, as the felt a sensation of floating upwards and realizes it was the sensation of Piney’s soul moving on. Peaceful...a life finished. But this memory wasn’t for her or Tig to know. Their own deaths was still waiting for them, they had to be patient to know what happens next.

“I don’t understand…” Tig gasped.

“It wasn’t black.” She repeated to Tig.

Recalling the memories from Jax’s reading, sending them into Tig.

The showdown between Clay and Opie, Opie’s all-consuming grief for his father and even Donna. That wound still not healed. Clay’s astonishment that Opie still blamed him for Donna, thinking that after all this time it had been buried in the past. But the past never stays buried.

Jax begging Opie with shocked tears to for his best friend to put the gun down. Opie at his breaking point, fired at Clay.

Jax’s shock, unable to believe that Opie actually shot Clay. Seeing that his shot didn’t kill Clay, re-trained his gun on Clay for the kill. Forcing him to shoot his best friend.

The memories flashed back to Dawn’s screaming...Opie’s sacrifice. She leaned into Tig, “Fire and blood.” She hissed.

The horror filled Tig’s eyes as he realized what she’d been trying to tell him since the day she read him. Pushing him to think, questioning him at every turn. All of it was for this.

This moment she saw happening where everything took a fatal turn. The pain and grief that he would bring on himself, his family, his club.

All of it because he’d been lied to. Because he didn’t wait for all the information.

She felt his shame that she’d been right about him. And he didn’t like it, especially with Piney watching him. His hand still resting at her shoulder.

She felt him trying to pull away from her. To get her hands off him, to make the memories stop, to stop him from seeing, from knowing truth.

Her power pulsed and breathed through her as Tig fought to free himself. But her hold was true.

“There is no escape from this lesson. It repeats itself to you. Lowell Sr. ...Donna. It repeats again, now. Learn your lesson or bring death with fire and blood. Sacrifice innocent blood for your actions here and now.”

Tig gasped and stared at her. His cheeks wet from his tears.

She knew she’d gotten through to him, finally. The constant challenges she’d thrown at Tig to start to think for himself merely scratched the surface with him before. Going along with her just to appease her and get her off his back. She tried though. Hoping that that was all it would take.

But, here and now, she knew that she had scared the living crap out of him to get through his thick
skull.

She felt wide open, the power riding her and taking Tig with her. She already had learned his past
and present, this second connection it took her deeper inside Tig. She’d never experienced this and
it got her curious. Curious about this new level she was experiencing with her readings.

She felt invincible and powerful in a way she’d never felt before when she’d been touched. With
Chibs it was different. It was more peaceful...controlled, she mused. No, grounded. While the
energy held a wild potential, eagerly waiting to be used.

The energy sank its roots deep inside them, inside Tig, she realized. Fuck, it was sinking into his
soul. She wondered what that bond could do. She studied it with her mind, a gentle touch and felt it
flicker and bend to her will. Pressing energy into it and pulling it back out again. Interesting. And
she knew, knew that if she wished it, she could suck that energy dry...suck life force right out of
Tig.

She compared the bond she felt with Tig to Piney. His blue eyes regarding her gravely. She
released her hold on Tig’s soul and felt Piney lighten with approval. Hmm.

She focused back onto Tig’s soul again, pushing energy into it. Feeling it beat and flow stronger,
sensing colors with it. Smoothing out some of the rough areas that seemed to cut and bleed. She
thought about it, the state...health of his soul, how life must shape it over time.

Her mind raced with the possibilities.

Tig begged, his eyes streaming with tears, his hand over his chest. “No more, God, no more.”

His plea pulled her back from her thoughts. “Do you see truth now?” She questioned him, making
sure he got the message.

“Yes! God, yes!” He cried hysterically to her.

Dear God, what was she doing? Tig was her friend. She hurt her friend. She had to end this sharing.
She had to end this connection. How? She didn’t know how. Fuck.

She knew she was panicking and forced herself to breath, to calm down and figure this out. She had
to figure it out. She was the one that did it. She had to figure out how to close this off.

She felt a jolt of heavy heat. Sliding a careful look, she saw Chibs next to her, his hand resting at
her back. Her anchor coming to her aid. She felt the energy try and add Chibs to it’s powerful
storm, but somehow he was able to block it from overtaking him. As if he were a concrete wall that
held back the crashing waves of the ocean. A dark winglike shadow cast up against the wall behind
him.

“Mo bhanrigh…” He breathed in her ear. “I think it’s okay to let Tig go.”

But, she didn’t think just taking her hands off Tig was smart. It’d be like shutting down a whole
electric power grid instead of just unplugging the toaster from the outlet. Yeah, that would be bad,
she mulled.

She tried to breath, the energy was stripping her of herself. Tig, Piney, now Chibs, everyone,
everything was pulling her apart, making it hard to think.

She looked to Piney, first things first. “Go, be in peace.”
Piney gave her a peck on her cheek and felt his relief. He gave her a wink and a grin, fading back to where it is he and JT and all the other souls hang out. The eternal clubhouse, holy cow, she can’t think about that right now. Just add it to the growing list.

With Piney gone, and Chibs at her back, she felt more solid inside herself. Her eyes going back to Tig, the power humming between them.

She knew Tig to the most basic level. Nothing was hidden from her. His hands hand come up around her hips, clinging to her. She shifted one of her hands to card deeper into his hair, the curls clinging to her fingers as her hand cupped the back of his head. The pressure of the power grew as they held onto each other.

Chibs moved his hand from her back to the back of her neck. Gripping her tight, the pain jerked at her. The power pulsed angrily as Chibs forced herself back into her own body. The power flared and whipped inside her.

Vaguely, she could hear voices talking loudly, as if trying to get her attention. But she couldn’t figure out what they said. All her focus was on Tig and the rising power. The painful drag of Chibs drawing her back, trying to stuff her back into her tiny body. There was just no way to fit back in there, she cried mentally.

The pressure inside her snapped the tidal wave crashing into her. She fought the pain as it screamed through her, her head exploded and centered around her forehead.

She felt the biting whiplash of the power between her and Tig. Her hands still holding onto him.

“Oh God, Oh God, Oh God…” Tig begged as he stared up at her.

The link. Cut the link. Her forehead felt it was on fire. So hot that it was burning cold.

A final effort, she grabbed at the metaphysical energy and forced it back. Pulling it back from flowing into Tig, up her arms and wrapping it around herself. And the power didn’t like it. Resisting her.

She’d rather take the pain than have Tig suffer from it. Afraid it would kill him. Knowing that it would in the back of her mind. No one could survive this. She only hoped and prayed that she did. That her brain wasn’t scrambled to hell and back after this.

And if anyone were to die, it should be her. Tig didn’t deserve to take that punishment when it was she that started whatever this was.

She ripped her hands off of Tig. Tig gave a hoarse cry as he dropped to the floor, curling in on himself at her feet.

Screaming would be bad in this place, bring unwanted attention to them. She breathed hard around the backlash, Chibs grabbed hold of her tighter. His body shielding her as the bond eased down between her and Tig. Gasping for air as if coming up from the deepest part of the ocean.

The power snapped and recoiled through her making her limbs jerk uncontrollably. Thank God Tig wasn’t connected to her. The pain would have killed him, she was sure of it. Feeling the tree shrink down, the roots pulling back up her legs back to her hips. The crown sliding down to settle once more at her nape and shoulder blades. It was a creepy feeling but the power had her scared and intrigued all at the same time.

The power leveling off inside her. But, it was still there ready for use with just a thought. Fear
flared through her at the thought. What was she?

Chibs kept tight hold on her, helping her back into herself...her own mind and body once more. But it was a tenuous moment, she was on the cusp of letting that power flare back out again. It would be so easy, the temptation whispered.

She started solving math problems in her head to help calm herself down. To just not think about the destruction she could have done with such power.

Her legs lost their ability to hold her upright and Chibs easily lifted her into his arms. His voice in her ear. She felt as if her entire body had been sunburned, raw and tender as she curled in his arms.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My queen = mo bhanrigh
Chapter 121

Chapter Summary

To Be, part 2
picks up right where we left Ch 120

Chapter Notes

Okay, this turned out longer than I anticipated. The more I like a certain part/section, I tend to write longer chapters it seems. Probably could have edited this down. But I couldn't help myself.

Let me know what you think.

And I hope everyone had a good Memorial Day weekend, if you observe the holiday. Otherwise, hope you had a good weekend.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry…” She pleaded uncontrollably. Her fists clutching at Chibs jacket and around his shoulder.

Tig was chanting, “Oh God,” over and over around his low, soul deep cries.

“Shhh, you’re okay. Everyone’s okay.” Chibs murmured in her ear. His hand stroking her hair as he moved back into the waiting room. Tig rocking and crying hoarsely behind her.

The sights, sounds, and smells of the hospital came back to her in a rush. No longer standing in her peaceful, meadowed forest with her tree. And part of her missed it, wishing she was still there. Especially when she caught Happy and Rat staring at them...at her from the corner of her eye.

Their silence unnerving. What did they see? And did she really want to know? She buried her face into Chibs shoulder.

She couldn’t help her pained sound as Chibs sat down in one of the chairs jostling her a little with the movement. The scorching inside her still tender. Chibs low voice hushing at her as he settled her in tight against him. She curled into a tight ball in the safety of his arms. “Okay?” He asked her.

“Ugh, gimme me a minute.” She managed to say. Even her vocal cords felt burned to a crisp.

Happy and Rat helped Tig back into the waiting room. But he was so shaken he couldn’t get up off the floor. Resorted to just dragging him back into the waiting room as he blindly fought them.

“Lemme go.” He shrugged their hands off him. And, of course, soon as they did, Tig couldn’t keep to his feet. Swearing as he fell back down to the floor, huddled down around himself.

And with perfect timing, Jax walked in. Halting abruptly, nearly stumbling over Tig as he kept
swiping at his eyes.

Her triskele hurt and itched six ways to Sunday. She wanted to scratch at it, but she felt like a twisted up pretzel and couldn’t figure out how she got like this.

She fought with herself, her body twitching as the energy flashed and popped inside her. Thankful for Chibs, his voice helping her quiet the storm inside her, giving her something to cling to.


Everyone shifted uncomfortably, unsure of what to say. Their eyes falling on her. Great. She pressed her face further into Chibs shoulder, still trying to settle down and wrap her brain around what she just did.

“He’s still in surgery,” Rat told Jax.

“Gemma was here, but left when they wheeled him up.” Happy added in his gravelly voice, threaded with fear. Something you don’t hear from Happy, ever.

“And these two?” Jax asked waving at Tig and her.

The room fell silent, the guys unsure exactly what to say.

“Is it true?” Tig looked up at Jax. “Piney?” Managing to get to his knees. Wiping at his eyes, still.

Jax looked down at Tig in confusion. “What happened to you? Why’re you on the floor crying?”

“Answer the fucking question! Is it true?” Tig snapped at Jax.

She jerked hard at the violence of Tig’s anger.

“Keep your voice down.” Jax snapped harshly back.

“Don’t tell me to fucking keep my voice down! Fucking answer me!” Tig shot back.

She caught Chibs checking her. Nodding to him. He pressed his lips together but looked to Jax.

“It’s time, Jackie.”

A moment of silence and the sound of Jax taking a deep breath, shifting on his feet as his leather sighed with some movement she didn’t see. Probably pulling at his growing beard or running his hand through his hair.

“Time for what?” Tig interrupted impatiently.

Jax squatted down next to Tig. “Yes.” He admitted lowly.

“No. But… Clay…he…he and Piney? And…and Opie… Fuck, fuck, fuck. Dawn…” Tig rattled trying to put together the pieces. “What the fuck is going on? What’s with those letters? And who or what the fuck are you?” His voice rising as he turned towards her, directing the last part at her.

She recoiled under the accusation, his anger and fear strumming through her.

“Tig!” Chibs threatened back, his hands gripping her tighter as she shook.

Two times two is four. Four times four is sixteen. Sixteen times sixteen is two hundred fifty six. She mentally ran through her math calculations.
“Shut up.” Jax hissed at Tig.

“Well someone better start talking!” Tig ramped up.

Two hundred fifty six to the third power is sixteen million five hundred fifty-five thousand two hundred sixteen. Square root of sixteen million five hundred fifty-five thousand two hundred sixteen is four thousand ninety six.

“What is she doing?” Jax asked.

She shook her head ignoring Jax, ignoring everyone in the room. Just concentrating on the soothing calculations that she must’ve inadvertently spoken out loud.

Chibs growled lowly, “Shite...Rat...Happy, check the hallway for the cops. Or anyone.”

She tensed up forgetting that there might have been witnesses. God, what if the idiot cops saw, she worried. Square root of four thousand ninety six is sixty four.

“She’s trying to calm down.” Chibs said carefully to Jax, keeping his voice low to not disturb her she guessed. “Which is what we all need to do right now.” He turned his threat towards Tig.

“Fuck.” Tig swore as she heard him collapse back down. His righteous anger no longer able to keep him upright.

Rat nodded and moved out the room passing down the halls and back again. “Cops are at the vending machines, oblivious.” He reported, planting himself in the doorway to keep eye on them.

“We’re good.” Happy said from his doorway.

At the news, she popped her eyes open, her hands loosened and her body uncurled a little. Relieved that whatever it was that she did to Tig was only witnessed by the guys.

Chibs glanced down at her but proceeded to fill in Jax.

The swell of the fire inside her eased off the longer Chibs held her. Taking inventory of herself, she felt aged and beaten to the inch of her life. But more worrisome was that she felt Tig. Felt him at her gut, sensing where he was in the room without having to look for him. But it was more than that, it was his personality, his own personal signature of his being. God. She had to stop thinking.

Stop thinking, she ordered to herself.

Chibs must’ve sensed her panic, one hand stroking her back, the thumb of his other hand methodically sweep across her thigh.

“Rat, go get a couple of coffees for Tig and Nancy.” Chibs ordered.

“Sure thing.” Rat said quickly, moving down the hallway.

“Are you okay, m ‘anam?”

Drawing a scattered breath. “Piney was here. He showed me...me and Tig what happened.” She cried into his neck. Her grief of Piney’s death, what she did to Tig overwhelmed her.

“What’re they talking about? Piney’s dead?” Happy questioned.

“Shit.” Jax swore under his breath.
Chibs hushed at her, rocking her slightly. Offering comfort, reminding her that she was still among the living. But she couldn’t let go of the guilt that she couldn’t save him.

“Let’s get him in a chair at least.” Jax sighed in frustration. She forced herself to get a grip. Crying wasn’t going to help anyone right now.

She heard Jax and Happy grab up Tig. Tig swearing at the two of them, but they managed to drag Tig off the floor and into a chair next to her and Chibs.

Horrified, she turned her head as she felt Tig move in the room. Her eyes wide at the sensation of him inside her. Keenly aware of his location and where he was in relation to her. The bond that she and Tig shared was still there she realized. Vibrating with Tig’s growing anger setting her nerves on edge again. Fuck.

He was shaky and blinking like crazy. Jax and Happy giving him solid squeezes at his shoulders as he hunched over in the chair. His eyes moved to her as she stared at him.

Tig’s attention on her so direct made everyone look, wondering what caught his attention. But inside she felt Tig, felt his compulsion to fall to his knees before her, his rightful place.

She saw him struggle to stay in the chair. It scared her, watching him struggle. She never wanted that of Tig, of anyone. He was a friend. Not a sycophant. God, focus. Business first. Figure out the metaphysical shitstorm later.

“Opie, okay?” She asked Jax, her voice hoarse as she broke her eye contact from Tig to look at Jax. Tig gave a small distressed whine as her attention shifted off of him.

Jax stood frozen, staring at her. Happy and Rat looked at her, too. They were seeing something that she wasn’t aware of.

“What?” The guys passed a silent conversation between themselves. “For god’s sake, quit staring at me like that.” She freaked out a little the longer they stared at her.

Chibs freed his hands and grabbed her face. Swiveled her head around a little under the light.

“What are you doing?” She asked, getting annoyed now.

Chibs looked to Jax and the guys. Tig still shaking in his chair, staring at her.

“You see it, too?” Chibs questioned to everyone but her. This was getting annoying.

“Fuck, yeah.” Happy bravely answered.

She felt like she was going cross-eyed as they all stared at her. Chibs gently ran a fingertip over her tattoo, testing what he was seeing to what he was feeling.

“See what? Somebody, tell me what the hell is wrong?” She demanded, reminding them that she heard them talk about her, over her.

“Your triskele’s had some work done.” Chibs told her, as he continued to study her tattoo.

“I figured, it’s itching like crazy.”

“It’s the same pattern, its just not black anymore. It’s silver.” Happy said curiously, leaning down with Jax to take an up close and personal look.
“What? You mean white?”

“No, it’s silver. Silver jewelry silver.” Jax said. “Fucking looks like a piece of silver jewelry is branded right into your forehead.”

“It feels like normal, but it’s silver, glinting under the lights.” Chibs added.

“I saw more than the stuff you were showing me. I saw you.” Tig said shakily. “Both of you.” He added to include Chibs.

Everyone shifted their attention to Tig.

“Was so fucking pissed at you for blocking my way. And fuck, when you grabbed me, shit, you lit up like a fucking phosphorus flare on a dark night. All I could see was you and then you pushed these...whatever the fuck they were at me.”

“Fuck, I was blind and deaf to everything but you and what you were showing me. I could only hear you. You were lit up...so fucking bright. And then I saw Piney. He put his hand on your shoulder and fuck... I saw... Clay was at the cabin. Fighting with Piney. Wanting some letters. Fucking shot Piney over them.”

“We were floating after that. Thought my heart was going to stop, I couldn’t breathe. It was you. You did something to me. I can feel it. Fucking hell, I want to fall to my knees at your feet. Pledge my life to you, like some fucking knight. Shit...you told Piney to go. He kissed your cheek and fuck...”

“You tattoo was molten, looked white hot. And I don’t know what happened, the anger I had from before was gone. Felt like you sucked me dry. Scared the shit out of me, felt you messing with me. Whatever you were doing, I felt it. You just...your voice, your command. Fuck, you commanded me. Blinding me. I still can’t see right. God.” He blinked hard, running his hand over his eyes.

Her heart stopped, stricken as she listened to Tig’s description.

“Shite. You can see, right?” Chibs asked worriedly, his hands still soothing along her spine and leg.

“Fuck, yeah. But it’s like I stared at the sun for too long.” Tig answered Chibs. “What the fuck is going on? And what the fuck is going on with Clay and those fucking letters? He killed Piney over letters. Shit, they talked about Tara.” Tig rattled, his eyes wide in panic. “Fuck, Opie and..and Dawn.” Tig panicked.

She looked to Chibs, his dark eyes watching her with worry. She felt a flare of fear, wondering if he was scared of her now. Would stop loving her. He simply gave her a wink and kissed her quickly. And she breathed again. Her arm tight over his shoulder.

“Opie, okay?” She asked Jax again, ignoring Tig’s meltdown.

Jax gave her and Chibs another heavy look but answered her question. “Yeah, winged him in the wrist. Dropped him off at Crain’s.”

Rat came back with a couple of cups of coffee.

“Thanks, Rat.” She said as Chibs took the cup from Rat, her hands still shaky.

Rat just nodded and handed the second cup to Tig. Quickly escaping to the outskirts of their little
group to guard the doorway again.

Chibs held the cup so she could take a sip. The bitter coffee a jolt to her system.

“Better?” He asked her.

She nodded as the caffeine rushed through her. “Thanks.”

Tig shifted as he was ignored, not liking it. Her eyes turned to him sharply, reading his non-verbal communication. Tig’s eyes widened as her attention fell on him again, realizing that having her attention might not be such a good idea. The power inside her roiled.

“Patience! You’ll get your answers in due time.” She said harshly. Tig jerking back at her vehemence. “I told you the book was only half the story.”

“Calm down. Both of ye’. Last thing we need is the cops to come back up on us.” Chibs reminded everyone.

She eased back heeding Chibs warning. The power flaring inside her, fighting to be let loose once more. She took a deep breath, imagining a flame in front of her. She needed a distraction. Something that would take her mind off of the shitstorm going on.

Reminded of JT’s book. “You owe me two hundred bucks, by the way.” Looking at Jax. Jax’s eyes widened comically at the dawning realization of what book she had Tig read, his jaw dropping. Even she was giggling inside at Jax’s reaction.

Chibs snorted at Jax’s reaction.

“Fuck! I thought you were going to have him read ‘Of Mice and Men’ or something, _not that!_” Jax complained, waving his arms around.

She glared at him. “You said <> any book. That book should be required reading for everyone in the club. Happy and Rat are next, since they’ve been listening to Tig tattle about shit that shouldn’t be known yet.” She griped. “You’re not going to welch on me like Gemma did to Tig, are you?” Giving him a hard look.

Jax glared at her dig. “I’m not my mother.” He said pointedly digging his wallet out.

Chibs huffed, “Thank mercy for that, at least.”

Jax shooting Chibs a glare, too now. “I’ll get you the other half later.” Handing her a hundred dollar bill.

She grinned gleefully as she waved the money in Chibs direction, enjoying her prize.

“Jesus.” Jax snorted, amused despite himself by her childish behavior. Even Happy raised his brow and shot a look to Rat. But she didn’t care.

Chibs grinning, helping her tuck the money into her pocket. Giving her a quick kiss. Her distraction helped shift her attention off the power that lay just below the surface, quieting it until she could think about it properly and in a place that wasn’t crawling with outsiders.

“What book?” Happy asked, bringing them back from their moment of comic relief.

“JT’s, his...manifesto for the club.” Tig told him.
“Fuck.” Jax groaned, as he sat down on the coffee table.

What is it with these men, she thought, there were plenty of chairs available.

Tig suddenly hissed in pain, nearly dropping his coffee. “Shit! What the fuck?” He yelped, quickly setting the cup down on the floor.


“I don’t believe it. Fucking hell.” Tig muttered, staring at the back of his hands.

“What is it?” Jax pressed when Tig didn’t respond. “Holy shit.” Jax breathed as he leaned closer to Tig.

Chibs went still under her.

She joined everyone in staring down at Tig’s hands. The back of his hands now tattooed a celtic drawing, she didn’t recognize the pattern.

“How? What did you do!” Tig accused her.

“Celtic dogs.” Chibs said. “Symbols of war and healing, if I remember correctly.”

She shrugged, “I don’t know.”

Tig glared at her, not liking her answer.

“I don’t know.” She glared back at him. “I don’t know what I did. You weren’t listening and were going to go running off by yourself and create a fuckup beyond belief.” Tig opened his mouth to argue with her.

“Don’t.” She cut Tig off. “I gave you JT’s book so you would start to think. Think about the consequences of your actions. You weren’t listening to Chibs, Happy, or even Unser. So cock-sure of yourself. Just like you were so fucking sure Opie turned rat when Stahl was buzzing around. Clay leading you around by your nose, letting you think it was your idea. Covering his ass and having you do the dirty work for him. Fuck!” She abruptly quit her rant. The power inside her rising up, sensing an opportunity if she lost her control. Not good...not good at all.

Chibs gripped at her tighter. Rat and Happy checking the hallways once more. Tig rubbing at his eyes. Jax simply watched and checked with Rat and Happy.

“I don’t know what is going on. I hit a new power level, I think.”

“No shit.” Tig interrupted with a snort.

“On top of Piney adding to everything. You weren’t there when JT invaded me. Piney was a walk in the park compared to JT. I don’t know.” She continued in a quieter voice.

“I was being burned inside from the energy...the power...the whatever. The flow of memories and consequences to you and to Piney. To make you listen. I’ve never done that before. So quit looking at me like everything is my fault. Like I did it on purpose, because you know that I didn’t. I don’t know what I’m doing. I was more afraid that I was killing you, thinking that power...energy was going to strike you dead.” She trailed off exhausted. And it was just the beginning of their hellacious day. God.

“I’m sorry if your new tattoos are my fault. But I honestly don’t know how or why I did it. At least
its on your hands and not your forehead like mine.” She said tiredly.

“Sorry.” Tig apologized.

“It’s okay, nobody’s blaming ye’.” Chibs soothed to her. “We’re all shook.”

“How long were I and Tig hooked up like that?” She asked him.

“A minute, maybe two.” Chibs said.

“God. Felt longer than that.” Tig nodded with her.

“I’m sorry for yelling at you.” Tig apologized to her. “I don’t know what to think anymore. Clay really did all that? Went after Piney?”

“Yes, he did.” Jax confirmed again. “And he’s done a shit ton more. But we can’t talk about that here. Not right now.” Jax ran his hands over his face and hair.

He looked to her and Chibs. “It was a close call, crashed the fucking hertz.” They all saw the exhaustion hitting Jax. He’d had a long night and no sleep yet.

“How’s Tara holding up?” Chibs asked. Jax snorted. “Medicated and pissed.”

“She’s going for the letters. She’ll come today with them. Try and get some sleep.” She warned and advised their new President.

“We have to tell the club, today. We can’t deal with this by ourselves anymore.” Chibs said to Jax.

Jax pressed his lips together, gripping his hands as he hunched over, elbows on his knees.

“Jax, they need to know. You are President now. It’s time.” She cut his argument off at the pass.


“Can’t find them, Bobby didn’t sign out of Stockton since he went up to see Otto. And Juice isn’t picking up. Juice, we figure, he’s on another joy ride.” Happy reported. “We were trying to track them down when our Seer and Tig...did whatever it was they did.”

She groaned, the Rico Suave lyric started up again, intent on driving her round the bend. “God damn it. Doesn’t anyone listen to me?” Jax and Chibs looked at her as she ran her hand over her eyes in frustration. “What, m ‘anam?”

“I, swear to God, I’m going to find every goddamn copy of that song and burn every last one of them.” She muttered.

“God damn it. You sure on that information?” Jax questioned her again.

“Yesss.” She hissed. “Have I been wrong so far?” She challenged him.

“Fuck.” Jax pulled at his beard. “No. But I can always hope.”

She sighed and tried to let go of her frustration. “We’re in the middle of things. Just a little bit
longer, things are changing.” She advised.

“Are they really? It doesn’t feel like it at all.” Jax questioned her.

“Tig’s still here. He’s not out going rogue. That’s a big step forward.”

“Not necessarily.” Jax argued. “Pope found Dawn before, what makes you think he doesn’t have tabs on her now? Especially with her conning him for twelve grand. She’s in something.”

“What? What are you talking about? What’s this about Dawnie and Pope?” Tig sat up in alarm.

She, Jax, and Chibs slid a careful look to Tig.

“Pope only took a personal interest in the club because of what Tig did before. That’s not happening, not now. Yes, I agree, Dawn’s in something. We should take a look at that. But for now, we’ve got our own problems to deal with. It’s not a pressing issue, not like before. And I have plans in the works for Pope and his associates.” She warned.

"Damon Pope?” Happy asked in horror. "Fuck me."

“What plans?” Jax pressed her.

“Plans that involve...resources that you don’t have.” She said. Sliding Chibs a warning look to not give away what resources she was referring to. By his scowl, she knew he didn't like what he was hearing.

“Fuck, you can’t go up against Pope all by yourself.” Jax argued.

“Can’t I?” She growled. “You don’t know me, Jax. You don’t know what I’m capable of. And if it’s for the benefit of the club, what the hell do you care?”

“I fucking care!” Jax countered.

“I know you do! But there’s only so much you can handle. You’re plate is full, it’s overflowing. You have to start delegating shit. You’ll be buried alive if you don’t. And I'm giving you plausible deniability. So drop it and let me do my job.”

“Oy, calm down, you two. Not the time or place.” Chibs reminded them.

“What the hell are you three talking about? What song? What plans? Fuck, will one of you explain shit to me?” Tig demanded, interrupting her fight with Jax.

Their attention drawn to Tig again. “Later,” Jax stalled, “there’s a lot going on lately that we haven’t had a chance or could bring to the table.” He explained.

Tig was about to question him further.

“Wait.” She snapped, getting annoyed Tig kept pressing for answers. The power flared once more, shooting down the bond to Tig. “Your questions will be answered in due time. Not before. Patience, that should’ve been tattooed on you.”

Tig’s eyes went wide and hunched over slightly. Chibs and Jax shared a look at her and Tig worriedly.

Chibs clamped a tighter hand on her. She shivered with the harder hold, forcing herself even further into herself.
“Better?” He checked her.

“Oh God, yeah.” She said shakily. “What the hell is going on with me?” She complained rhetorically.

“Christ,” Jax sat up, running his hand over his hair, readjusting his cap, “I’ll go try and find out what happened with Bobby. Give Romeo a heads up about Clay, the meeting may be off with Clay down for the count.” Jax prioritized.

“Are you sure you want to open that box?” She asked.

“What choice do I have?” Jax said in frustration.

He got up and walked out.

“Heavy lies the crown.” Chibs said lowly.

“Yes, it does.” She agreed. "But we're going to help him."

“You feeling better?” He eyed her critically.

“Yeah. I don’t feel as ramped up as before. Thanks.” Giving him a quick kiss.

“Tig, you okay?” Chibs asked next.

“My hands are itching. And I’m confused as hell. But yeah.”

Chibs helped steady her as she got up from his lap. “I’m okay.” She reassured him. Chibs standing, taking firm hold of her hand. Their fingers weaving.

“Let’s go. Rat, stay here. Call us if there’s news on Clay, aye?” Chibs took charge of them.

“Sure, no problem.” Rat shrugged agreeably.

She looked at the prospect. “You're doing a good job, Rat. Keep doing what Jax or Chibs tells you and you’ll be fine."

“Yeah, sure.” Rat agreed, his eyes shifting, unsure how to respond to her compliment.

“I should stay.” Tig said uncertainly as he swayed a little on his feet.

“No,” Chibs huffed, "you're coming with us. We're going back to the garage and wait for Jax to get back to us.”

Tig pulled at his goatee, still uncertain of what to do.

“Come on, Tig. Let’s go.” She called after him, as Chibs led her into the hallway.

Tig hesitated for a second but followed them out of the hospital. Happy taking up the rear.

Soon as they stepped outside, she paused and breathed in the cool air. The sun was breaking over the horizon. Chibs stopped with her and let her take the moment.

“Sure you’re okay?” He asked, wrapping her in his arms.

“Yeah. I couldn’t relax in there. Too much going on, wasn’t sure if the cops would come waltzing back.”
“I love ye’.” He whispered before pulling her into a kiss. Her hands sliding up and around his neck as their kiss grew. The two of them swaying with the beat of their hearts.

Breaking for air, she gasped. “I don’t know what is happening to me. I almost killed Tig.”

“But you didn’t.” He leaned his forehead to hers.

She shivered and looked into his unwavering, whiskey eyes. “This time. I’m scared.” She admitted.

“I know. You’re growing in your power. But, know, that I will always be there for you. Always. Come on, we have work to do. It’s going to be a very long day.”

“You have no idea.” She sighed, letting Chibs steer her to the bike. Happy and Tig already buckling on their helmets.

She clung to Chibs as they rode back to the garage. Riding through downtown, she watched the people going about their day as if nothing had happened. But to her, it felt as if a new age has been born. She prayed that what they’d been doing would fix things. It had to work. It just had to. Too much pain and death has been dealt, it had to mean something.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 122

Chapter Summary

To Be or Not To Be, part 3

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay. Got bamboozled by a guy who I thought was ready to start a web design agency and I was helping him get it set up when he completely flaked out on me. Accusing me of being too tied up with my dying family business, a freelancing job, etc. Yet, I had done exactly what he said he wanted. Built him a website, helped him with his content, helped him figure out marketing, listened to him for hours on end as he kept telling me to trust him. It was ridiculous. Now, I'm scrambling to find a job, because I've wasted a good couple of months with this guy.

So, I apologize for lateness on this. It's just been very stressful and I haven't been able to concentrate. And, of course, when I started editing this section, I ended up rewriting stuff. This chapter is pretty much new. So forgive any rough edges.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As they rode across town, she felt jittery, her thoughts skipped and skittered, slipping just out of her grasp. Pressing her face into Chibs reaper, his hand coming down to cup her knee or give her thigh a gentle squeeze whenever they came to a stop.

She was scared. Chancing a look to Tig, he seemed to be okay, thankfully. Her worry for his safety riding the bike slipped off her shoulders, leaving her with her own thoughts that refused to shut up.

She'd done something that even she never imagined doing. Something that was impossible to the rest of the world. Sure, she'd grown used to reading people growing up, but this was a whole new level. And she didn’t know what to do with it. How to deal with it, where to compartmentalize it.

The energy still flitted through her nerves making her jerk around as she fought to stay calm... and sane. Her hands clutching at Chibs waist and his touches to her leg were the only thing that kept her from flying apart.

Her triskele was itching and part of her was begging Chibs to hurry up so that she could get some cream on it. The tattoo feeling like it was burring a hole right into her skull wasn’t helping her nerves.

Gasping in relief when she caught sight of the entrance to the garage. Instinctively following Chibs lean as he made the turn. Her nerves ratcheted up that he wasn’t going fast enough, but knew he had to slow for the turn or they wouldn’t make the turn at all.

Soon as they were parked, she was flying off the bike, but her limbs weren’t working right so she nearly fell to the hard concrete if it weren’t for Chibs quick hands grabbing at her.
“Hey, you okay?” Chibs dark eyes searched hers.

She gasped, unable to form words. Nodding to him rapidly like an idiot.

“You’re shaking. And cold. Talk to me.” He got off the bike quickly and pulled her deeper into his arms with a deep frown.

“I...my tat...too...its ittt...ch...ching.” She managed to chatter out. Her teeth clicking as she shook.

He frowned down again at her, but hustled her over to his bay. Sitting her down on her desk, quickly moving to the first aid kit that was bolted to the wall in the back. Rummaging through it, he came back unscrewing a tube in his hands.

She reached out for the tube, but gave a frustrated noise that her hands were still quaking uncontrollably.

“I got it. Breath. Aye?” His finger starting to swipe and massage in the cream into her tattoo.

“Ttrry...ing.” She chattered. “I ... catch my thoughtttssss. I was fiine when we lefft...tt.” Sounding hysterical to her ears.

“You’re in shock. Just keep breathing. How’s that feeling now?”

“Betttt...terrr...rr.” The cream working it’s magic. Instead of a dark burning itch, now a cool spot that still had her attention. At least it didn’t feel like it was creating a hole in her skull anymore.

He set the tube down and wiped his hands off on a paper towel before running his hands vigorously up and down her arms.

“God. Thththth...anks.” She uttered, fighting to keep from crying. She was angry with herself for feeling this vulnerable, yet unable to stop it.

“Shite. You're fingers are turning blue. You need to eat something.”

She grimaced, she didn’t feel like eating.

He read her expression and frowned at her. “Hap! Go find her something to eat.”

Happy and Tig were standing a little back from Chibs and her, uncertain what to do.

“Anything in particular?” Happy asked.

“Something with protein. Hurry up.”

Happy jogged off to the clubhouse and she moaned, swaying into Chibs heat and strong body. His arms wrapping around her, trying to press and will his heat into her. He hissed as her hands slid around his skin, the chill sending goosebumps over his skin. He twisted a little and pressed his jacket around her as she burrowed into his large frame. “Sss...orrrrr...y.” She apologized at his discomfort and for being a burden.

“Fuck. Don’t apologize.” He groaned back.

Looking beyond Tig, she saw Dog and Lowell staring at them, and beyond them, a couple of men in white coveralls were working at the other end of the garage. And a pair of uniformed officers watching over everything.
Yellow crime scene tape taking up the whole bay. God, how did she miss that? Fuck.

“Whatt...tt...the helllll are they doing herrr...rrre?” She chattered and waved a pointed finger.

Chibs twisted around and glanced over his shoulder. “Fuck me. Tiggy, find out how long they’ll be. Aye?”

“Yeah. Okay.” Tig eyed Chibs, then looked to her only to turn and do Chibs bidding.

Happy came rushing back out. V-lin and the dogs following. The dogs quickly running, beating the men to reach her.

“Ah, ye’ muckers. Back off, she’s fine.” Chibs hushed at the dogs, they pressing at her for pets and whining at her slow response. She didn’t want to move, whatever heat that she’d managed to wrap around her at risk of annihilation if she dared to move. Just the thought of it, made her body jerk violently. Chibs arms tightened around her.

“Ssoo...ssorry. Sorryy...yy.” She chattered. Trying to breath and relax her jaw.

“Hush, nothing to be sorry for. Calm ye’rself.”

“Here.” Happy held out a jar of peanut butter, a spoon, and a bottle of water.

“What the fuck? There’s nothing else?” Chibs complained sharply. His dictate that she’d never eat peanut butter ever again, well, that was going out the window.

“We’re out of power bars and the lunchmeat is mold.” Happy explained.

“Fucking...goddamn it…” Chibs heaved an annoyed growl. “Fuck it...open it up, she’s shivering like mad here. Don’t want to let her go just yet.”

Happy glanced at her and twisted the jar open, tossing the lid onto the desk next to her. Twirling the spoon around he scooped up the peanut butter. He held the loaded spoon out to Chibs.

The two of them looked down at her. She saw their concern and mentally geared herself up for the loss of his heat. Thinking she was ready, she yelped when he unwrapped one arm from her to take the spoon. Sharply aware that she wasn’t ready at all, realizing that she wouldn’t have been ready even with another minute. Fuck. Her body shook as she reached out to Chibs once more.

“Here.” Chibs held the peanut butter at her lips. His glower had her forcing her jaw open to take in the food. Her teeth involuntarily biting down hard around the metal of the spoon. “Fuck, careful, luv.”

The peanut butter, thick and creamy against her tongue as she pulled back from the spoon. Her teeth sore but they didn’t feel like she’d chipped anything. She breathed hard through her nose as she mawed at the peanut butter, managing to swallow it down without choking herself.

It took a minute before she felt herself start to settle. He was right. She needed food.

Chibs had Happy gather another spoonful for him. He holding it out to her again.

“Better?” He asked.

“More.”

Chibs and Happy did their careful dance to bring her another spoonful of peanut butter. Tig came
back and eyed the proceedings curiously.

Chibs glanced at Tig as he took the freshly loaded spoon from Happy. “What’s going on over there.” Twisting back around to feed her the peanut butter again.

“Well, according to Dog and Lowell, they’ve been here for little over three hours already. With the bay out of commission Dog’s been working with Lowell, rescheduled his repairs.”

“ Fucking cops.” Chibs swore.

She pulled back from his arms. Swallowing the latest bite of peanut butter. Already feeling better she reached for the water. Before she could twist the cap off herself, Chibs scowled and thrust the spoon at Happy. Grabbing the bottle from her, twisting the cap off and tipping it towards her like he did with the peanut butter.

“You’re hands are still shaking.” He explained at her annoyed look. “I’d rather you managed to actually drink it than wear it.”

Rather than fighting with him, she swallowed down the cool water, washing the peanut butter down.

Breaking away for air, “Better now?” He asked.

“Yeah. Thanks.” She nodded, wiping her lips with the back of her hand. “Thanks, Happy.”

“No problem.” Happy said.

Chibs pressed the back of his hand to her cheek, “You’re warmer.” He reported.

“Yeah, not as bad as before.” She looked up to his warm, whiskey eyes as he continued to assess her condition. “Love you.”

He grunted with a smirk. “Ye’ better. Graim thu, m ‘anam.” Pressing a kiss to her lips.

Pulling back, he licked at his lips. “No more peanut butter for you. This is a one time deal.” He mock threatened. She grinned goofily at him to his threat, which only made him roll his eyes at her.

She caught sight of the cops and crime scene tech guys slow movements and their curious looks around the garage. Dog looking peeved that his bay was out of commission.

She slid off the desk, Chibs hands catching her around her waist, making sure she didn’t fall down.

“Woah, what’re you doing?” He asked worriedly.

“I’m okay.” She reassured. “I’m pissed, but better.”

“Pissed? For what?”

“Them.” She said as she tested her walking ability. Seeing that she wasn’t going to fall down, she moved faster. The dogs whined and trotted next to her.

“Fuck. M ‘anam....” Chibs heaved a sigh. “Hey, just let them alone. They’ll leave sooner or later.” He tried reasoning with her.

“Sooner is better.” Jax was going to be back and they had club business that needs to be taken care
of. Can’t do it with these interlopers hanging around. Walking over to the yellow-taped area, ready to grab at a wall or shelving unit as she trudged her way across the garage in case she did fall down.

Dog and Lowell glancing at her worriedly, their eyes widening at the sight of her triskele. As she traversed the garage, she caught light reflections bobbing on the wall as her head moved. Making a mental note to get in front of a mirror to see it herself.

“Shit, what happened to you?” Lowell asked in shock. Dog slapping Lowell in the back of the head for the possibility of drawing her attention to them.

She didn't have to look behind her to sense Chibs and the guys following closely behind her. The two men in white overalls glanced up at her. The larger one clearly the leader as the skinny one still crouched down on the floor with a long handled swab and a test tube.

“Ma’am. This is a crime scene.” Officer Rigby waved at her, trying to stop her progress with his sheer size. But she caught the unnerved look in his eyes as he took in her tattoos and kutte.

“Ma’am step back, please.” The portly technician said nearly on top of Rigby's warning, raising a blue-gloved hand up to wave her back.

“Noooo, really? I wouldn’t have guessed.” She snarked back sarcastically. “You have five minutes to finish whatever you’re doing before I kick you out.”

“But, we just got here.” The skinny tech said nervously. His bulging eyes looked from her to his boss.

Perfect. Lying to her. “Dog? What time did these two show up?” She demanded.

Dog came lumbering up next to her. His eyes glanced at her shining triskele but her glare broke his stare. “They were here when I got in, so seven this morning.”

She looked up at the clock on the wall, it was just after ten in the morning. “Five minutes. We have a business to run and we can’t do it with you idiots scaring off our customers.”

“Ma’am, this is a crime scene, we have to do our jobs.” The portly technician said with a smirk.

That smirk pissed her off. She wasn’t chilled anymore, she was burning hot with anger. “It takes you over three hours to process a blood stain? Any moron knows that Clay, the guy who was shot, is the evidence. Five minutes or I’m calling my lawyers and having them crawl so far up your ass…you’ll wish you’d never gotten out of bed this morning.”

The techs glanced at each other and to their cop babysitters like they weren’t sure to believe her or not.

“Four minutes…”

“You boys better hop to, she’s serious.” Tig piped up.

They hesitated a minute longer.

“Phone, please.” Holding her hand out to Chibs, without breaking her pressing gaze on the interlopers.

Chibs handed her his burner, his free hand resting at her waist.
Her eyelids fluttered at his touch, she covered her reaction to his touch by looking down at the phone, opening it and slowly and methodically dialing Mark’s number. She needed to call him anyway but making the call a spectacle had them worried, not enough to get them packing yet. Stupid idiots.

“Three minutes.” She raised the phone to her ear, listening to the ringing as the skinny tech raced to pack up their shit.

“This is highly irregular.” The head tech huffed. “I’ll report this!”

She barked out a laugh. “I dare you. What’re you going to write down? I think the city council would love to hear about your behavior. You’re preventing this business to operate. It’s a loss of sales and tax revenue. Taxes that go to pay your salary. Think they’d take a dim view on your job performance. Wonder what other crime scenes you’ve managed to bungle in your tenure. Two minutes.”

Mark’s secretary answered finally. “Put Mark on. It’s Nancy Fraser.”

The secretary gasped and put her on hold. The classical music didn’t calm her down though.

“Who’s Mark?” She heard Tig ask behind her. Ignoring Tig, she kept glowering at the technicians and the cops.

“Ma’am, please, we’re just doing our jobs. Don’t you want the person who shot your friend taken to justice?” Rigby’s partner questioned around a nervous swallow, his adam’s apple bobbing.

“If you think that whatever evidence you managed to collect will actually be useful in a trial…” She snorted derisively. “You know what, let’s ask my attorney?” She said archedly. “One minute, by the way.” She added helpfully. The dogs were growling next to her, sensing her anger at the men.

“Nancy! I know…I know…” Mark said frustratingly into the phone before she even had a chance to question him on anything. Almost as if he’d been expecting her call, expecting her fury.

“Mark,” She cut into whatever diatribe Mark was about to spew, “what would you do if the cops presented blood evidence gathered at an auto repair shop?” She held the phone out where everyone could hear Mark take a breath and rattle off an answer her question.

“What? Well, at a garage, where I presume, there’s all kinds of grease, oil, maybe even old blood if someone who worked there cut themselves working on a repair…the contamination of the scene would muddy whatever results the lab managed to get. It’s useless, so it’d most likely get kicked. Why?”

“Would the owners of the garage have a case against the cops and crime scene technicians who managed to waste nearly an entire morning processing a pool of blood barely three feet wide in said auto garage? Taking up an entire bay of the garage, forcing the workers to reschedule jobs and loss of business due to their prolonged presence?”

She heard the guys behind her swearing and bristling as she stared down the technicians. The portly one’s face turning red while his underling paled and rushed to pack up what gear he could without stepping in the half-curdled, pool of blood. The cops glanced nervously between each other.

Mark was quiet for a long moment. “Hand the phone to the guy in charge.”
She stepped to the red-faced portly man, “Here, my attorney wants to talk to you.”

The man huffed and glared at her and the phone. Resisting a brief moment before gingerly taking the phone from her, handling it as if it were a live grenade.

“Yeah.” He blustered into the phone.

She stepped back, Chibs hands wrapping around her waist as she felt his warm breath along her neck as he pressed his smiling lips to her skin. Her own arms crossed, her entire being thrusting out, whatever force she had she threw at the outsiders, pushing them out of their bay, off of their lot.

She heard Tig swearing softly, but she didn’t pay him any mind.

“We’re trying to solve a crime here.” Rigby fought her.

She turned her angry eyes to the cop. “This crime isn’t yours to solve.”

The technician sputtered and tried to explain his behavior into the phone, while she assumed Mark was reading him the riot act. She didn’t think the man could get any redder, but he was turning shades of purple as he tried to counter whatever Mark was saying.

Eventually, a panicked look came over his eyes. He looked to her and thrust the phone back to her.

“Hold on a second.” She said into the phone, turning back to the technicians and the cops. “Time’s up. Get off our lot, now.” She ordered, breathing around the pulse of energy that shot out from her.

"Fuck...fuck...what the hell is that?” Tig muttered, rubbing at his arms.

The technicians stared at her with wide eyes, realizing that the jig was up, they packed up their gear and were practically running back to their SUV.

The cops confused, watched the tech guys peel out of the lot. Giving her another look, they went to their squad car and took off as well.

Happy taking the initiative to pull down the crime scene tape, a small ghost of a smile graced his lips as he wound the yellow tape in his hands.

“Sorry, Dog, you’ll be compensated for any lost wages.” She apologized.

Dog shifted on his feet and scratched at his jaw. “It’s okay. Thanks.” Dog nodded to her before grabbing the industrial hose and started washing out the blood so he could get to work.

“Jesus Christ. You can’t just cry lawyer every time you run into the law.” Tig complained as she turned to get back to her desk.

She needed to sit down before she fell down. God, what was wrong with her, she felt wiped out.

Looking to a shocked Tig, “Who says I’m crying. I’m actually on the phone with my lawyer.” She turned and walked towards her desk.

“Shit.” Tig swore behind her. “Since when do you have a lawyer?” He questioned.

“Since it’s none of your beeswax, Tig! God, you do not need to know everything that’s been going on. So quit questioning me when you’ll find out when it’s time! And not one second before!”
Tig jerked back at her snapping vehemence. She felt the power inside her flare as her emotions ping-ponged back and forth as she dropped into her chair, her legs giving out.

“Alright, show’s over.” Chibs took over. “Everyone back to work.”

“Mark? What’s going on?” She prompted now that everyone was back to work and giving her space for her phone call.

“I’ve been trying to get in to see Otto for days now. We’ve been going over his case files, Lowen’s been helping us comb through it all.” Mark told her.

She collapsed into her chair, catching Tig looking a bit lost as he hovered near her. The dogs were sniffing at Tig, Cuchulain nudged Tig’s hand for some petting action. Sorcha laid down at her feet.

“Hang on.” She said to Mark again. “Tig, I’m sorry I snapped at you. But could you go get my laptop from the bike, please?”

Tig gave her a confused nod, walking to the bike and rummaging through the saddlebags. Something about Tig’s behavior nagged at her.

“Nancy? You there?” Mark drew her back.

“Yeah. Sorry. What’s the hold up? I expected results sooner than this.”

“I know. I’ve been out to Stockton twice now only to be turned away by the warden. Otto’s been put into PC. The way...it’s as if someone is purposefully keeping him under wraps. It fucking reeks. The only local office with that kind of pull would be the district attorney.”

“God damn it.” She swore. Tig was back, setting her bag down. “Thanks Tig.”

“Sure. Anything else?”

“No. I’m good. Thanks.”

Tig wandered off to check with Dog and Lowell. Chibs rubbed at his forehead and started towards her.

“Sorry, Mark.” She apologized for the interruption once again, running her hand through her hair.

“Look, I’ve got a meeting with a judge this afternoon. In a couple of hours I should have the paperwork that’ll get me in to see Otto.”

“How sure are you on this?” She asked. Chibs hitching his hip against her desk, taking her hand in his, giving it a massage. With that small touch, her headache eased back. Chibs gave a sigh of relief and knew his headache was backing off as well.

“I know the judge, I’ll get in. I’ve got a case here.”

She sighed, trying to think. Going over ideas and seeing the outcomes. But she was feeling out of her depth on this. Mark sounded confident and he had the meeting...maybe...

“Nancy? What’s going on? Anything I need to know?” Mark’s voice drew her from her circular thoughts.

She glanced around her checking that only Chibs was in listening distance. Deciding that the more information Mark had, the better. She’d rather him be over prepared than get smacked in the face
with what is really going on. “Things are happening here.”

“And what does that mean?”

“It means that we’re too late.”

“Too late for what? Don’t tell me all this work is for nothing.” Mark stressed.

“Otto’s flipped on the club. He’s...past history.”

“Past history...oh my God.” Mark uttered as he figured out what she was talking about. “Are you talking about RICO?”

“Yeah, pretty sure he’s signed a deal.”

“Fuck me. Without a lawyer representing him!” Mark lambasted, she pulled the phone back from her ear. Chibs raising a brow in amusement.

“Sounds like.”

“Shit. Well, that just pisses me off.” Mark spit out. “What the flying fuck is wrong with you people!”

“Hey, don’t blame me. I’m the one that hired you. The club didn’t. Left Otto to his own devices, and he’s pissed. He’s striking out at the club the only way he can.”

She heard Mark growl on his end of the line. “Okay. Let me dig into this. I’ve got the judge in a couple of hours...Let me see what I can find. You know if you hadn’t paid double my retainer I would’ve walked and let you find someone else to fucking fix this clusterfuck.” He griped.

She smirked. "No, you wouldn't. You're too damn curious now. Want to see just how screwed up all this is." She teased.

She heard him groan. "God damn it." Agreeing with her assessment.

"Just get in to see Otto. Get him that care package. Make him listen to you, tell him that I’m not going to let him rot in there all by himself. Anything else you can do about that deal...that’s gravy at this point.”

Mark heaved a heavy sigh. “Okay. Got it.”

“Good. And fucking call or email me when you have something for me. I don’t want to have to keep calling to check up on you like your mother nagging you to clean up your room.”

She hung up on Mark. Handing the phone back to Chibs.

“Okay?”

She nodded. “Mark’s been trying to get in to see Otto. But he’s been turned away by the warden twice. He’s got a meeting with a judge in a couple of hours, if things go well, Mark will have legal access to Otto finally.”

“Jesus.” Chibs shook his head, dropping his voice, “Will things work out? With Jackie on his end of things?”

“Yeah, pretty sure. It just makes Mark’s job harder is all. The goal is to keep Tara from Otto.”
He regarded her a moment, raising her hand to his lips. “You didn’t have to threaten the cops...they’ll report back to Roosevelt.”

“Let them. We can’t do things the same way as they’ve always been done before. Clay allowed the cops to walk all over the club with stuff like this, no more. Changes are happening. No more letting the Sheriff or anyone run roughshod over the club.”

“I just worry. You’ve been through the wringer, nearly collapsed on me again.” He worried at her.

“I know. I’m sorry. I’m feeling better. Thank you.” She leaned into his side, his hand coming down to brush her hair back.

“You going to be okay? Thought I’d help get things caught up here.”

“Yeah, I’m just going to check my trades.”

“Hmm...my Wall Street Tycoon...” He teased, leaning down for a kiss.

Slitting her eyes at his teasing, “Go on...get some work done.” She pushed him off to help the guys.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
I love you = Graim thu
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 123

Chapter Summary

To Be, part 4

Chapter Notes

Tried to make this an uber-long chapter, but couldn't do it. I'm working on it. and it's super late, can't keep my eye's open. Forgive any grammatical errors.

With the cops gone, the guys quickly settled into catching up on the work that had piled up. Chucky was in the office handling the phones. Chibs muttering as he figured out a coolant issue on the Buick that he was hovering over.

While, she settled down checking her trades, thankfully, nothing too out of whack going on in the markets. It annoys her to no end when she’s tied up with club business and can’t keep an eye on what the spoo’s are doing. Afraid that she was missing out on a trading opportunity. But with things heating up with the club...it’s probably for the best that she not get too distracted.

Speaking of distracted, she turned on the camera to her laptop staring and leaning into the camera. Frowning at her image reflected back on the large screen in full, unadulterated, gory detail.

Angling her head around as the light hit the tattoo. The cream had sunk in, her finger touching the tattoo carefully. It unsettled her a little when she touched it. Her eyes telling her brain that’d she should be touching the cool, hard metal, but her fingers translating the usual scarring of the triskele design from when it first appeared.

That was freaky, leaning closer into the tiny camera.

Chibs wandered over to her, coming back from pulling his finished repair job out of his bay. His warm hand coming to the back of her neck, cooling their headaches as he peered into her image on the screen. Turning to face him, he took another scrutinizing look at her triskele.

“It’s beautiful.” He declared.

She shrugged in confusion. “It’s not like I can do anything about it.”

“Aye, I still love it. Love ye’.”

He kissed her again. Wandering off to bring up the next car into the bay.

Taking another picture of her triskele she’d send to Fiona and Maureen. Something else to add to their ever growing list of things to try and find more information about. Knowing that she'll be getting a call from Fiona when she read this email. Sighing in defeat, knowing that Fi would be grilling her for every scrap of information from her. And she wasn't sure how to explain it.
Cuchulain wandered back to her from Tig’s bay, grunting as he circled and laid down next to Sorcha. Sorcha raising her head to warn him about encroaching in on her spot only to flop back down back into her nap.

She tilted her laptop and twisted around to take a photo of the dogs for the Belfast contingent. God, so much has been happening. She wasn’t sure how to approach it all. Pulling up her journal she quickly typed out notes with questions to follow up on later.

Pausing, her fingers hovering over the keys as she mulled what happened with Tig. He’d clearly been affected. Not just with the memories she’d made him see, but his own tattoos that appeared on his hands. His behavior to how she spoke to him.

She frowned in thought, remembering ordering him about. At first, it was just to keep him from doing something stupid like going after LaRoy. But it was...more than that. How he hopped to in getting her laptop for her. He didn’t question her or fight her on the trivial task. A task that a prospect or even she could have done for herself. But Tig just did it, without question. That wasn't like him, not at all.

Sitting back in her chair, she swung around to look at Tig as he searched for a tool out of his messy tool chest. Silently watching him, she could still feel the bond to him. It was just an echo of what it was at the hospital, but it was still there.

He looked up suddenly, looking right at her. “What?” He asked sharply.

She jerked at being caught. “Nothing. Just thinking. Sorry.” She bit at her lip for getting caught.

Tig frowned at her, but turned back to his repair.

Chibs glancing over at her, a brow raised.

She shrugged and twisted back around to her laptop. Making some more notes. Chibs said Tig’s tattoo’s were of celtic dogs, symbols of war and healing. Did they have some deeper meaning? Setting up Tig to help them in some way? For what? When? How?

Frustrated she got up with her laptop, running her free hand at Chibs waist as she passed him, approaching Tig.

“God, what.” He sighed heavily, tightening a bolt, sensing her approach without looking up at her.

“Sorry, I’m putting together an email to Fiona. She and Maureen are doing research on what’s happening to Chibs and I. I want to send them a photo of your new tattoos.”

Tig stared at her for a minute but straightened up and held his hands out so she could snap the picture. “Chibs already said what they were.”

“Yeah, I know. But, why that particular design? I’m just wondering if there’s some deeper meaning to it all.”

“God, you think too much.” Tig griped turning back to the repair, dismissing her. She stared at Tig for his brusque attitude, but maybe he was feeling all weirded out. She couldn't fault him for that. She was weirded out herself.

“It doesn’t hurt to ask Fi or Mo. I’d rather have more information than less.” She defended.

Tig huffed as she went back to her desk, she typed out an email, attaching pictures.
Looking closer at the photo of Tig’s new tattoos, she wondered if they’d affect him as she and Chibs felt affected by their tattoos? Remembering the feel of the tree at her back, growing and planting up and down her entire body. She shivered at the memory.

It was curious how she spoke to Tig earlier, almost...compelling him to follow them back to the garage. Compelling him to bring her her laptop from the bike.

And, as she thought about it, it seemed as if the cops and crime scene guys were just as affected and she hadn’t touched them at all. Sure, she threatened them with Mark, but it wasn’t anything like what she did with Tig. They seemed ... scared of her. Her, not the guys, not Mark who most likely threatened their jobs, just her. Her word and will for them to leave.

Her head was pounding, rubbing at her eyes and temples, her mind whirled with possibilities. And lets not forget about Piney’s appearance, she wryly reminded herself. Sharing what happened to him with her.

She had a headache from just all her unanswered questions. She felt such a deep-seated need to go to the library and dig for information. But, the odds of the library having any information that could answer her questions was highly unlikely. She didn’t like the uncertainty of all this. Is this her new normal? Or was there more coming at her around the corner?

Before it was just reading people. Now she was wielding...no not wielding. Wielding implied control. The power...the energy...it was raw and a creature of its own will. She could barely cling and ride that power. Fear flared up inside her, fear of what would happen if she couldn’t learn to control this power. She felt like a hand grenade that the pin was being pulled.

Chibs returned to her and she eagerly leaned into his side. His body strong and warm. His hands cupping her elbows as she stood up, moving deeper into his arms. Her hands sliding under his t-shirt, her forehead resting against his. Their breath mingling as they swayed silently together.

“Hi.” He said softly.

She smiled as he repeated his first word to her. “Hi, back.” She said, tightening her grip on him. Breathing in his warm, spicy scent. It drifted through her, unlocking some emotional, protective shield she didn’t know she had, relaxing into him.

“I love you.” She said simply. Such small words, yet so powerful in meaning. She’d be completely lost without him.

He kissed her, their bubble complete as the rest of the world slid away.

“You sure you’re okay?” He asked again. The two of them softly gasping for air as they swayed to some internal music that only they could hear.

“Yeah, I guess. Scared...scared and confused. Scared that I don’t know what’s happening to me.”

She pulled back a little so she could look up into his eyes. His hands coming up to brush back her hair.

“That thing with Tig. It’s freaking me out. I’ve never had that happen before.”

“Aye, but ye’ had to stop Tig. Ye’ changed a bit of the future. Saved Tig’s daughter...saved Opie, you grabbing onto Tig.”

She nodded. “I didn’t want to grab him. I didn’t realize I was even going to do it. I was so angry at
him. That I’d been making him think...read JT’s book...he was going to throw all that learning away for some lie that Gemma, Wayne and had Clay concocted on the fly.”

“Jax, too, don’t forget. He was here cleaning up the mess. He’s lying to the club, too.”

She grimaced. “I know. But you know the risk we’re playing with. I can’t fault Jax, not yet at least. Let’s see how he handles taking over, first.”

Chibs huffed, “He better do right for all this shite.”

“I didn’t expect Piney to show up. Not while I was...doing what I was doing to Tig. God, it...I don’t know how to describe it. I felt...other. I wasn’t fully at the hospital. Swear to God, I could’ve sworn I was in some meadow with my tree at my back. Flowing down into the earth and rising far over my head. Tig...Piney...fuck.” She broke off unable to fully verbalize what she did.

“Aye...something happened to ye’. Wasn’t sure if I should try and pull you off Tig or not.”

“I sensed you, soon as you put your hands on me, it reminded me that I was...human?” She sounded out her thoughts. Not sure if she was making any sense. “But the power...energy...it fought me. I was panicking that I’d never fit back inside myself.” Her fear flaring up inside her as she looked into Chibs eyes. Searching his to see if he’d been scared off.

“You never said anything earlier, did you see or hear anything while I’d been dealing with...everything?”

“Hmm, well, your eyes went all purple. But it could’ve been just a trick of the light. And your voice. It went all whispery. But it was powerful. Like nobody should dare question you. Spoke like a Queen.”

She stared up at him as he took a moment to think. He looked back down into her eyes.

“Ye’ sounded like that actress in that movie...Lord of the Rings. Liv Tyler. That’s her name.” Chibs recalled.

“Who? What movie? Lord of the Rings? That’s a book, well, series of books. They made a movie out of them? Ambitious...is it any good?”

He quirked a grin at her. “Aye, they are. We’ll put it on the list.”

“Okay.” She shrugged holding him tight again. “I emailed Fi and Maureen my triskele and told them of Tig’s new tattoos.”

He grunted at the mention of her email to Fiona. “Does it hurt?” He asked, peering at the tattoo once more.

“No, it’s better than before. If I wasn’t cross-eyed before, I’m definitely feeling it now.” She snorted.

Chibs grinned and kissed her. “I like it. It’s unique.”

She gave him a shy smile. “I was worried a little bit. Things are moving so fast and it feels like we hardly can catch a breath, and I keep getting thrown into the deep end of the pool with this esoteric stuff. Just wondered if there was a tipping point where you’d say enough was enough.”

“Hey,” he crooned, “there’s nothin’ you’d do that’d scare me off. You hear me? I love ye’.” Thick
or thin. So get this idiotic idea out of your head that I’m going to cut and run. Ain’t goin’ to happen.” Pulling her into another deep kiss, his head slanting and jaw working as her own followed his lead. Their tongues sliding and dancing against each other.

He backed her into the desk, lifting her up onto it. Leaning hard into her, that her own body twisted and flexed to his demands.

She mewled feeling his readiness and heat for her, revving her up in the process. His hands pulling her shirt from her waistband of her jeans, slipping up her skin. Heat racing inside her as he trailed his hands up her spine and moving to her breast. His lips falling to her neck as she gasped for air, her legs trapping him to her.

She felt humbled and so loved by this man. Tears crept from her lids as the emotions swept through her.

His eyes capturing hers, his hands moving to her cheeks. His thumbs gently wiping the tears from her face. “Convinced yet?” He smiled at her knowingly at her.

She blushed and gave him a mock aggrieved sigh, forcing herself to pull out of her emotional maelstrom. “Hmm, not sure yet. Might need some more convincing, especially when we get home...and alone.” She joked lightly at him. But her hands gripping at him, belied her joke. She loved him, there was no question of that, it wasn’t a joking matter at all.

His dark eyes glittered at her. “Witch.” He complained lightly.

She followed his sliding a look across the lot, catching sight of Tig and Happy. The sound of them clapping and whistling at them registered with an embarrassing flash. “Hope they were taking notes.” He joked, pressing a quick kiss to the curve of her neck.

She ran her hands down his arms soothingly, letting him have a moment to gather himself back together. Glancing down along Chibs body, It was moments like this that she was glad to be a girl. Able to hide her arousal better. “Maybe I should be asking if you’re okay?”

He rolled a dark eye at her. “Oh, I’m perfectly fine.” He declared, despite the lack of such physical evidence.

Tig and Happy were still catcalling and clapping at them, Chibs gave a disgusted growl and shot them a finger. Which didn’t seem to stop Tig and Happy from having their fun.

The dogs woke up from their naps and begged for pets once more. She and Chibs ignored them as they held onto each other a moment longer.

“You know, I had a crazy thought with Tig’s new tattoos and our mind meld.”

“Oh?” He asked breathily into her neck, his lips brushing at her pulse, making her breath hitch.

“Well, it’s just that they’re celtic dogs, and I noticed the way I’ve been speaking towards Tig... Telling him to come back with us here instead of sitting and waiting at St. Thomas for news about Clay. Then asking him to get my laptop from the bike....sort of ordering him about, like what we do with the dogs. I wasn’t doing it consciously or anything. I don’t know, maybe I’m just imagining it.” She said with a sheepish shrug.

Chibs gave a deep breath, standing more upright. As he pulled back, the dogs seized the opportunity, begging for pets and attention. He scratched at their ears while she tucked her shirt back into place. Scooching up off her desk she caught Chibs eyes narrowing in thought.
He ran his hand down his goatee. “Interesting. Tig’ll probably need extensive training though. At least, he’s house trained.” He joked. “Barely.”

Rolling her eyes, his grin widened at her reaction. “What? That’s a terrible thing to say.” She admonished.

He smirked and pulled her into another kiss to the sound of Jax pulling into the lot.

Chapter End Notes

Trader lingo:
Spoo’s = colloquial pronunciation for the SPX. The S&P 500 future.
Chapter 124

Chapter Summary

To Be, part 5

Chapter Notes

Hot off the press, enjoy!

And Happy 4th if I don't post in the next couple of day. Stay safe. No lighting firecrackers and blowing off fingers or anything. I expect all of you to remain in one whole piece....grin

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chibs took her hand, tangling his fingers with hers, giving it a playful waggle. Leading her towards the growing gathering as Jax climbed off his bike, setting his helmet on the handlebar. Tig and Happy joining them as everyone converged. The dogs went round for their quota of pets.

“What’s the news.” Chibs asked.

“Met with Lenny.” Jax reported, glancing up from Cuchulain.

“Shit, really?” Tig asked surprisingly, his head tilting. “Thought he lost visitation?”

Jax shook his head. “I couldn’t get in to see Otto. Been put into protective custody according to the guards.”

That part didn’t surprise her. If Mark couldn’t see Otto, Jax had even less of a chance of getting in to see him.

“Lenny said there’s a lot of talk going around with the guards.” Jax added.

The guys all shot each other a weighted look. Chibs shifted on his feet at the news.

“According to Lenny,” Jax continued. “Otto’s been meeting with some Feds and lawyers. He’s as surprised himself that he’s suddenly got yard time and visitations back.”

“Fuck. Has he talked to Otto?” Tig questioned.

“No. Not sure what’s going on.”

“Shite.” Chibs swore, glancing to her.

“Fuck. He’s made a deal. Only reason for the Feds to be around.” Tig said, shaking his head at the idea.
She breathed through her nose, trying to stay calm.

“Jax! Rat just called.” Chucky interrupted, running out of the office towards them. “Clay’s out of surgery.”

Tig’s head snapped up. “I’m going to go see him.” He announced.

“No. You’re not.” She snapped with a hard glare, cutting Tig’s idea off before he could go running off on his own. “You’re staying here.”

Tig full-bodied jerked at her directive. He stared at her and she frowned at his reaction. Chibs shifted a curious look between her and Tig. Jax shot Tig a questioning look. Happy was silently confused, thankfully.

They were saved when Jax’s phone rang. Everyone shifting their attention to Jax as he pulled his phone out.

“It’s Romeo.” Jax announced, identifying the caller id. Flipping the phone open he turned his back to the group of them.

Jax’s voice lowering as he questioned Romeo. Jax gave a nod and turned back to them. “Yeah, okay.” He said ending the call.

At their questioning looks. “We’re a go.” He reported. Turning to Happy, “Happ, you and Tig, head up to warehouse pull one of each big gun for the meet.” Happy nodded like a good soldier. “Thanks.”

“Track down Lowen.” Jax turned to Chibs next. “Have her start making calls. Getting worried about Juice and Bobby.”

She stifled her sour look at the mention of Bobby and Juan. She knew Jax knew where they were. Yet she knew he had to make a show of it for Tig and Happy. Freaking waste of time.

“Aye. we’ll find ’em.” Chibs agreed, his face closed. He, too, knew it was a fool’s errand, yet pulling his cell out.

Happy starts moving to his bike to do Jax’s bidding. Tig, however, paused, with a bewildered look on his face.

“What’s with you?” Jax asked, realizing that Tig wasn’t hopping to on his order like Happy did.

Tig looked at Jax and then to her. The confusion on his face clear.

“Shite.” Chibs swore lowly. “Try telling him to go with Happy.” He instructed into her ear.

She looked up at him sharply. The grim look on his face had her looking back at Tig. Seeing his hesitation, she felt a hollow whoosh-ing sound that left her lightheaded. Gripping Chibs hand tighter, she started realizing what she’d done. What her words were doing to him. The bond between her and Tig yanked at her.

Happy was already on his bike ready to go. Waiting for Tig, raising his hands questioningly at what the hold up was.

“Tig, go with Happy. Help him load up the van for the meet.” She said hollowly, fighting the panic that was rising up inside her.
Jax’s head swiveled between her and Chibs to Tig. “What…” He said confusedly. Dropping the rest of his question when Tig gave her a quick look then turned, striding off to his bike, joining Happy without further question. Shock spread across Jax’s face as the three of them fell silent, watching Tig.

Her heart hammering as she watched Tig and Happy ride off of the lot. And, she felt him riding away from her, the bond inside her tracking him. Fuck.

“That was weird.” Jax said bewildered.

“Fucking hell.” Chibs groaned.

Chibs reaction gave her the cue that she could let loose on her fear. “Shit! I didn’t know! I swear, I didn’t know!” She burst out as the ramifications clicked into place.

Breaking away from Chibs. His hand she’d been holding, still reaching out for her as she paced back and forth. Staring off at the now empty spot where Tig and Happy turned off the lot, as if it would hold some answer or clue.

“Know what?” Jax looked at her.

“His tattoos. The celtic dogs. Appearing after he’d been mind-melded with her at the hospital.” Chibs looked at her carefully as he was putting the pieces together himself. “I think she broke his loyalty from Clay. From the club, too, maybe.” He speculated to Jax.

“Wait… You’re saying Tig will only do what she says now?” Jax asked, his eyebrows sky high.

“You weren’t there, you only saw the after.” Chibs reminded him. “And you weren’t here when the cops were here. Fuck.”

“I didn’t know!” She repeated wildly. “This is bad.” She moaned.

“What cops?”

“Fuck me.” Chibs swore. “We got here and the crime scene guys were gathering their ‘evidence’ for Clay’s shooting. Couple of sheriff’s babysitting them.”

“Okaayyy…” Jax drawled, uncertain where this was going.

Chibs glanced at her as she paced. She waved at him to keep going. Too busy thinking. Or rather trying not think. Trying not to feel Tig as he rode further away from her. And the scary feeling that she didn’t like it. Didn’t like that he was so far from her.

Jax took a step back from her, looking warily to Chibs. As if he didn’t want to deal with the crazy person. Leaving Chibs to step into the breach. Annoyed now at Jax’s reaction. Chibs rolling his eyes at the two of them, stepping between her and Jax.

“We pulled in and she was going into shock with whatever it was she did with Tig…and Piney. Fuck. While we were helping her, the fucking cops were staring at us. Dog was practically constipated because they’d taken over his bay. I sent Tig to find out how long they’d been there and when they’d be done.” He shot her another assessing look. “I told her to leave it. That they’d get bored and leave eventually.” He shrugged. Jax carefully blank. As if he wasn’t getting what was going on.

“They were here when Dog showed up to work. Seven in the morning!” Jax blinked at her. “Over
three hours to stare at a pool of blood. Fucking idiots.” She huffed, getting mad all over again. Running her hands through her hair, her headache building wasn’t helping things.

She went back to pacing. Jax’s eyes going between her and Chibs.

“Nancy, she...uh...” Chibs stammered and searched for what to say.

“What?” Jax started glowering at her. Like everything was her fault. God.

“Basically, she kicked them out. Told them they had five minutes... Called her lawyer, they pretty much ran from her.” Chibs shrugged again.

Jax’s brows raised up astonishingly.

“I let Mark do his job.” She waved at them, as she turned back on her pacing pathway.

“Mark?” Jax asked, shifting a look from her to Chibs.

“The lawyer I hired for Otto.” She expanded. “I needed to talk to him anyway. Having him light a fire under their asses was just a bonus.”

Jax rocked back with her news.

Frowning at him, “I knew you’d be back, we have a lot of club business to do. Can’t exactly do it with the cops hanging around.” She defended herself.

Jax stepped forward, about to speak but she didn’t let him say whatever thought he had. She was too worked up now.

“And I’m fucking tired of this ‘letting the cops do what they want’. Running all roughshod with the club. Time for that is over. I won’t...” She shook her head, annoyed having to explain herself.

“Hold on... You hired a lawyer for Otto?” Jax waved his hands at her, to backtrack what she’d said.

She screamed in frustration, gripping at her hair.

"M ‘anam..." Chibs stepped towards her to grab her or comfort her.

But she wasn’t ready to be calmed or comforted. And she didn't think she deserved it. Everyone should be mad at her. "No. Don't." Swaying out of his reach, going back to her pacing.

Chibs huffed and turned back to Jax as she resumed her pacing. The dogs were simply watching the three of them. God, how simple it must be, being a dog. Eat, sleep, play...how difficult was that? Why did her and every person’s life have to be so freaking complicated.

“Jackie, the point is...fuck....whatever is going on with her...it’s now affecting Tig. You saw him just now. You told him to go with Happ, yet he’s conflicted. Only when she told him to go, he goes without question.”

“He wanted to stay at St. Thomas when we were coming back here, I told him to come with us. I didn't even think about it. Then I asked him to grab my laptop from the bike. He...he just did it.” She waved her arm around. “Didn’t complain or fuss over the request, he just did it. This is so bad. Epic-level bad.” She lamented.

“Jesus.” Jax breathed.
“Aye.” Chibs nodded. "When Chucky said Clay made it through the surgery, Tig wanted to go to Clay’s side.” He waved a hand at her direction.

“Shit. You told him no. That he was staying here.” Jax put together.

“And whatever it was that I did to Tig at the hospital...I almost killed him! And now, he’s…he’s….” She waved her hand off towards where Happy and Tig rode off.

“It was intense. You heard what he’d felt and saw from her touch. Whatever it was that happened, must’ve made a connection between Tig and her.” She snorted humorously, God, if they only knew. "The tattoos changing and showing up on Tig’s hands. We were just talking about it before you rolled in. But we were just joking about it.” Chibs shrugged.

Jax and Chibs watched her have her meltdown.

“Dear God, what if its permanent? He has to have some free will. He has his own soul, I felt it...hell...I touched it. I can’t tell him what to do all the time. It’s crazy.” She said to herself. Her voice rising hysterically.

“I only advise, give you guys insight.” She looked at Jax and Chibs. “What you do with the information is up to you. Life’s lessons. Shit. I don’t know what to think.” She stopped abruptly.

Jax and Chibs staring at her with worried expressions.

“I need a drink.” She decided. Striding purposefully into the clubhouse, passing Jax and Chibs without a glance. Her eyes fixed on the door into the clubhouse and where all the booze was.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
My soul = m ‘anam
Chapter 125

Chapter Summary

To be, part 6

Chapter Notes

Thank you for your patience, I'm on the job hunt and it's taking longer than I thought it's taking.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He and Jax watched Nancy sweep into the clubhouse, the dogs scrambling inside after her.

“What the fuck are you doing?” He swore.

“Wow. Glad I’m not you.” Jax snarked with an amused look.

“Oh, fuck you.” He snapped back, giving Jax a look he so deserved. Fucker.

Jax’s smirk just grew as he pulled out a cigarette, following him as he made after Nancy.

“I don’t care, get the hell out of my way. I can pour my own drinks, thank you very much.” He heard Nancy snap sarcastically, as he came around the corner of the entrance hall.

Catching sight of her shooing Darrell, a prospect hang around, out from behind the bar. Darrell staring wide-eyed at her, twisting the bar towel in his nervous hands.

She’d grabbed up the Johnnie Walker Blue off the top shelf and was filling a shot glass. Taking a bracing breath, she swallowed the liquor in one go. The bite of the whiskey made her wince and breath out noisily, her tongue sticking out. Her reaction was funny, but the stark look in her eyes...fuck.

He felt Jax at his side as they watched her refill the glass with single-minded determination.

Darrell shot them a nervous look, worried they’d never let him prospect finding that he wasn’t doing his job.

“Take a break.” He tilted his head to the door sharply, indicating for the guy to leave.

Idiot didn’t need to be told twice as he stumbled around them and out the door. Jax snickering, watching the kid nearly tripped and fell on his face. Jesus Christ.

Nancy was on her third shot and she only had peanut butter so far today. Fuck. He needed to find a way to slow her down, before she passed out.

“You gonna share, mo leanab?” He asked with a deceptively amused voice, sitting down at the
bar. Jax eagerly grabbing the chair next to him, not one to miss out on whatever drama that was brewing. Fucking kid.

She gave him an angry look. But pulled out a couple more glasses and poured a couple of fingers for them. Pouring her fourth.

Jax slammed his shot back swiftly.


Jax rolling his eyes for insulting how he drank his liquor.

Nancy refilled their glasses without a word. Still not ready to calm down just yet, he noted. Breathing impatiently, his headache was driving a spike behind his left eye.

Jax mockingly took a sip of his whiskey. Nancy, ignored the two of them, threw back her own shot.

“If anyone can control Tig, I’d rather it be you.” Jax said setting down his glass.

Nancy slammed her shot glass down with a sharp snap, glaring at Jax.

Fuck, he, too, glaring at Jax. He didn’t want his girl to be saddled with Tig. God help him. They barely made it back from Naperville. The idea of having Tig underfoot for however long is not something he wants in their lives.

He shuddered, imagining Tig bunking over, showing up whenever he wanted. Taking over whatever they had planned for the day. It would be something Tig’d do. Fucker. He took another sip of his whiskey. Silently letting Nancy find her way through this latest foible. Or, at least, wait til she was ready for his help.

“You don’t get it.” She exploded with a huff. “It’s more than that. I can feel where he is.” She waved off in the direction Tig was travelling, most of the whiskey in her glass went flying as her hand waved around.

She drew the nearly empty glass in front of her, staring down into it with a confused look. As if she didn’t know how the glass became empty.

He tried to take her hand, when she set the glass down on top of the bar. But her hands shifted just out of his reach as she grabbed the bottle and refilled her glass.

“I knew,” she said darkly, “a part of me knew that I could kill Tig...with a thought. If I wanted to! I felt his soul. Touched it. The idea...it scares the shit out of me. Piney was still hooked up with me, waiting for me to decide...to make a choice...if I was going to let Tig live or not.”

She drank the shot. “Felt his pride that I made the right decision. That I wasn’t...morally corrupt or something.” She gave a hysterical laugh as she poured another shot of the whiskey.

“Hey, ease down on the whiskey.” He tried to warn, but she just shot him an angry look and kept talking. Okay, he sighed.

“And as I let go of his soul, I thought if I could destroy it, I could heal it, too. I don’t know. It happened so fast.” She covered her eyes with one hand as she thought out what was going on.

“And now,” She dropped her hand, staring at them blindly, “Tig’s waiting for my orders to do his
job. I think if I think about it hard enough, that Tig would stop what he was doing and pick a… a bouquet of wildflowers if I desired it. No matter what he was in the middle of.”

He and Jax shared another look as they pondered that. Yeah, that’d freak anyone out.

“I didn’t get it...I didn’t know what I did…” She shook her head, taking a step back. Her full shot clutched in front of her. “But Tig said it.” She said softly, talking to herself. And he hated the abject sorrow in her eyes. “God.” She downed her shot.

His heart clenched at the sight and sound of his girl.

“I’m really trying to not think about Tig.” Her voice pleaded. “He’s my friend. He helped save me from Naperville. He doesn’t deserve to be a...a...a sycophant to my whims. I don’t want that. Jesus, when you and Happy dragged him into that chair, he wanted to get to his knees soon as I looked at him. Felt him fighting the compulsion.”

“M ‘anam, it’s probably just temporary. Relax, okay? We’ll keep an eye on him.” He eyed Jax to agree with him. Jax quickly nodding his head to the plan. “Keep him with Happy and Ope for a while, maybe your...bond...or hold on him will weaken. We don’t know, but let’s not jump to conclusions, aye?”

“But...that’s.... What happens if I start infecting the rest of the guys. Happy, Bobby, Juan, Opie, you?” She pointed to Jax, stepping back to the bar, refilling her glass. “Are all of you going to wait on me hand and foot? Suddenly, this...this,” she waved her hand out over the clubhouse, “this won’t be an outlaw bike club anymore...it’ll become a...a book club.” She breathed harshly.

Jax barked a laugh, absolutely surprised at her ludicrous idea while Nancy glowered at him. “Gemma’s head would explode if that ever happened.” He smirked.

“Dear God.” He begged for patience.

Shaking her head, she bit at her lip. “It’s not right. I’ve already dragged Chibs into this. And, dammit, we still have the headaches.” She slammed the glass down.

“Oy!” Grabbing her hand before she could refill her glass again. Fighting the physical reaction to his pain dropping, he had a point and he was going to make it.

“...you don’t drag me into nothing I don’t want to be dragged to. You’ve hit a new power level. You held it together. The fact you’re so upset about it tells me that you won’t abuse it.” He leveled at her.

Jax shifting to watch him talk Nancy down off the cliff.

“I think that’s what Piney was telling you.” He ventured. “You’ve always known the responsibility of what you do. It’s a heavy weight, heavier than Jax with the gavel, by far. But I know that you can handle it. And I’ll help you. I’m your anchor and I love you. I’ve loved you since I started dreaming of you. So, don’t be thinking its your power that is forcing me to feel what I feel or do what I do. Even without the headaches and the dreams, I would have loved ye’. You’re a survivor and ye’ fight for what is right. I’m proud of ye’.”

He held her hand tight to make sure she heard him. And to try to keep her from taking another shot of whiskey. He could see the effect of the alcohol starting to hit her system as she swayed a little, leaning on the bar. Her skin flushed and warm to his touch, as her face remained pensive thinking deep thoughts.
“Chibs is right.” Jax added, giving his support. “If this is a new power level, then I’m glad you are who you are. I don’t know anyone else who could handle what you are going through and stay sane. Tig’s stubborn, he’ll be fine. I know you’d never hurt him. Not without reason, of course.”

“I might.” He warned, his eyes narrowing. Jax just grinned at him. Enjoying the idea of Tig crash landing into his and Nancy’s private life just for the fucking fun of it. Fucker, he mentally swore at Jax again.

Jax shook his head with a grin. “I still like the idea of a leash on him. The shit he gets into.” He drolled.

She rolled her eyes at them. “I don’t want this. I’m only nineteen years old, advising grown men, outlaws in how to live their lives. How did this become my life? Honestly, I’m winging things here. Now this? And you were saying that even the cops were affected. God. I don’t know what to think. Maybe unicorns do exist.” She huffed, twisting her hand in his so that their fingers tangled together. Part of him eased down at that small gesture.

“Well, if they do. You’ll have fun riding one of them and we’ll all be here to witness it.” Jax grinned, stubbing out his cigarette.

Nancy rolled her eyes, clearly not amused by Jax’s humor. But, she was calming down, at least.

“Now, want to tell me what you’ve been cooking up with this lawyer for Otto? Might’ve been good to know before I hauled all the way to Stockton.” Jax asked, pivoting the conversation off of the metaphysics.

He groaned as Nancy pulled back from him, glaring at Jax. Fighting the urge to slap Jax upside the head.

“No.” Nancy said shortly.

Jax raised his brows at her for refusal.

“M ‘anam...” He eyed her, the cat was already out of the bag.

She shook her head angrily, pouring herself another shot. Picking up her glass, she looked at Jax. “Fine.” She bit out. “I found a lawyer to represent Otto. Consider yourself informed.”

She drank a sip of the liquor.

He rolled his eyes at her snarking answer. Jax glancing at him and back to Nancy. “You...? Why not tell me? Who is this guy? Why not use Lowen or Rosen, they have the most information on Otto’s case...”

Nancy gave Jax an amused grin as Jax stuttered his questions. Jax blinking at her like she just spoken in Swahili. “You’re so pretty.” She mocked.

Jax glared at her. “God, I hate when you do that. Just fucking tell me.”

“There’s nothing to tell you yet.” She shrugged. “Mark’s meeting with a judge to get a court-order for him to be Otto’s lawyer and to finally get a face-to-face. Until that happens, there isn’t much to report.”

Jax thunked his hand down on the bar, turning to look at him. “Did you know about this?”
He sighed and glanced to Nancy, who unhelpfully shrugged at him. “Aye. I met him. He’s fucking good Jackie.”

Jax stared at him a bit. “And why didn’t you tell me about this?” Jax asked, starting to direct his ire at him for keeping secrets.

Nancy slapped her glass down on the bar, grabbing the bottle. The noise had Jax shifting his look to her, taking him off the hot seat to Jax’s accusation.

“Jax...you’ve been busy. And this isn’t something you could have helped with. Bringing Mark on for Otto is a way of keeping Tara away from this. Remember that?” She chided Jax.

Jax rubbed a hand over his beard. Giving Nancy an annoyed look. He knew how much Jackie hated being handled. Normally, he’d agree with Jax on that point. But given all the shite going on behind the scenes, he agreed with Nancy.

“I remember. But why not use Rosen or Lowen?”

“Because they can’t.” Jax started to question her, but she cut him off, pouring them another round of shots. “One, they can’t afford to take on a case like Otto’s. They don’t have the funds or the manpower. And the club certainly can’t afford it. Two, due to their association with the club, they’ve lost any political capital they had with the DA’s office. They don’t have any more bargaining chips anymore. Three, they themselves gave up on Otto when he got charged with his latest charges. There wasn’t even a defense. They, the club, Otto, all of you gave up on him.”

She set the bottle down, glaring hard at Jax, keeping him from interrupting her.

“I know it wasn’t your fault, much of what happened to Otto is due to Clay’s greed and carelessness. Instead, Clay abused Otto with this stupid Georgie-Hale investor land scheme. Bobby lying to him. It's left Otto open for the AUSA to spin the truth to his favor. Mark, by the way, is pissed off beyond belief with what’s happened to Otto. He’s invested.”

She took a sip of the whiskey. “So...since everyone has pretty much given up on Otto, it was necessary to find a lawyer that will represent Otto. Not the club. Not become a message boy between the club and Otto. A person who will fight for Otto and his interests first and foremost.”

He looked to Jax, checking to see how the kid was taking what Nancy was saying.

“Clay’s no longer president.” Nancy continued. “Are you going to keep up with the status quo? Because, I know, you hate the status quo. It’s why you want out. Why Tara wants out.”

She gave a sigh and frowned slightly. “I had hoped that Mark could get to Otto earlier, before things are where they are, but he was turned away just as you were today. While you don’t have relationships with judges, Mark does. Let Mark do his job. While we deal with everything else. Should I have told you what I was doing? Maybe. But would it have made a difference if you’d known? No. I doubt it. So don’t try and lay blame on Chibs for not telling you. He knew, but he knew that you didn’t have to know. You have more pressing issues going on than dealing with Otto.”

Jax glanced towards him, he saw his brain trying to pick apart Nancy’s reasoning. But he could see Jax’s exhaustion.

“Fuck. Will it work?” Jax asked.

“I don’t know. I hope so.”
“Okay. I get it.” Jax threw the shot back.

Nancy waggled the bottle at them, asking if they wanted refills.

He shook his head to the offer.

Jax threw his shot back, gathering his cigarettes and lighter. “No, I have to go through Clay’s notes for the meeting.” He said standing up from the stool.

“Jax,” Nancy’s warning voice halted Jax before he could escape. “If Mark manages a miracle, I expect every member of this club to visit Otto. I expect every member to apologize and thank him for his service to this club. I expect you to enforce it. Clay will need a babysitter to make sure he actually does it and doesn’t try and spin the truth. But I expect you to order everyone to look Otto in the eye and thank him. Otto has done enough for this club. This club owes him a debt of honor. He’s done. No more tasking him. Let him live what life he has left.”

Nancy stared Jax down, waiting for Jax to step up and assume responsibility for the demand. Jesus. A shiver went down his spine at the steel in his girl's eyes. He was so fucking proud of her. Fuck.

“Just let me know when.” Jax intelligently said.

Nancy nodded, releasing Jax so he could get to his studying.

Jax turned and went into chapel as Nancy swallowed the last of her whiskey. Taking the opportunity, he snagged the bottle and screwed the top back on. Nancy sighed mournfully at the sight of the bottle being taken away from her.

It made him grin as he got up and joined her behind the bar, setting the bottle back up on the shelf. “No more for ye’. Surprised you’re still standing.” He joked, giving her a peck on the lips.

“Can’t be drunk if I’m still standing.” She returned woozily.

He huffed. “Well, you’re not really standing, more like...leaning.” He corrected with an amused tilt of his head, studying her.

She looked down at herself, shrugging when she realized he was right.

Gods she was cute. Even drunk, she manages to fight, argue, win, and all with self-deprecating humor. “How’re you feeling?” He set his hands around her arms, helping hold her upright.

“Tired. Tired of thinking.”

“Still feeling Tig?”

“A little, but the alcohol is helping, I think. I don’t know.”

“Come on, let’s get you settled over on the couch. Let Darrell back to do his job, aye?”

She frowned hazily up at him. “You’re managing me.”

“Aye, I am.” He agreed, walking her out from behind the bar. The dogs perked up and followed them.

Watching her decide if she was going to try and argue with him or not, he nodded to Darrell back to work as the kid came back inside tentatively.
“Okay.” Nancy gave up and let him set her down on the leather couch. She flopped back, he swung her feet up so that she laid down. Her hands refused to let him go, so he ended up laid down alongside her. “Stay with me.” She sighed, her eyelids at half-mast already.

“I’m not going anywhere. Go to sleep.”

He curled his arms around her, her face tucked into his chest.

“Sorry about Tig.” She breathed with a soft whisper. “I love you.”

“I know. Love ye’ too.”

He didn’t think he’d fall asleep himself, but after checking his watch, he saw an hour had gone by. His stomach waking him. Glancing down, Nancy was still out. Her breath warm and steady.

Sorcha managed to squeeze herself at the far end of the sofa, her front paws and head resting on top of their booted feet. Cuchulain had sprawled down on the floor in front of the sofa.

Carefully sitting up so he didn’t wake Nancy, disturb Sorcha and not step on Cuchulain, he got up.

Chucky was sitting at the bar chatting up Darrell, who was wiping down the bar. A glance at chapel the doors were still shut.

He made a run to the bathroom and then went into the kitchen to assess their food options. Fuck, it was just as Happy said.

“Oy, you two, go to the shop, pick up some groceries.” He peeled off a hundred dollars, handing the money to Darrell.

“Sure thing.” Chucky saluted as he and Darrell quickly left the clubhouse.

His attention moved back to Nancy. She was stirring awake, rubbing at her eyes. She smiled over at him as she caught sight of him.

He crossed back to her, sitting down, pulling her into his arms.

“Hi.” He said, brushing a bit of her hair from her face.

She grinned up at him. “Hi back.”

He loved the feeling inside him when they had their moments like this together. “How’re you feeling?”

She grimaced. “I shouldn’t have had all that whiskey.” She admitted.

He chuckled as she pouted at him. He pecked a kiss on those pouty lips of hers. Resting his forehead to hers. “Might help if you ate something. You hungry?”

She shook her head. “I’m just tired. Want to sleep for the next century or so.” She slid down, resting her head on his thigh.

“Hmm. How ‘bout I order a pizza, you can sleep until it shows up?” He countered.

She heaved a sigh. “Fair.”
He didn’t give her a chance to back out of it, pulling his phone out. Hitting the speed dial to Johnny’s, placing the order with the works. Nancy was conked out when he finished ordering. He stroked her hair, watching the light play with the red in her hair.

About thirty minutes later, the pizza arrived. The kid watched as he untangled himself from the sofa. Pulling his wallet out, handing over a twenty. “Thanks kid.” Taking the piping hot pizza. The bottom of the cardboard box moist from the heat. Perfect he thought as the smell hit him.

The dogs perked up, their noses quivering when they scented the deliciousness.

Setting the pizza down on the table, he went back to Nancy. Stroking her cheek, giving her a little bit of a jostle. “M ‘anam. Come on. Wake up. Pizza’s here.”

Nancy stirred with a groan, stretching with a wide yawn. Giving her room, he got up and grabbed plates and sodas.

He stifled a laugh as Nancy stumbled off the sofa, nearly tripping over Cuchulain.


“Hurry up.” He prompted, as she strode down the hallway to the bathroom.

Cuchulain and Sorcha crowded around the table, sniffing at the pizza. “Oy, not for you two. Come on, over here.” He herded the dogs into the kitchen where he scooped out their food and topped off their water.

“Chibs?”

Drying his hands he came out of the kitchen. “What’s up?” He asked Lowell.

“I’m done for the day, Nancy left this out on her desk. Thought I should bring it in before something happened to it.” Lowell handed him Nancy’s laptop.

“Ta. Everything caught up out there?”

“Yeah. Dog’s on til close. I gotta go pick up my kid.”

“Right, see you later.”

Lowell jogged out. He set the laptop down and opened up the pizza. God in heaven, nothing like a fresh, hot pizza.

Sliding a couple of slices onto a plate for Nancy and himself, he folded the pizza box back down to keep it warm.

“M ‘anam!” He called out.

“I’m here. I’m here.” She threw herself down in the chair next to him. “Thank you.” She said, leaning over to give him a kiss on his cheek.

“Just dig in, darlin’.” He covered his anxiousness by pouring out the sodas into a couple of glasses. He still found it hard to start to eat first. He needed to wait for her. A vague thought that maybe it was an effect of her powers. But if it was, nothing he could do about it. Setting the glass down, he watched Nancy take a bite of the pizza. The cheese stretching that she had to use her free hand to break it apart, jaw chewing.
Giving her poached out cheek a peck, he picked up his own slice.

“Man, I needed this.” Nancy groaned blissfully.

He couldn’t help but feel proud. He took care of his woman. The sound of her voice had his cock hardening, expecting a different activity than simply eating pizza. Shifting in his chair to ease the sudden pressure, their feet tangling.

“How long til the meeting?” She asked.

Checking his watch, “We got time.”

They tucked into their food, he grabbing up seconds as Nancy worked on her first slice. The dogs had wolfed their food down and were now anxiously sitting next to them. Their eyes trained on their pizza, heads turning as they ate. Their bodies tense, tails waving distractedly as their whole attention was waiting for a prime opportunity to snatch up any scraps.

He shared an amused with Nancy as they watched the dogs.

Their attention shifted as the door to the clubhouse opened and shut, the sunlight blaring a few seconds. The sound of heels on the floor.

“God. Here we go.” Nancy muttered, as she hunched down a little, as Gemma marched into the clubhouse.

“Oy, Gemma. Clay survived the surgery.” He informed Gemma helpfully. "Still have a chance to make peace with your old man."

Gemma gave him a snort and a dark look as she went right into chapel. Nary a break in her stride.

Nancy shot him a knowing look.

“Should we call Tara? Check on her?” He asked.

Nancy shook her head. “Tara’s fine. You’ll see. I’m more worried about Jax.” Her eyes watching the door to church.

He checked his watch, as they waited for some clue what was going on between Jax and Gemma. “This is killing me.” He groaned, tossing his napkin onto his plate. Nancy slid her hand to his thigh in comfort while they waited in the tense silence.

He jerked as the door opened and Gemma came striding out. A satisfied look on her face, as if she’d won a fucking war. “Fuck.” He swore softly.

He didn’t need to be told, they both knew they needed to make sure Jax was in one piece.

“Get a soda for Jax, would you? I’ll set up a plate for Jax.” She said, he was already up and moving, grabbing a soda from behind the bar. Darrell moving out of his way. Nancy had gotten a clean plate from the kitchen and was sliding some of their pizza onto it.

His free hand going to her lower back, her hands full with the plate and napkins. They walked into church.

Jax looking up at them with the colorful letters in front of him, his eyes pained.
Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
My baby = mo leanabh
God fucking damn it. = Tha Dia a ‘guidhe dha.
Chapter 126

Chapter Summary

To Be, part 7

Chapter Notes

Just a short update.

He rubbed at his eyes trying to read Clay’s chicken scratch scrawl. Papers were strewn before him as he tried to make sense of it all. Nothing was in any kind of order, making his head hurt as he tried to organize it all.

Success of getting the Irish and the cartel to make their deal this afternoon was just barely within his grasp. Just needed to wait and seal the deal in the next couple of hours. After this, he, Tara and the boys were leaving. Away from the chaos of the club, of the town politics, the cops. Just fucking start over.

At least he hoped so. He knew Nancy kept telling him that it wasn’t going to happen. But he’d always managed to enact his plans before, why not now?

Gemma walked in without a knock, interrupting him and his work, as usual. That was something he wasn’t going to miss, his mother just barging into his home or conversation he was in the middle of. Didn’t matter what he was doing, she expected him to drop everything and engage her in conversation. Tell her every detail of what’s going on. Tara was getting tired of it as well, long before he was. He didn’t know how she managed when he was in Stockton for fourteen months.

“Been looking for you. Shut the door.” He ordered before she could start. His stomach growled as he smelled the pizza from the main room.

A small part of him enjoyed the power he had over his mother. Now that he was unofficially running the club, even his mother had to subjugate herself to him. He was pissed. He promised Opie to find truth. The fact that his mother had information about it and didn’t bother to tell him before shit went down pissed him off.

“What happened to Piney?” He snapped.

“Clay killed him.” His mother said matter-of-factly.

He blinked, didn’t think she’d admit to the truth so quickly. “Look I know Clay were beefing over the cartel shit…”

Gemma shook her head, cutting him off. “Wasn’t over the cartel. It was over these.”

He froze at the sight of the accordion folder as she slid it across the table. His heart pounding at the sight. Afraid to say or do something that would give him away. That he knew about the letters.
He’d read them already. His mother eyeing him carefully as he opened the folder, the colorful letters inside. The familiar cursive handwriting of John’s, he had to bite back his amused huff. The comparison of Clay’s illegible handwriting to John’s was clear as day. He quickly squashed his humor and focussed in on what he needed to do.

“Maureen Ashby put them in your bag before you left Belfast. They’re letters from your father. Tara found them before you did.”

“Tara had these? Why didn’t she tell me?” He managed to convey a soft shock at what Gemma was telling him. Waiting, hoping that his mother would tell him the truth. Trying to ignore the sound of Nancy’s voice in the back of his mind, reminding him that his mother was a liar.

“She knew they would break your heart. Same way they did mine. When Thomas got sick. Your dad stopped going to Belfast. Started writing to Maureen.” His heart clenched at the mention of his brother.

“What does this have to do with Clay?” Getting angry that Gemma was resurrecting Thomas.

“JT and Kellen decided to get MC out of guns. Away from the IRA. Clay thought it was a mistake. He was afraid John would destroy the club. So, he decided to kill him. First time he...sent John into Mayan ambush...unprotected. Your dad made it out. But he knew it was Clay who set it up. And he knew Clay would try again. He predicted it would be mechanical. He was right.” Horrified listening to his mother, bringing up painful memories yet sounding so matter-of-fact about it all. Expecting her to react like he had when he first read the letters. But she was calm, too calm, too reasonable.

“The accident?”

“The only person JT ever let work on his bike was Lowell Sr. Clay must’ve paid him off or threatened him. He had to be the one who sabotaged the panhead.” She said, her voice growing excited with her theory.

He swallowed, digesting Gemma’s theory. “Lowell Sr was killed by the Mayans a week later.”

“Yeah. Clay buried the secret.” Gemma said darkly...knowingly. Goosebumps raised up along his spine to the back of his neck.

“How do you know all this?”


“Piney got hold of these.” He concluded for her.

“He must’ve threatened Clay.”

“Oh my God.” He breathed.

“That’s not all.” His mother braced.

He tensed up, waiting for her to drop the other shoe.

“I found the cover letter Maureen wrote. Telling you to read them. It was in your house. I knew
Tara was the one who found them. I panicked. I told Clay.” She admitted. Admitted this small truth, compared to what Nancy had told him, it was a drop in the bucket. God dammit.

“Clay knew that Tara had these?” He twisted his anger to keep questioning her, trying to keep his cool and not lose his head in anger.

“He tried to kill Tara. That thing that happened in the park. That wasn’t the cartel. That was guys Clay hired to kill your wife Jax.”

“How’d you get them?” He bit out, his jaw clenching.

“Tara gave them to me. Don’t be upset with her. She didn’t want you to read them. She didn’t know what you might do.”

“Why’re you telling me this Mom? Why now?” God, please.

“Because I know how dangerous secrets can be. And its time we all knew the truth. Clay Morrow killed your father. Stole that seat away from this family. Gunned down your father’s best friend. He tried to kill your wife. He’s a murderous traitor. And there’s only one thing to do now Jackson. For your father, your family, and your club. It’s in you. It’s who you are. Clay has to die.”

Is this what she did with Clay when it was JT’s turn to die? The question threw him off balance as his mother twisted the knife.

His mother stood up and eased around the table to where he sat. His heart pounding as he watched his mother stare down at him, like a panther that stalks ever closer to her prey. Watching his every move, anticipating when the time is right to attack.

“Read them. See them in your father’s own hand. And then you kill him Jax. You kill Clay before he’s on his feet and strikes first. And when its done. You take your place at the head of this table. Where a Teller belongs. Where you belong.” And he went utterly cold at her order. That was it. She...his mother...just ordered him to kill...to murder her husband.

And he realized that his power over her when she walked in had shifted. She ordered him, ordered him as if she were president and he, her subject. And he knew, that if he hadn’t found these letters before, he would do it. Do what his mother ordered. It was club law.

She leaned down into him, her eyes unblinking, watching him, gauging if she’d pushed him enough to do her bidding. All he could do was stare back at her. Another long moment and his mother turns and walks out.

Drawing in a ragged breath he looked down at the letters. The letters that everyone was killing each other over.

Maybe...there had to be something here. Something that would exonerate Gemma. He quickly started counting the letters. Reaching the last in the stack, he started counting once more. Not wanting to believe it.

Three were missing. Just as Nancy had foretold. Even the accident report was gone.

Shocked by the revelation his mother placed on his shoulders, he started reading the letters again. Sick at how history was twisted for all these years. His father trying to do right by the club, killed over it. Because of money and jealousy. Recalling the sharp, biting tone when Gemma said Maureen’s name. Even now, decades later, she was still jealous.
He looked up as the door opened.

Nancy regarded him, gave him a small rueful grin. “Well, I see Lady Macbeth did a number on you.”

Chibs jerked, looking at Nancy for her sarcastic observation.

It was all too much. He burst out with a hysterical laugh, making the connection of Lady Macbeth to his mother. Jesus Christ.
Chapter 127

Chapter Summary

To Be, Act 1 part 8

Chapter Notes

Okay, sooo, this was originally only 3 pages long. And now...12. It was 10 yesterday. Not sure exactly how that happened, but hey, good for you guys!

Work has been super crazy, so writing and posting has slowed down. I'm plugging away at this every day. Some days I can get more done, others only a couple sentences. But know that I won't suddenly stop writing altogether. It's a pet peeve of mine leaving stuff unfinished.

Enjoy, and let me know how you like it or not in the comments or hit that kudo if you haven't already.

And it feels like the weekend already for me, so... have a good weekend! lol.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Jesus Christ.” He slapped a hand to his forehead. Gemma as Lady Macbeth. Fuck, his brain whiplashed at Nancy’s observation.

“Didn’t she kill herself?” Jax questioned. His eyes crinkling, tilting his head, jaw dropping despite himself.

Nancy, in typical teenage fashion, rolled her eyes as she went to Jax’s side of the table. Pushing papers and letters to the side making space for the plate of pizza. Taking her cue, he followed, setting the soda down. Jax nodded his thanks as he picked up a slice of pizza.

The dogs both rushing around, their eyes intent on the food. Jax side-eyed the dogs as he navigated chewing, trying to keep the stretching cheese from making a mess.

“Gemma’s too self-involved to kill herself. I was referring to her emot...political machinations.” She quickly corrected her wording under Jax’s warning glare. “I see she gave you the letters.”

Taking up one of the letters.

He took the chair to Jax’s left. Snagging Nancy around her hips, pulling her into his lap giving her behind a light slap for her insouciance. She just grinned and settled into his frame, he couldn’t help but grin himself at her antics. Witch.

Everyone turned their attention to the letters. Except for the dogs, though, still very intent on the pizza. Mooches, he sighed, making a mental note to inform everyone not to feed the dogs whatever they were begging for.
“Are they all there?” He asked turning his attention back to the letters. Remembering what Nancy had told them, he leaned forward to take the stack. Nancy handing him the letter she held to add back into the pile.

“No.” Jax said grimly, chewing hard as he watched him count the letters.

“Of course they aren’t.” Nancy snarked.

He groaned at her snarky comment, Jax glaring at her.

“What is all this?” Nancy asked, taking up one of the scraps of paper, ignoring Jax’s ire.

“Clay’s notes.” Jax said around a bite of pizza.

“Huh...Is that a g?” She held the paper closer for her inspection then tilting it in Jax’s direction.

“No. It’s a c.” Jax grumbled. “Cal..fifty cal.” He explained.

Nancy frowned, bringing back in front of her. “God, his handwriting is atrocious. Hieroglyphics is easier to read than this.”

“Classic.” He snorted. Suspending his count of the letters for the moment. “Coming from someone who created her own language...for fun.”

Jax raised a brow, eyeing the two of them. “You made your own language? Why?” He laughed around his chewing, nearly choking in the process.

Nancy rolled her eyes again, setting the note back down. “I was bored and it kept other people from reading my notes.”

Jax gave a slight wince, remembering her past. He hugged her closer, giving Jax a look that it was okay. That she was okay.

“Anyway, are you able to figure out what Clay had set?” He asked, starting to recount the letters and putting them in order by date.

“Yeah, enough so I can walk everyone through it.” Jax took a sip of his drink.

Absently circling his thumb around a small patch of Nancy’s hip, by his own count there were three letters missing. The police report was gone, too. Fuck. He shared a knowing look to Jax, Gemma was lying to them.

“Seriously, I know I was joking about Gemma before, but are you okay?” Nancy asked.

Jax leaned back and lit a cigarette. The dogs gave up on getting any pizza. Cuchulain sat down with a low, disappointed whine. Sorcha laying down behind his chair, licking at her front paws.

“I know you told me what was happening.” Jax rubbed at his brow. “I didn’t want to believe it. She ordered me to kill Clay.”

God damn it. The idea of Gemma...fuck. It wasn’t her place to…and to turn the screws to her own son like this.

Jax looked to him as if he knew what he was thinking. Hell, any of the guys would think the same thing.
“She’s...I can’t believe it...she’s still jealous over John and Maureen. I could hear it in her voice every time she brought up Maureen.” Jax waved his arm out towards the door. “Now, wanting me to take out Clay. Did she do this with my father? Telling Clay to kill him? Kill him before John could strike first?”

He and Jax looked to Nancy, expecting her response. Nancy crossing her arms, hunching over a little as she bit her lip pensively.

“You already know, Jax. I don’t have to...you already know. The question is...what are you going to do about it? About Gemma?”

Fuck. He looked to Jax to get his take.

“I don’t know.” Jax said quietly after a pause.

“Yes, you do. You just don’t want to do it. To face it.” Nancy shrugged at Jax’s guilty look. “It’s okay. Okay to feel that pain. Knowing that your mother is so...calculating. Willing to kill to achieve her plans. Is willing to push you...force you into this...decision. It’s unconscionable what Gemma is doing to you. No mother...no parent should ever do what Gemma has and is doing to you.” Jax hitched a painful breath.

“This is your choice, Jax. The choice to follow Gemma’s orders blindly, or what the Club rules demand, or break a new trail of your own making. I don’t have to tell you that whatever course you choose will have ramifications. No plan is ever certain. Just a matter of picking what you can live with. What or who you’re willing to sacrifice.”

They watched Jax as he drew in a deep draw on his cigarette. His eyes downcast, running a hand through his hair, thinking about what Nancy was advising. Needing time, he’s so like his father. Taking everything in, assuming responsibility for things that wasn’t his fault. It made him sick that Gemma was putting Jax through this.

“He...he deserves to meet Mr. Mayhem. The letters prove it. What he did to Tara...” Jax seethed.

“Aye.” He agreed solemnly.

“It doesn’t hurt to wait. We have time. If you push through on this decision, it takes other options out of play. And with the cartel...we need options.” She advised further, seeing Jax’s indecision.

“Let’s get back to this after the meeting, aye?” He suggested, giving Jax an out for the moment.


“Hopefully, the Irish and Romeo will play nice with each other long enough to agree to this fucking deal.”

Nancy stood up and took up the empty plate. “Hmm, we can only hope.” She said archly as she went to the door. Cuchulain was eager to leave the room with her.

“Fuck.” He swore, getting up. Sorcha scrambling with her long limbs to join Nancy at the door. Cuchulain giving the new door a scratch.

Jax shot her a sour look as he started putting his papers together. Shoving the letters into the accordion file.

“Can’t I get a straight answer out of you at all?” Jax complained.
“Ha. That is funny. I already told you the truth of everything. You’re the one trying to wish it all away.”

“Fuck.” Jax sighed heavily.

“All right. That’s enough. Come on, m ‘anam.” Sending her a ‘quit-it’ look. Nancy just shrugged at him. “We gotta leave in ten if you want to be on time.” He reminded Jax, opening the door, letting the dogs lope out ahead of them.

“Yeah. I have to talk to Gemma before we go.” Jax waved at them as he put the papers in the safe.

“And Tara.” Nancy reminded over her shoulder.

“Fuck. I told her I’d handle it.” He heard Jax mutter.

Wondering if he should talk to Jax some more over this, but there wasn’t time, fuck. He left Jax to finish straightening up in chapel, catching up to Nancy.

Nancy slid the dirty plate onto the bar for Darrell to take care of. Their plates already taken away, the table wiped clean. Grabbing up the laptop, he handed it to Nancy. She smiled up at him and he couldn’t resist kissing her pulling her close.

“Lady Macbeth? Seriously?” He aggrieved playfully, grinning down at her.

She giggled and turned in his arms towards the door.

“God help me.” He muttered, taking her free hand in his. Leading his lovely, sarcastic, witch outside.

She shifted her eyes into the shade, blinking as she was blinded by the bright glare bouncing off the concrete of the lot. When she turned, she caught sight of Gemma and Wayne talking, sitting on the edge of the boxing ring.

Wayne looked a little sick, Gemma saying something to him. By his reaction, he wasn’t reassured by whatever Gemma was whispering to him.

There was something about how the two of them were huddled together, Gemma’s smirk...it rankled at her. She wondered if she turned a flashlight on the two of them if they’d skitter off in panic at being caught out of the shadows.

Chibs had slipped on his shades and lit a cigarette. Taking the opportunity, she wandered over to Wayne and Gemma.

“Uh...m ‘anam?” Chibs warningly checked her.

“It’s okay.” She reassured him.

At his exaggerated head tilt, his eyes peering at her over the top of his shades. The look that said he didn’t believe one bit of her assertion, but his breaking grin egged her on. The look nearly sent her into a fit of giggles. God she loved that playful look. Sending her toes curling and butterflies taking flight inside her.

He shook his head, straightening up, taking a drag on his cigarette, muttering to himself as she turned back towards Gemma and Wayne.
The two of them looking up at her as her shadow fell over top of the two of them.

“Well, how’s the alliance holding up?” She asked brightly, ignoring the dark huff coming from Chibs.

“Whoa!” Wayne’s jaw dropped, eye brows rising up towards where his hairline must have used to have been. “What happened to you? How’d your tattoo turn silver? It wasn’t like that this morning.”

“Crazy gash.” Gemma muttered harshly, as she squinted sourly up at her.

Clearly unhappy with her, threatening to strip away at her victory. Unwilling to let go of her personal quest to get Jax as President. Pointing her son to kill her husband. All the while keeping her involvement with her first husband’s murder buried and never see the light of day.

The amount of mental, emotional, and even physical energy to run around town getting everything in line with her plans...she must be exhausted.

“Let’s just say I had a visitor from the other side. Someone you both knew...intimately.” She faced Wayne, answering his question. “By the way, did Gemma tell you? Looks like Clay will survive his shooting. Isn’t that fantastic news?”

She smiled. But she didn’t feel that cheer rise through her eyes. Staring down at Gemma knowingly. What Gemma was doing, she didn’t deserve any sort of victory.

Wayne looked to Gemma for a moment at the news.

“Seems to be quite the pattern you have regarding the men in your life, Gemma. If Clay had kicked the bucket you’d be one step closer to earning a ‘Black Widow’ title. Quite the achievement.” She nodded sagely with her own assessment. “Is Jax next on your list if he ever dares to stray from your orders or world view? Hmmm?”

Gemma reeled back slightly, surprised at the threat for a brief moment, but catching herself and leaned forward once more, her eyes hardening, lips pressing hard into a thin line.

“Uh...” Wayne flustered, eyeing between her and Gemma. Looking for a way out of this without losing his loyal standing with Gemma. But by his nervous clenching of his hands, she was hoping that he was finally getting the inkling that he was betting on the wrong horse.

“But hey, Clay’s alive. That must be such a relief for you.” She concluded cheerfully, rocking on the heels of her boots. Watching Gemma grow increasingly pissed off. Her face turning red, though it was hard to tell in the dim light and from all the makeup Gemma slathered on. A poor attempt to keep looking younger than she is. But the makeup only added to her increasingly wrinkled and lined face.

“Shut up, you stupid gash!” Gemma spat at her. “Don’t put yourself in things that have nothing to do with you. My son knows what he has to do.” She warned with a bony finger point, her nails painted black.

“Gemma!” Wayne warned.

But Gemma shot Wayne a hard look. A look that Wayne hunched down submissively.

Black, black-ity black. Everything about Gemma was black, from her clothes to her nails, the black-lined makeup edging out her eyes from her weathered face, down to her soul. Hiding out
here in the dark shade of the clubhouse.

She just smiled at Gemma, letting the silence build. Watching the doubt was starting to filter through her brain. Maybe remembering that she and Chibs had the opportunity to talk to Jax after she walked out of the clubhouse just thirty minutes ago. The smile slipped from her face, her anger and disgust threading her words.

“Your son is not your weapon. He is not a tool that you can use and discard. He is not just your son. He is also Clay’s son. He is also John’s son. He is his own man. He doesn’t need his mommy to tell him what to do, at all.” She hissed down into the woman. Taking a breath she took a small step closer. “Enjoy your pyrrhic victory while it lasts, Gemma. Because it won’t last long.”

“I know he’s a man. You think I’m fucking blind!” Gemma’s voice raising, but she saw the confused look in her eye. Not understanding some of the words she used.

Wayne’s eyes widened, listening to the fight. Realizing what Gemma didn’t understand.

She shook her head, ignoring Gemma’s rising anger. “I offered to help you Gemma. But you are clearly on a path of your own destruction. You'll soon find yourself completely alone in that big house of yours. A house that used to be filled with people, will be empty. Except you, wandering around with the ghosts of those that you’ve destroyed. All your dreams and hopes for your rulership...everything you’ve done...is of your own making. Know that, Gemma.” She leaned back, realizing she’d bent forward to look right into Gemma’s dark eyes. Taking a breath. “Despite everything you’ve done, when you are ready, I’ll help.”

“I don’t need...or want...your god damned help.”

She regarded Gemma for a moment. “Yes, you do. You’ve fallen into the abyss. You just haven’t realized it yet. But you will.”

“Get the fuck away from me before I rip your tongue out.”

“Gemm…don’t…” Wayne mollified, grabbing Gemma to keep her from launching herself at her.

"Let go of me!" Gemma growled and hissed, fighting Wayne's grip.

She leaned down towards Gemma again, her head starting to crack open. The power inside her spilling and leaking out through her very being. Her tree rustled a little.

Looking right into Gemma’s dark, angry eyes. “I will not let you destroy this club, Gemma. I won’t let you destroy any more lives with your stupid games. Shame on you. This club...this town...it will be free of your poisonous grip. It will be great and thrive no matter what you try and do. I will force this club and this town into the future that you fear so greatly, so help me God.”

“Who are you?” Wayne asked, his eyes widening as he stared up at her.

“A stupid bitch that doesn’t know her place.” Gemma seethed, her arms fighting to shake off Wayne’s grip.

“I’m the Seer and I know what you have done. I know it all. I am the reckoning.” Hissing out the last. And the back of her mind, she didn’t know where she was coming up with what she was saying. Looking to Wayne, “Run, buraku, run before she kills you.”

“Unbelievable. What the hell have you been smoking?” Gemma scoffed. “What the fuck is buraku?”
Wayne looked uncertain under her gaze, wincing as Gemma mispronounced the title she’d given him.

“M ‘anam!” Chibs called for her.

Giving Gemma and Wayne a final look, she walked away. She’d stirred the pot quite well in this round. Hopefully scared Wayne straight. Suddenly tired of all the bullshit. Why she had to scare anyone to do the right thing was beyond her.

Her head slipping and sliding as her knees wobbled. Wincing as she saw a bright flash of light reflecting into the darkened garage bays where the guys were working. The light bobbed and swayed as she walked. Her triskele catching the sun’s rays, acting as a mirror. God, this was ridiculous, grabbing her sunglasses.

Chibs took her hand eagerly when she got close enough. “Everything okay?” He asked, curling her hand up to his lips for a soft brushing of a kiss. His eyes sliding to look back at Gemma and Wayne. “Should I be worried?”

“I’m fine. And it’s Gemma and Wayne that should be worried.” She sighed gratefully as her pain cleared.

Chibs snorted. “Had to kick the hornet’s nest, didn’t ye, mo bhanrigh?”

She smiled softly at him. By silent agreement, they leaned into each other, falling into a deep kiss. Her knees wobbly for a whole different reason. And the other-worldly sensation settled back inside her.

The sound of a vehicle pulling into the lot caught their attention as they pulled back from their kiss, the two of them breathing hard.

“Uhhh, should she be mobile? Driving this soon after getting out of the hospital?” She questioned. Watching Tara carefully climb out of the vehicle.

Chibs sighed heavily, steering them into Tara’s path. “No.”

The three of them came to a halt in the middle of the lot. Tara paler than usual, her arm trussed up in a sling.

“Tara, darlin’. What’re ye’ doing? Hmm?” Chibs lulled in his thickening brogue. His free hand catching Tara by the elbow of her un-injured arm. “Ye’ shouldn’t be driving in your condition like this.”

“I’m fine.” Tara said shortly. “I gave the letters to Gemma. She said she’d give them to Clay. That the violence would all stop, if I gave them to her.”

She shared a worried glance to Chibs. Did Tara really need to deal with this? And could they convince Tara to go home at this point?

“Jax has the letters.” She informed Tara, at his small shrug. The damage was done already.

Tara shifting her pinned eyes to her. “Of course he does.” Tara snapped. “Fucking bitch. I just...I need...I can’t let him do this by himself. I can’t. He has to know...know that I...Clay tried to have me killed.” Tara argued in quiet outrage.

“Tara, luv’...” Chibs tried to sooth.
“Don’t.” Tara cut Chibs off. “I have to do this. I can’t let her win.” She vehemently said.

“Tara, we talked about this. You’ve won already. Breathe. Jax isn’t a toy to be fought over. Don’t let Gemma drag you down to her level. You’re better than that. Have faith in Jax.”

Tara shot her an angry glare.

“She’s...they...” Tara fought, angry at her for stealing her thunder.

“Yes, she...they....we talked to Jax already. He knows that Gemma lied to him. You don’t have to do this. Not like this. Teach them, Tara. Show them your strength.”

Tara’s breathing hitched as she fought with herself for a moment. She and Chibs blocking her view of Gemma, helping shield her as Tara found her footing within herself.

Swiping a hand over her eyes, Tara focused back to where she was and who with. Blinking at them.

She groaned slightly as Tara double-taked, finally registering the change to her triskele. Even Chibs snorted in amusement that it took Tara so long.

Tara glancing at Chibs and back to her.

She had to blink and look beyond Tara for a second to keep from going cross-eyed.

“What the hell happened to you? How?” Tara gasped, her face and body softening from her earlier anger and upset by the sheer strangeness that was her.

“I don’t know.” She bewilderingly shrugged.

Tara wasn’t deterred by her reaction, continuing to stare and shift around to get a better look at her triskele from every freaking angle. She half-expected Tara to whip out a magnifying glass at any moment.

Chibs started chuckling. Her annoyed glare only had him laughing harder.

“Dear God, you should see your face.” He sputtered.

Rolling her eyes at him. “Thanks...thanks a lot. Love you, too.” She said sarcastically.

He bit back his laugh and gathered her back into his arms. Unable to completely wipe his enjoyment of her predicament. “Graim thu, mo bhanrigh. Graim thu.” He said huskily.

The tenor of his voice deflated her ire. “You’re impossible.” She complained lightly.

His grin widened again as he kissed her, hugging her tightly. Whispering gaelic in her ear. Her annoyance seeped away.

She managed to pull back from his embrace, Tara blinking at the two of them. Noting that she was much calmer than what she was a few moments ago, at least.

“What’s mo bhanrigh mean?” Tara asked quizzically.

She shrugged not knowing herself.

Chibs grinned. “Means my queen.” His grin widening at Tara’s widening eyes at the meaning.
She snorted at how satisfied he was with his added endearment for her. Giving him a sly look, “Mon chevalier, mon amour, mon âme, mon roi.” she hummed back to him.

He shifted on his feet, his eyes darkening as he recognized some of what she said. Gathering her closer to him, the two of them swaying to their own little bubble of them-ness. Reveling in each other for a moment. No matter what was going on, there was always this between them. A language that only they knew.

Catching Tara’s raised brows from the corner of her eye, she looked at Tara once more. Stiffening her body, reminding him that they weren’t alone.

“I managed to spread doubt with Gemma and Wayne already. If you want to do what you’re planning, go ahead.”

“You aren’t mad at me? Think I’m evil?” Tara frowned at her.

“No. Tara. You’re hurt and angry. And you know why we’re doing things the way we’re doing them. As much as you want Clay and Gemma to hurt and pay for what they’ve done...But there’s a RICO over our heads. We have to be smart about this.” Tara’s frown deepened that she was trying to keep her from her retaliatory plans.

“But it doesn’t mean you can’t lay the law down on Gemma and Clay, even Wayne. You aren’t one to be toyed with. Not anymore. They think you’re weak, but I know you are anything but. Show them.”

Tara nodded, her earlier emotional state filtered and distilled to a quiet resolve. Her head was in the game.

“You sure you're okay, Tara?” Chibs checked the dark-haired woman over once more.

Tara nodded, her eyes seeking out Gemma already. “I’m fine. Really.”

Chibs frowned. “You’re just out of ‘ospital, have Dog drive ye’ home, at least. Ye’ know you shouldn’t be driving under whatever painkillers you’re on.”

Tara glared at Chibs.

“Hey. Don’t be giving me that look. You’re a doctor, you should know better. You got two wee ones waiting for you at home. Be safe for them, at least.”

Tara scrubbed at her face in frustration. “Fine. I’ll have Dog take me home. After I do this.” She waved a hand towards the clubhouse.

Chibs gave her another harsh look, grunted and gave her cheek a kiss. “All right, I’ll tell Dog to watch for ye’. Now, go give ’em hell.” Sending Tara off.

They watched as Wayne slunk off when Gemma and Tara started talking. Jax joining them not long after. The three of them sitting at the picnic table, talking.

After a few more seconds, Chibs went to give Dog his instructions to drive Tara home. She walked the rest of the way to the bike, giving the dogs a comforting scratch. Mentally telling them to stay here. They would be back soon. She sighed, it was going to be a long night yet. The dogs snuffled at her a moment longer and then wandered off into the garage to seek out some shade.

“Fuck me. This better work.” Chibs sighed, joining her.
“She needs this.”

“Aye, I know. But how the fuck things got like this... And I was here the whole fucking time. Never fucking saw it turning into this shite.” He berated himself.

“It’s not your fault. Just a series of events that happened over decades. There was nothing you could have done. Nothing anyone could have done. It’s not your fault. We just have to work to make sure that we fix it before any more bodies drop because of it.”

He sighed heavily, checking his watch again. “Aye, I know. Fuck, we need to get going.”

She grabbed her helmet and tucked her laptop into the saddlebag as he whistled for Jax, yelling that they had to go.

Jax standing up from his conversation with Gemma and Tara. Tucking something away inside his jacket, he jogged to them. His face closed off and tense. There wasn’t time to ask if he was okay as they settled onto the bikes.

Glancing back at Gemma and Tara, the two of them facing off with each other. Tara slinging her bag over her shoulder, leaving Gemma to stew.

Her hands gripped around Chibs as he kicked the bike forward. Pairing up with Jax, as they left the lot, heading out to the meet point.

Passing the police station, she noted how deserted the building and its’ parking lot was. Yes, this meeting was very important.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m 'anam
Queen = mo bhanrigh
I love you = Graim thu
my knight, my love, my soul, my king = mon chevalier, mon amour, mon âme, mon roi
“Seer! Hey!” Tig yelled, his hand raised up to gain her attention.

Confused, setting her helmet down on the seat of their bike, she turned to watch Tig jog over to her.

The bond she had with Tig flared to life. Tig’s intense blue eyes locked onto her made her step back, half-hiding behind Chibs.

“Shite.” He murmured, taking a step in front of her, body blocking Tig and her.

Her hands curling into his kutte. Clinging to Chibs, her eyes wide as Tig rushed towards her.

“Oh my God.” She breathed in horror. Panic welling up inside her, the bond between them flared to life. “Please…” Her body shaking as she twisted her hands tighter in the thick leather.

Chibs grabbed one of her hands in his, the heat and sinking weight pulled her down inside herself, making her gasp for a whole other reason. “God. Don’t let go of me.” She managed to groan.

He hushing at her as he took a step forward to catch Tig. Her bones rattled as Chibs squeezed her hand, her anchor.

Peeking around him, she saw Jax and the rest of the guys watching Tig’s odd behavior half in quiet confusion, half in humor. Just waiting to see what the outcome would be.

“Seer, hey. Everything is ready. Anything else you need?” Tig informed as he drew up.
Chibs stretching out to wrap Tig in his other arm, stopping him from getting too close.

“No…” She stuttered, unnerved by Tig’s intensity.

“You okay, Tiggy?” Chibs asked calmly.

“Yeah. Fine.” Tig shrugged, breaking his gaze from her to Chibs. “Why?” He asked breezily, with a confused look on his face.

Which only made her even more worried, Tig didn’t seem to realize what he was doing. How his behavior has changed. Oh god.

“Just checking.” Chibs hummed, twisting Tig around while keeping a firm hold on her hand.

A whimper escaped her lips as she gripped tighter around Chibs hand and kutte. Letting his leather and spicy scent fill her senses. Letting it distract her, from what the energy was trying to do. Feeling it rise up inside her. Wanting to reach out and grab hold of Tig, as if recognizing a part of herself that belonged to her. That he belonged to her. God, this isn’t right.

Closing her eyes she felt her triskele flare to life across her forehead, the tree at her back flexing. No. No. No. Focussing on her breathing, the smell of the leather, the tight weight around her hand. Sensing Tig’s frustration as Chibs kept him away from her. Fighting to stay in control.

“Holy shit.” Jax muttered, had her opening her eyes again.

Happy and the Tacoma guys shooting them all a confused look.

Chibs jerked his head at Jax pointedly.

Taking the hint, Jax stepped up and grabbed hold of Tig. Doing a half-hug as he forced Tig to walk with him towards the guns in the back of the van. Chatting with him as they walked. Tig glancing back at her, but Jax’s hold on him kept him moving forward.

Drawing harsh, deep breaths, she forced herself to calm down. The power seeping up and down inside her, threatening to overwhelm her. God. God. She pleaded desperately in silence. She had to do better than this. Pressing a hand over her eyes as her tears threatened to spill over.

Looking off into the scrubby forest and clear sky, she breathed. Mentally focusing on the little things. The sound of the leaves in the light breeze, the dance of light as the tall grass bent and swayed.

Chibs turned with her, pulling her into his lean frame. His hands spread wide across her stomach under her t-shirt. “You’re okay. It’s all okay.” He murmured in her ear.

His verbalization broke her tenuous control. Biting back a surge of despair, a low sound escaping her. His body curling ever more over her, his lips finding the curve of her neck.

Daring to look into his eyes as he pulled away from the kiss he gave her. His quiet acceptance in his eyes, she melted under that look. Whatever was going on, he wasn’t running and he sure as hell wasn’t going to let her fall over the cliff.

Twisting around, her hand glided across his jaw and cheek to slide through his hair as they met for a deep kiss. Her panic over Tig, sliding to the back of her mind as she swayed under the kiss. The weight of him forced the power that threatened to overwhelm her, it pulling back like the tide. He held her as her legs refused to support her body anymore. His hands sweeping up under her t-shirt,
massaging the muscles of her spine.

Their breaths harsh as their lips and heads shifted, tongues sliding and teasing each other. “Fuck.” He groaned, only to capture her lips into another kiss. Her hips rocking against his.

He hauled in her in close, holding her tight so she couldn’t move. His breath heavy against the curve of her neck. Feeling his physical response, she fought to find satisfaction for them both. But he refused to let her.

“Fuck me. We go at it again, I really will take ye’,” He complained.

“And I’d let you.” She enticed, trying to calm her racing heart.

Tilting his head, his dark eyes captured hers. Her blood went back to the races and butterflies flew at his unwavering, heavy look. She stretched up and captured his sensuous lips into another kiss.

His arms pulling her closer still, mock glaring at her. “Witch. Don’t fuckin’ tempt me.”

“Damn.” She swore teasingly.

He huffed as he gathered his bearings, she worried that there was something wrong by the way he wobbled a little.

“You okay?” She asked.

“Aye.” Sliding his eyes back to her, filled with dark promises. “We will pick this up again, later.” Giving her a wink and a smile.

Stifling a laugh, she stepped back as he lit a cigarette. Tucking his lighter away, he took her hand and escorted her to the barn. His stride lazy and windy.

“Fuck, ye’ pack a wallop, m ‘anam.” He breathed a plume of smoke from his lungs, lazily strolling next to her, his fingers massaging hers.

“Sorry?” Peering up at him, with a small grin.

Rolling his eyes at her apology, he pulled her closer by wrapping his arm around her.

“You feeling better, at least?” He asked.

Eyes turning their way, Happy and Jax smirking. Tig watching them, but not approaching her like he had when they pulled in at least.

“Yes, you’ve effectively distracted me. Thank you.”

“Good.” He paused to snuff out his cigarette. A pair of Hummers pulled up and their Mexican buyers stepped out.

Jax throwing up an easy smile as he moved to shake their hands. Taking the opportunity to show them the weapons in question for the sale. Everyone settled, letting Jax take point as he answered Romeo and Luis’s questions as they looked them over.

“Come on, let’s get out of this fucking sun. Have you sit down.” Chibs said as he led her into the cool barn.

She grinned, knowing that it was his aversion to the glorious California weather was the real
reason for going inside the dark shadows of the barn. Ignoring Tig’s following eyes as they led the way into the barn.

Chibs pulled her down next to him on a bale of hay, pressing a kiss to their joined hands. Watching the guys trail inside, everyone waiting for the Irish to show up. Tig sidling closer to where they had sat down, feeling his presence next to her. The bond humming a bit louder, making her tense up. Tig just seemed confused, watching Romeo and Luis.

She pressed her face into Chibs muscled arm.

“You doing okay?” He asked softly.

“Yeah. It’s taking some getting used to, is all.” She sighed. “What if…” She started asking, the worry picking at her.

He tilted her head up, his dark eyes searching hers. “Don’t. Give yourself time. See how it goes the next few days.” He advised.

Smiling tiredly, he leaned over and kissed her. Her lips molding to his, kissing back. Groaning as she swayed deeper into the kiss. The awareness of the bond with Tig lessened as the heat of the kiss drew her attention like a moth to a flame. God, she hoped this wouldn’t keep happening. As much as she loved sexing it up with her man, they had a life to live. But, hell, she so wanted to escape and drag Chibs with her. Lock the world out and just have her way with her man. God, what he does to her.

“We interrupting?” An amused voice grumbled out.

She broke from the kiss, breathing hard as her heart and brain caught up to each other. Remembering they weren’t alone and they were here to do business.

Glancing up she saw Romeo and Luis grinning down at them. Jax and the guys smirking just behind them.

Chibs huffed and swore as he straightened up himself.

Blinking up at Romeo and Luis, the two of them clearly amused. Quickly stamping out the flare of anger at being made fun of.

“We’re fine.” Chibs sharply answered Romeo’s question.

“Wasn’t your tattoo black before?” Luis asked with a point of a finger.

Romeo leaned closer to study her triskele.

“Yes, it was.”

“Why’d you get it redone?” Luis asked as he crouched lower to get a better look. “And how? I don’t see any of the black anymore.”

She tried to lean back away from the intrusion but Chibs’ hold on her prevented it. “Jesus Christ. I didn’t do it.” She huffed. “It just happened.”

Everyone frowned at her, Jax merely cocked a brow at her amusedly. Tig stepped closer towards her, facing Luis and Romeo. As if readying himself to get between her and anyone that got too close. This was just ridiculous, she thought dourly.
The sound of cars pulling up drew everyone’s attention to the front of the barn, thankfully. The Irish were here.

“Hell, I might have to find a way of covering this up. It’s distracting everyone.” She muttered with a heavy sigh. Feeling like a freak again.

“Don’t.” Chibs said.

Her eyes flying to his.

“They’ll all just have to get used to it.” He declared.

She wanted to argue with him over it, but gave up when their attention diverted towards the Irishmen.

Chibs helped her to her feet once more, wandering closer to the action. Setting her in front of him, legs spread wide as his arms looping around her waist.

She leaned back in the cradle of his body, settling in to listen in on the upcoming, futile conversation.

Studying Galen and the Kings as they looked around the barn. Galen seemed to be looking for someone in particular. Gee, she wondered who. Galen and the Kings briefly frowned at her, their eyes flicking at her triskele, but refrained from saying anything about it.

”Galen, good to see you.” Jax holds his hand out for the handshake.

Galen’s eyes sweeping the barn. “Where’s Clay?”

Jax sighed heavily. “Something went down last night. Clay got shot.”

“What happened?” Galen blinked.

“Not sure yet. He got hit at the garage. Had nothing to do with this.” Jax reassured everyone.

“There’s been a problem brewing in Oakland; a black thing.” Chibs filled in.

“Is he going to live?” Galen asked.

Jax nodded. “Yeah, he pulled through the worst of it. This is Romeo Parada.” Jax gestured towards Romeo, who moved forward at the introduction.

Romeo and Galen shook hands. “Pleasure to meet you. My associate, Luis Torres.” Romeo introduced as Luis stepped forward to shake Galen’s hand.

Galen frowned, stepping back from the round of handshakes. “When will Clay be back on his feet?”

“Hard to say. We’re up to speed on schedules and routes. I’ll be able to talk you through everything.” Jax said, readying to go into his pitch.

“No, you won’t.” Galen interrupted. “I made it very clear to Clay. The only way this deal happens is if he’s running it.”

She snorted a dark laugh. Galen was practically pouting like he was five and his best friend, Clay, couldn’t come out and play.
The men all glanced towards her at her interruption. Turning her eyes down, she toed the straw on the floor ignoring everyone’s looks. Chibs hand squeezing hers, warning her to not do or say anything.

“Galen, we run things as a club. We can make this work without Clay.” Jax stressed.

Galen shook his head. “It’s not about making it work. It’s about trust. I have little in you, and less in them. When Clay’s back at the table, we can discuss the deal. Until then, there is none.”

She rolled her eyes at Galen’s power play. Hell, even Clay would be telling Galen to make the deal. The money was too good to pass up. Idiots. Nothing but a waste of time.

Galen ushered the Kings back out to their cars. Romeo and Luis sending each other sharp looks of anger at the turn of events.

“Galen!” Jax started off after the Irishmen.

“Fuck.” Chibs swore, releasing her quickly.

“Jackie, you’ll make it worse. Stubborn bastards won’t hear you.” Chibs grabbing hold of Jax, preventing him from making the situation even worse.

Jax turning around, she could see the blistering round of swearing he was ranting in his head.

Romeo and Luis tense, as they shared a conversation with their eyes and body language.

“We have to talk.” Romeo had sidled up behind Jax, the dark threat brimming over in his gravelly voice.

“Yeah.” Jax agrees with a heavy breath.

Romeo and Luis glance around at them all. “Alone.”

“That’s not happening.” Chibs argued, unwilling to leave Jax alone with the two of them.

Romeo shooting Jax a dark look to get rid of them all.

“It’s okay. I got this. Tig, you and Happy to take the guns back to the warehouse.” Jax reassured, with a slap to Chibs shoulder.

Chibs looked at Jax a moment, not liking the idea one bit. But, Jax held firm.

“Fine. We’ll be right outside.” Chibs gave in. His dark eyes warning Romeo and Luis.

Holding his hand out to her, he hustled her out of the barn. Tig and Happy trailing them.

The doors to the barn shut soon as they all stepped outside.

“Fuck, man. This is wrong.” Tig worried, pacing and watching the doors to the barn.

“It’s Jax’s call. Go on and get the guns back to the warehouse, lock it all down. Aye?”

Happy shot the barn another look, but nodded towards Chibs and went off to the van.

“It’s okay, Tig. Go on.” She added. “It’ll be fine.”

“Yeah. Okay.” Tig nodded absently, but went to the passenger side and got in the van. Happy
driving off. Tacoma leading and following their precious cargo.

“Christ.” Chibs complained, sending the barn a dark look, lighting a cigarette while they waited. His cell went off and he pulled it out. “Aye?...Right. Hang on.” He held the phone out to her. “Mark, for you.”

“Did you get it?” She asked into the phone, not bothering to say hello.

“Yes. Finally.” Mark said victoriously.

“Good, when will you go see him?”

“It’s too late today, by the time I get there, visiting hours will be over. So first thing in the morning.”

“Okay. You know what to do.”

“Ohhhh, I certainly do. Talk to you soon.” Mark said as he hung up on her.

Handing the phone back to Chibs, “Well?”

“He’ll see Otto in the morning.”

“Good, something finally working in our favor.” He grunted.

Quirking a half smile to her man, “It all works out in the end. One way or the other.”

“Just wish all this shite would be behind us already. Getting tired of this song and dance.”

“I know.”

The doors to the barn swung open once more. Romeo and Luis walked out with their men. Climbing into their Hummers they drove off in a dusty, dirt trail that plumed up from their tires.

Jax walked out, pale and tense, lighting a cigarette.

“Did you get blinded by the flash of badges?” She asked snarkily.

Jax gave her a sour look, pressing the heels of his hands to his eyes for a moment.

“Guns are on their way back to the warehouse.” Chibs said, after giving her an aggrieved look.

“Yeah, okay.” Jax replied automatically.

Jax glanced over at her, she was waiting for him. Knowing that he had to decide. The next move was his. And he was the only one that could make it.

“Fuck, you were right. God damn it!” He swore angrily. “Fucking Galen! And fucking Clay!”

“Sorry. But, things aren’t as bad as they seem.” She shrugged.

“The fuck it isn’t.” Jax rounded on her.

“They aren’t.” She insisted. “Tig isn’t or hasn’t run down the Niners, hasn’t killed Damon Pope’s daughter. That’s a huge difference from before.”

“Yeah.” Jax said un-enthusiastically.
“Yes, it is.” She insisted. “I just got off the phone with Mark, he’s going to see Otto in the morning. Clay’s still alive to come out and play with Galen when he gets sprung from the hospital.” She waved her arms emphatically.

“Jesus.” Jax huffed despite himself.

Chibs snorted at her characterization of Galen and Clay’s relationship.

“Tara...she…” Jax vexed.

“Yeah, I know. She needed to do that.”

“Do what?” Chibs asked, getting lost in what she and Jax were talking about.

Jax pulled out the small kit from his jacket. “Here,” handing it to Chibs, “keep this away from me. I have to go see the bastard. The temptation...fuck me...he has to live. For now.”

Chibs took the kit, unzipping it to see what was inside. One glance and he zipped it back up quick, tucking it into his jacket pocket.

Jax looked conflicted as Chibs tucked away the kit. Shaking himself back from his dark thoughts she watched him.

“We have to tell the club about the letters.” She said.

“You sure?” Jax questioned.

“Yes, it’s time. You keep the guys in the dark about them...they won’t understand why we’re making decisions the way we are or will. It’s a new era for the club. Start it on the right foot.”

Jax considered her a moment, glancing to Chibs for his opinion.

“You can have them follow ye’ either way...but them informed...it’ll give them purpose and reason for why. They’ll follow ye’ for your honesty. They’ll die for you, if they know it’s for a greater purpose. And it’ll keep them from falling for Clay and Gemma’s power plays.”

“I don’t want any more blood. We’ve lost too much already.” Jax sighed, looking off in the distance. “All right. Get the copies, bring them. We’ll have church tonight, eight o’clock.”

“Aye. We’ll have Lowen come in with the notarized set, too. Let them know how serious we took their legitimacy.”

“Good. What about Juice? He’s proven himself a rat. Can we trust him with the letters?”

“I don’t see how we can get around it. We’ll have to. We cut him out, the other guys will question why. And, unfortunately, we need him still.” She explained.

“Fuck.” Chibs sighed.

“You could put the whammy on him like you did Tig,” Jax broached.

Her jaw dropped in horror at what Jax was suggesting. The audacity...

“Oh Christ, Jackie.” Chibs swore.

“Fuck, didn't you see Tig when you two showed up?” Jax defended.
“I am not some weapon to be used to keep everyone in line for you. I told you that from the very beginning. God, you have no clue what this is like.”

“It was just a suggestion.” Jax lifted his hands up in surrender.

“No.” She pointed at Jax. "My answer is no. It’s taking everything in me to keep from..from invading Tig. Juan has a path he has to learn, it’s why he’s failed in his suicide attempts. Me...impressing my will on him...that isn’t making him learn. Eventually, when things calm down, we can revisit what to do with him.”

Jax shook his head, breathing out a long plume of smoke.

“Later then.” Chibs concluded for Jax.

“Yeah. Okay.” Jax agreed.

“I think the guilt he’s under, he wouldn’t dare cross you. And he's a vote you'll have. But you can’t let him be Clay’s babysitter when he’s back on his feet.”

“Shit. Someone has to deal with Clay.”

“Have Happy do it. Let him use the prospects to do the day-to-day, but supervise them. Happy won’t let Clay guilt him into going behind the table again.” She suggested.

“I’ll think about it. Anything else?”

“Mark’s finally got access to Otto, he’ll be in to see him in the morning.”

Jax nodded and slightly relaxed under the news. “Good. Something seems to be working.” Echoing Chibs sentiment when he learned the news.

“Not to worry, Jackie. When everyone’s on board, there’s no stopping us.”

“Okay, thanks. I need to clear my head. I’ll see you at church.” Jax gave Chibs a hug and was off before they could get their helmets on.

“We’re in it now, m ‘anam.”

“We certainly are.”

After calling the members for church, they spent the next couple of hours criss-crossing town, picking up several more copies of the letters. She called Alison, as Chibs tucked the last set into her bag along with her laptop. Telling her they needed her to be at the clubhouse with her notarized copy.

Handing the phone back to Chibs, he tucked it away, question in his eyes.

“She’ll be there.”

“Good.” He nodded.

“We need to make another stop.” She said.

Chibs looked at her, slightly confused. “We do?”

“Yep. City council meeting.” She fastened her helmet on.
His frown deepened. “City council? What for?”

“Trust me. You won’t want to miss it.” She grinned, climbing onto the bike behind him. Her grin widening as she caught his confused expression in one of the mirrors. But he turned the bike back towards downtown Charming.

They got a couple of nasty looks as Chibs pulled the bike right in front of City Hall.

“You sure about this?” He questioned again.

“Absolutely.” She said, walking up the concrete stairs and into the building.

Settling into a couple of seats in the back to listen to the satisfied glee in Jacob Hale’s voice.

“My office has sent over the outstanding paperwork & permits required by the city for your review.” Hale handed over a pile of folders to the city council members.

“Thank you, Mr. Mayor. We will now proceed with C5-0710 ordinance to allow the property associated with the 99 on-ramp to…” Council member Westmoreland trailed off as a man came striding into the chamber with a large, black gear bag and a child-sized doll slung over his shoulder that bounced with Potter’s long stride.

“What the fuck?” Chibs questioned, twisting to watch Potter continue his way down to the very front of the council members.


“Mary, mother of Christ!” Chibs softly gasped, his eyes widening as he realized who the man was.

“It gets better.” She advised.

“What is this about Mr. Potter? Were in the middle of a council meeting.” Westmoreland prompted.

“Moral bankruptcy, sir.” Potter answered after setting down the bag and doll down on the table.

Chibs snorted at the righteous outrage in Potter’s voice.

“Jacob Hale as scraped the bottom of the barrel to fund Charming Heights and he’s dumping the sludge in your backyard!” Potter dramatically emptied out the large bag. Sex toys dumped in a disturbing large pile on the table in full view. A few falling to the floor, as a collective gasp of shock rippled through the chamber.

Chibs snorted again, choking back a fit of laughter. His reaction had her grinning. Joyous in seeing his glee at the proceedings.

“Jesus Christ! What the hell is this?” Jacob stands up in horrified shock, realizing his dream of Charming Heights was going up in smoke right before his eyes.

“The Tokyo Fund, as it’s called in the Mayor’s proposal, is actually a single investor. The Natsuki family, the largest manufacturer of sex dolls and hard core sex paraphanelia in the world.” Potter informs the council members, staring down at the child sized doll in green shorts. “Including the sumyoung boy line for the discerning pedophile.”
“Oh, come on! Peter, this is bullshit.” Jacob entreats to the head of the council.

Westmoreland shot Jacob a withering look, “Jacob, let him finish.”

“As a public servant of this district. I felt the good people of Charming needed to know the truth. It’s all there. Feel free to review and...explore.”

Everyone’s attention lay on the pile of sex toys. Potter letting everyone draw their own conclusions.

“How a good day.” Potter concluded abruptly. Turning and walking back to the door he had entered from.

Jacob jogged after Potter, “Why’re you doing this?”

“Because I don’t like you. And the good guys need a win.” He said as he left. Hale left staring off where Potter had left, all his work undone by the show and tell.

Jacob tried to put a spin on the deal, trying his best to salvage what he could. But it was no use. They left as the council members voted to put a recess on the whole thing.

“Oh my God.” Chibs said, taking her hand, lost in his thoughts as they stepped outside.

She laughed, enjoying his reaction. “Told you you wouldn’t want to miss it.”

“How’d you know about this?” He googled at her.

She nodded towards Rita who was talking with some other lady on the sidewalk. “I read her husband. She’s going to go see him right now. Tell him what just happened.”

“Fuck me.” He swore, turning the bike towards the clubhouse with a shake of his head.

The sun was setting already, and the lot was filling up with cars and bikes alike. Everyone seemed on edge, knowing that things were changing. A new leadership to be witnessed and observed.

The dogs came loping up to her as they happily realized they were back. Tails wagging as they scratched and petted to the dogs content. Chibs leading the way into the packed clubhouse. She tucked herself slightly behind him, letting him create a space for them. The dogs helping push people back.

“We fed them an hour ago.” Phil informed them, setting a couple of beers on the bar.

“Aye, good.” He took a healthy swallow of the beer. She ignored hers, not in the mood. Not when so much was riding on the next few hours.

The door opened and she caught sight of Alison in a white blouse, pencil skirt, heels, and more importantly, briefcase in hand.

She raised her hand up, Alison seeing her, she wound her way through the crush of people towards her.

“What’s going on?” She asked.

“Hold on...Juan!” She yelled for their rat. The rest of the guys looked at her, questioning each other what was going on, why she was calling him by his given name.
But she ignored them, her eyes tracking Juan slinking through the crowd, coming to a stop before her. Looking up at his guilt-ridden eyes, his eyes dropping to the floor, unable to hold her gaze. The murmur from the guys breaking as they realized nothing interesting was going on like a fight or something. Men.

“You have the paperwork?” She prompted.

“Yeah.” He nodded, handing her thick set of papers.

Giving them a brief scan to make sure they were the right ones. The rate things were going, she wouldn’t put it past him to give her the papers of his father’s record instead for the weed shop.

She pulled out a pen from her bag, slapping the papers down on the bar, holding the pen to him. “Sign it over to me and date it.”

Juan hesitated but took the pen and signed his ownership of the business to her.

“Okay, now, go wait for church someplace else.” She dismissed brusquely, tucking the papers and her pen back into her bag.

Juan raised his eyes up at her in surprise that she was still pissed off at him. Expecting that she’d forgive him.

“For the love of God, Juan, Forgiveness doesn’t come with a simple signature. You know the rules. Wish I could have watched TV all day.” She warned. “Get, I’m tired and this day isn’t over yet.”

Chibs laid a heavy hand on Juan’s shoulder, leaning down and whispering something to him. Juan’s eyes widened, with a push from Chibs, he stumbled away.

She looked up at Chibs, he looked back at her, waiting for her to ask what it was he’d said to Juan. Shaking her head. “I don’t want to know.”

He quirked a grin, leaned down whispering, “Mo bhanrigh,” before giving her a kiss.

She groaned as they broke for air, leaning her head to his chest. His hands ran up and down her arms.

The room fell silent as everyone saw Jax enter the clubhouse.

She turned in Chibs arms to watch their new President assume responsibility. She didn’t have to speak to him nor look at the weight in his eyes to know he was on board. It was his shoes.

Gone were the white sneakers. Instead Jax put on a pair of leather motorcycle boots. Jax caught her eyes and gave her a ghost of a smile, knowing he knew what she’d been looking at, knowing what it meant. She gave him an encouraging smile and nod. The boy a man now. A man of his own right. She didn’t think anyone else noticed the shoes, but it wasn’t for them to know, it was for Jax’s edification.

The guys stepped out of the way for Jax’s slow procession towards church. The President’s patch clutched in his hand. His eyes taking in every member. The weight of responsibility with each acknowledging look filled Jax’s eyes.

There was a long pause as Jax disappeared into church. The weight of the change impressing itself over every member.
Alison looked confused, missing some hidden clue of what just happened. But she wasn’t a member, she didn’t need to know the history or the meaning of what just happened. Chibs set his beer down on the bar.

“Come on. We’ll get you out of here soon as we can.” She said to Alison, Chibs helping her up from the bar stool.

Tig had stood up and entered church before them. The rest of the guys drifting up behind them. Alison, nervously, glancing at them.

“No Tig. That’s you brother.” Jax stopped Tig from taking his usual seat. No longer SA, no longer Clay’s right hand. And clearly not Jax’s pick for that position. Jax instead looking to Chibs. “You okay with that brother?”

Chibs took a breath, glanced to her a moment.

She squeezed his hand encouragingly.

Chibs turned back to Jax and nodded. “Absolutely.” Taking the seat to be Jax’s right hand.

Alison hovered by the door, unsure what to do as the rest of the guys figured out their place around the table.

She set her bag down as Chibs pulled her into his lap.

Happy smiling as he assumed his usual seat.

Juan came through last, shutting the doors behind him.

“You all straightened out?” Jax questioned Juan before he could sit down.

“Yeah. I’m good.” Juan nodded.

Jax shot her and Chibs a look, then nodded back to Juan. “Ok.”

Juan quickly slid into his usual seat.

Chibs checked around the room. “Ope coming?” He questioned.

“Eight o’three.” Happy reported.

Jax shifted in the chair, taking up the gavel only to knock it down against the table, calling the meeting to order.

The doors opened behind them, finding Tara hesitating as everyone looked at who dared to enter church.

“Sorry.” Tara uttered nervously.

“It’s ok.” Jax leaned forward, waving her closer. Tara moves right to Jax, crouching down so that they were at eye level.

“I’m not going anywhere. I’m here, baby. I’m here.” She heard Tara whisper to Jax.
Turning her attention off Jax and Tara, giving them a sense of privacy. She gave Chibs a smile and peck on his cheek. His hand curling around her waist.

Everyone’s attention was drawn to the doorway again as they heard the doors squeak. Gemma stood in the doorway. Staring at Jax. At Jax and Tara. Her surprise that Tara was here and already at Jax’s side.

Tara stood up, moving around behind Jax. Her hand resting over his heart as she stares down Gemma. Nobody had to say anything, it was evident that Tara had usurped Gemma as queen. The question now is how Gemma was going to take it. Knowing Gemma like she does, it’ll be a battle, Gemma wasn’t a person that just gives up a fight. But they had other business to attend to. Gemma’s influence would be diminished as soon as the guys read the letters. And it’s going to happen tonight.

Gemma taking a nervous look around to the guys, nobody speaking up for her, not even Jax. She haltingly steps back from the doorway. The sound of her boot heels growing quieter as she left the clubhouse.

Everyone looked to Jax and Tara. Tara realizing that she had to leave, too. Jax sighed and gave her a grim smile, pulling her down for a kiss.

“I love you, Jackson. Don’t be too long.” Tara advised before taking her leave.

Happy shut the doors after Tara walked out.

Time to get down to business.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m ‘anam
My Queen = mo bhanrigh
Chapter 129

Chapter Summary

To Be, part 10

Chapter Notes

Fuuddgggeeee, I'm sorry this took so long. I broke down and split this whole next part up. There was just way too much to do in one chapter update. I may need to go back and fix this as I get into the other parts, but if I kept going over this...let's just say it won't be pretty.

Thank you, all, for waiting ever so patiently. You have no idea how much I appreciate it.

Enjoy...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jax pulled out a cigarette, lighting it in the anticipatory silence.

The guys flicked questioning eyes towards Alison, who shifted on her feet nervously. The dogs had circled around the room, Cuchulain settled in a corner between her and Jax, Sorcha laid down under the table. She toed off her boots and curled her socked feet over Sorcha’s belly and side.

“Normally, I’d begin by nominating a VP right now.” Jax glanced at her. “But, we have other business to attend to. History and truths that have been kept from all of you. Even from me, until recently.”

Jax pulled out the folder of letters from his jacket, smoothing the bend he’d created to fit inside his pocket.

“What you’re going to learn tonight...doesn’t leave this room. Nobody that isn’t in this room...is to know what’s going on here. No one. Not Clay, Gemma, or even Unser. The people around this table are the only ones you can trust. The only ones I...we can trust.” Jax stared each person down; ending with Juan who flushed and dropped his eyes to the table; the epitome of submission.

Good, she thought. He’s towing the line and following the rules.

“So no blabbing to your sweetbutt of the night or even Floyd. That includes you, too, Lowen. Are we clear on that?” Jax impressed further the seriousness of what is about to be revealed. She felt Tig squirm and huff. Alison shot her a quick look and shrugged, safe behind her attorney-client privilege.

“Jax? What’re...Why’s Lowen here?” Tig accused at the tone Jax had taken.

She stiffened, closing her eyes, calculating math in her head, attempting to stay calm at Tig’s
interruption. The bond flared to life, jerking at her. And his accusation pissed her off. Taking even
breaths, she pressed her face into her hands. She knew Tig was biting at the bit, he’d had a glimpse
of the letters, he’d been patient...oh so patient under her orders...

“Tig.” Chibs growled warningly.

His voice rolled and rumbled through her, making her gasp deeply. His hands tightened around her.
She wasn’t sure if he knew how close she was to losing it or not, reflexively anchoring her. Sorcha
gave her foot a nervous lick as Cuchulain perked his head up.

“Fuck you...I may not be SA but I get to ask questions.” Tig twisted to look at Chibs. “I’ve been
waiting all fucking day for answers...for him to start some song and dance about keeping our
mouths shut...”

She slammed her hands down on the solid, wood table before her. The harsh slap to the hard
surface stung her palms. Tig cut off his rant, the guys staring at her.

“M ‘anam…” Chibs breathed into her ear, his body tense.

“Oh. my. god...” She swore under her breath, turning her eyes to Tig’s.

“Seriously?” Glaring at Tig for his supposed outrage. She’d been living with the truth of these
letters since she had to read him.

Seeing Tig’s obstinance rearing its’ ugly head, “Just a few minutes longer, Tig. Let Jax tell you
what is going on. He...we have our reasons. Just...let him get through this.” She seethed in a tight
voice. Keeping a tight hold on her words and emotions as she possibly could. She wasn’t going to
control Tig, she wasn’t a monster, she chanted to herself mentally.

Though by the look in Tig’s eyes, she scared him regardless. She sucked in a deep breath, turning
her mind to her math problems. Nope, that wasn’t going to do it, she thought frustratedly.

Twisting around, she searched around in Chib’s jacket and kutte, finding a joint but couldn’t reach
his lighter even as he squirmed to help. Giving up she grabbed up the lighter Jax had tossed onto
the table a minute earlier.

Taking a deep pull on it, letting the smoke waft and hover over her face, breathing it in, calming
her down. It was the good stuff, wiping at her eyes for a moment. Taking another pull, holding it in
letting the pot work its wondrous magic and help calm herself down.

Breathing out a plume of smoke, she opened her eyes. Catching everyone staring at her. Lowen
concerned. Juan, silent and watchful with his downtrodden eyes. Happy and Tig confused. Jax
clearly amused at her antics. His brow popping up in question if it was okay for him to continue or
not.

Rolling her eyes back at him, “Well? We don’t have all night.” She prodded, taking another pull on
the joint. To which Jax rolled his eyes.

Chibs pressed his smiling lips to the curve of her neck, taking the joint from her as she swayed a
little. Fuck, if it wasn’t for his grip on her, she’d probably slide bonelessly down to the floor;
curling up around Sorcha.

Cuchulain got up and moved to her side, laying his head into her lap. Her hands fell to his scruff as
he gave her a low whine.
Her anger falling back with the distractions. She felt Tig grudgingly settle back, like a bird settling its feathers back into place.

Jax jumped back in, garnering everyone’s attention once more. “Look. There’s a lot that’s been going on these last few weeks. Things that I...we...couldn’t bring to the table. Not with Clay as President.”

“Gemma gave me these letters this afternoon. Ordering that when I read them...that I’d kill Clay before he could get up out of his hospital bed. And I would have done just that before...” Jax waved off the sudden worried looks. “But this isn’t the first time I’ve seen these letters. Nancy, after reading Gemma, pointed me to their existence.”

Heads moved to her and then back to Jax.

“What do a bunch of letters have to do with the club?” Happy questioned. “Or the secrecy?”

Jax stood up and walked around the table towards Alison, sending Happy a look to hold off on his question for a minute. “Lowen, you brought your set, right?”

“Yes.” She stepped forward and opened up her briefcase. Everyone watching Jax and Alison tensely.

Lowen pulled out her sealed copy of the letters, handing it to Jax. He looked at the seal and turned it around to show everyone else at the table. She recognized her and Chibs initials scrawled across the seal.

“What the hell is this Jax?” Tig couldn’t help himself.

“The importance of these letters…” Jax started but trailed off with a shake of his head.

“When we understood the damage those letters would cause, we had them copied and notarized by Lowen. She kept the notarized copy in her possession, then we hid more copies around the town and area.” Chibs said.

“We needed to protect their legitimacy as much as possible. They are proof of what is going to be confirmed right now.” Jax added sadly.

“Proof of what?” Juan asked.

“Go ahead Alison, compare your copy to what Gemma gave Jax.” She cut off Juan’s question.

Alison looked over at her a moment but did as she was ordered.

Everyone watched as Alison checked the two piles of letters. The tension in the room increased as the minutes ticked by as Alison checked her set to Jax’s along with the notary ledger. Alison hesitated momentarily a few times, pulling out letters and setting them into their own pile.

“I’m sorry, your set is missing these documents. Three letters and the copy of the accident report.” Alison concluded, slightly vexed at the inconsistency.

“Yeah, okay.” Jax nodded. “Leave them there. I’ll have Rat escort you home.”

Alison shot her a worried look as she packed up her briefcase. The letters still laid out on the table. Everyone watched as Jax led Alison to the door, opening it for her. “Rat! Escort Lowen home.”
Rat popped up at the doorway, his eyes filled with questions but knew better than to ask them. “Sure thing.”

“Tell everyone here to go home, we’re going to be here for a long while.” Jax ordered before closing the door as Alison slipped out.

Jax turned and gathered the letters, the silence weighed heavily as he sat back down. The piles of letters before him, the three missing he glanced at with a pained look.

“I never wanted this chair. I had plans when we walked out of Stockton. These letters...what Nancy told me...it took me a long time to come to terms with it. It still gnaws at me. My need to protect my family.”

“What’re you saying?” Tig pressed forward, leaning into the table.

“I’m saying, admitting to you, is that I had a plan of leaving. Leaving the club, leaving Charming. Packing up Tara and the boys and getting out of here. To start a new life.”

“But Jax...you...it’s always been you that would take over after Clay…” Tig said in a hush.

“I know. Maybe before…” Jax shook his head. “It won’t work, not now. Not with what we’re up against. What the future holds for this club.” Jax looked at her again.

“You were going to leave?” Juan asked, wide-eyed. Bringing everyone back to the here and now.

She glared down the table at Juan for daring to speak. But the same looks were on Tig’s and Happy’s faces.

“I was almost killed inside. All I could think about was Tara and the boys.” Jax answered with a shrug. “I made a deal with Clay after we got out. I helped push the mule vote through and I would get a free pass.”

Jax lit another cigarette. “I thought I had it all figured out.”

She couldn’t help her amused snort, recalling just how bad his Great Escape Plan was. Jax gave her a mild glare, to which she just smirked back at him.

“I didn’t know what was going on behind my back. Tara found these letters in my gear when we got back from Belfast. Maureen Ashby hid them. Once we landed, I didn’t...we didn’t have a chance to unpack at all before we were shipped off to Stockton, as you all recall.” He defended himself.

“Even when we got out, Tara didn’t tell me or show me these letters. She hid them, worried of what I might do. Tara wants to get out of Charming just as badly as I do.”

“You’re still here, wearing that patch...What changed?” Happy asked.

“Chibs and Nancy changed. Nancy, our psychic shiv. Fuck me.”

Jax took another draw on his cigarette.

“Without her, I’d still be in the dark of the truth. Clay and my own mother...lying to me...even now. Keeping secrets...from me...from all of you. To protect their sins, to bury the truth of what they did to my father. Making me partly responsible for the entire mess. And none of this shit was my fault. Yet she’s trying to drag me into doing her dirty work, to protect the lie.” Jax rattled darkly
through a plume of smoke.

“JT? He was in an accident.” Tig questioned.

Jax cut a hard look at Tig. “No, he wasn’t. He was murdered. Unser wrote it up as an accident. But it was Clay and Gemma that set him up. It’s in these letters...JT knew...”

“Hold up...why was he writing to Maureen in the first place?” Happy asked.

“Maureen was his old lady. John had plans of getting out of the club. Moving to Belfast to be with her. Trinity is my half-sister.”

Jax waited a moment as the news hit the guys, a ghost of a smirk on his face as he watched the guys reactions. Even she was amused by their reactions.

“How old was he? Holy shit, Jax.” Tig rocked back, blinking in astonishment. “Are you serious? JT stepping out on Gem?”

It took her a second to catch Tig’s meaning, not fully believing Tig actually said it and meant it. “Jesus Christ. Tig...for God’s sake. How anyone managed to live so long with her...they deserve a medal just for that...”

Jax shot her an annoyed look.

“What? It’s true.” She shrugged. Chibs starting to chuckle.

Jax rolled his eyes with a deep huff. Forcing himself to get serious again. “It’s all here, in his hand. And that’s not all. John wrote that he was going to meet with Kellen and the Kings. A meeting where he was going to negotiate the club out of guns.”

The guys shifted and rocked back in their chairs as the implications hammered home.

“He was killed before he could make that meeting.”

“Shit.” Juan uttered as his eyes went wider and wider.

She wondered if Juan’s eyes would pop out if his lids opened any wider. Breathing in the smoke of the pot Chibs had breathed out behind her.

“How? You said Tara hid them from you...how’d you find them?” Happy questioned.

Jax nodded in her direction. “I gave Nancy and Chibs my father’s book to read. She’d just been forced to read Gemma and her reaction to being here and around us. Reading Tig...then Gemma...I was concerned. I got a call a few hours later, Chibs telling me that Nancy said there’s more to the story. That the book is only half of the story. The letters...these letters are the other half. Thought it was a joke, but when I mentioned the letters to Tara...”

He breathed in another pull on his cigarette, giving his head a small shake at some memory.

“The look Tara gave me...I knew she had them. I was beyond pissed that she kept these from me all that time. Never breathed a word about them to me, not until I asked for them. Even then, she didn’t want me to read them. Chibs made me promise on my Reaper that I wouldn’t do anything until I talked with him and Nancy. Saying Nancy was freaking out just by telling me about their existence.”

The guys all glanced at her.
“You all know how skittish she can be, especially when we first got here. Wasn’t saying much of anything, her physical reactions getting worse with every read.” Jax added.

She snuggled deeper into Chibs lap, his free hand running up and down her arm.

“When Gemma attacked her at the garage...she let slip some things. Started telling me what she’s seeing. The little she said...it was enough to get me worried about our safety. All of our safety.” Chibs said.

“Like what?” Tig asked.

She, Jax and Chibs all shared a look. Jax nodding to her. “Tell them.”

“War. I saw war and death.”

“You mean with the cartel?” Happy asked.

“No. The cartel...the Irish...they are small potatoes compared to the war that we are currently in...over these letters.”

“Currently?” Juan broached.

“We have been at war for months now. Ever since Opie and Lyla’s wedding. When Gemma realized the letters existed.” She filled in.

Tig and Happy sent her confused looks.

“Yes, that’s when things rampantly went into high gear. Gemma has a knack for creating chaos all by herself.” She breathed.

“What’re you saying?” Tig questioned her.

“I’m saying that Gemma is at the center of what has happened to this club. Telling herself and everyone around her that the things she does is to protect her family, only it’s made everything worse. And she doesn’t even realize it. Still convinced she’s right and knows what’s best for the club...for all of you...for this town.”

“I hate to agree with her...but it’s true. Everything that’s happened with the club started with Gemma.” Jax nodded sagely.

“That doesn’t make any sense, she’s just an old lady.” Happy growled.

“No, she isn’t.” She slammed back harshly.

“Fuck, let them read the letters. They’ll have more questions instead of guessing at shite.” Chibs advised.

Jax shot his new SA a look, but acquiesced.

“Like I said before, these don’t leave this room. The information here, doesn’t leave this room.” Jax reiterated.

She reached down into her bag, Cuchulain whining a little as his paw had settled on top of her bag she was grabbing.

“That notarized set wasn’t the only copy we made. I knew that you would need to read them.
Gemma proved that she’s not above lying and destroying evidence.” Tossing thick envelopes around the table to the guys.

“What about Bobby and Ope?” Tig asked.

“We’ll tell them when they’re back.” Jax said. “You don’t say shit, none of you do. Let us handle it.”

After a moment of silence, Tig was the first to open his and start reading. Happy and Juan followed suit. Jax shuffled the letters he had from Gemma and Lowen. Chibs grabbed a set for himself. She watched as the truth begin to reveal itself, as everyone began reading.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

My soul = m `anam
Chapter 130

Chapter Summary

To Be, part 11

Chapter Notes

Just a short one, rough, but I couldn't resist adding this scene. Still working on the reactions coming up.

Happy 2nd-versary of this fic! 2 years writing and posting, I can't believe it myself. So much more to come. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all of your support, comments, and patience.

She sighed as she watched the guys read the letters. Silently riveted by a ghost of the past speaking the truth, destroying the lies that Clay and Gemma spun ever since they killed John. Thus, setting the course of the club into a direction that John didn’t want the club to go, ever. And she, she was bored. Staring at the ash that grew alarmingly long from Tig’s cigarette, held forgotten between his fingers as he flipped a page to the next with the other.

Even Jax and Chibs were re-reading them in the tense silence. Nobody talking or making any sort of noise to break this heavy silence.

She was kind of surprised at their silence. The only clue she had of their reaction so far, was the minute tightening of facial muscles around an eye or jaw to indicate that they were processing the truth of the past. She knew that once they finished, their reactions would turn explosive. In the meantime, she was bored.

Shifting out of Chibs lap he leaned back to give her room. His dark eyes catching hers in question.

“I’ll be right back.” She mollified, half-tripping over the dogs while Chibs reluctantly released her.

“Hurry back.” He said.

She gave him a smile, leaned down and gave his cheek a kiss.

Cuchulain at her side as she stepped out of church, the earlier crush of everyone had left, thankfully. Rat looked up from behind the bar he was wiping down.

“Everything okay?” he asked.

“Yeah. Lowen get home alright?” She questioned.

“Yeah. All good.” Rat nodded.

“Okay, thanks.” She yawned, wandering into the kitchen.
“Of for the love of…” Jerking as she saw JT, casually leaning a hip against the counter watching Chucky.

“Hey Seer. Anything I can get you?” Chucky turned to look at her from the sink, where he was rinsing out a large pot.

“No. I...you should get yourself home.” She waved him off. “Been a long day…” She expanded at Chucky’s stare.

“Okey dokey.” He grinned and nodded at her, setting the clean pot down on the drying rack.

JT smirked at her, his brow cocked watching her as Chucky hustled out the door.

“Having fun?” She snarked to the ghost.

Cuchulain had stepped between her and JT, giving the ghost a warning growl.

“Impressive wolf guard you’ve acquired.” JT waved a hand towards Cuchulain.

“He’s a dog, not a wolf. And if he keeps you from invading me, then good. Scared the living crap out of me...and Chibs. Oh, hey...good going on outing his secret identity to Fi by the way.” Shaking her head remembering the fight Fi and Chibs had when they got home from the barbeque.

The two of them exchanging words in Gaelic while she and Kerrianne sat on the couch watching the two of them. Kerrianne shrugging at her questioning look, just as lost of what was being said. Chibs growing more and more agitated as Fiona kept after him. Ramping up to something. Whatever it was...it was a doozy. Causing Chibs to freeze and then storming out of the house to the backyard, pulling out his cigarettes as he went.

“Well, then.” She said in the sudden silence.

Fiona scowled, apparently having lost the argument. “Will you talk some sense into that thick head of his?!?” Fiona pointed at her, her voice thick with brogue and the heat of the argument.

“Fi! I have no idea what the two of you were saying, but you know, there’s probably a very good reason he can’t or won’t talk to you. And you hammering at him like that... He is what he is, Fi. His own man. That really has nothing to do with you and your opinions. And for future reference, I’m on his side.”

Kerrianne gave a surprised snort that had Fi cutting a look at her daughter. But it broke up the fight and allowed her to escape and find Chibs. Her headache was splitting her head open and she doubted Chibs would set foot back in the house right now. Not until he’d calmed down at least.

Finding him sitting on top of the patio steps down to the lawn. White plume of smoke streaming from his nostrils. She sat down next to him, he shooting her a warning look. But wrapped an arm around her shoulders, pulling her close. “At least she didn’t throw things at you.” She offered as a silver lining to the fight.

He barked a laugh and she knew he’d be okay. His normal whiskey-colored eyes turned black under the night sky. Lips curled in a smile as he looked at her. “Another minute and she would have.” He said.

Grumbling at that, she shifted around so she straddled his lap, facing him. His arms curling around her waist and hips. Her hands stroking his forehead and cheeks. “I love you. Nothing else matters.”
He heaved a heavy sigh as they swayed together. “Love ye’, too. And what’s done is done. Can’t go back and undo it. She...talking like I can just quit. Like some shitty job. It isn’t that. She doesn’t…” He broke off in frustration.

“I know.” She said simply, hugging him to help the hurt go away.

“Fuck me, I don’t know what I did to deserve ye’.” He said, cuddling into her. Holding her like a teddy bear.

“Hmm. Everything right, I’d guess.”

Their eyes met, lips finding each others. The world righting itself as they held and kissed each other.

She sighed remembering that perfect moment.

JT huffed at her admonishment, jerking her back to the here and now.

Ignoring JT, she rubbed her nose as scanned the haphazardly packed pantry. “Ooohh...” she breathed catching sight of a brand new package of Oreo cookies. Grinning at the sudden, visceral memory of eating Oreo cookies that first night with Chibs in their motel room. Sharing stories, getting to know each other. How far they’ve come since that night.

“You’re taking a snack break, now?” JT asked her in astonishment.

Grabbing the package, she found a clean glass and poured herself a glass of milk. “What? I don’t need to read the letters to know what’s in them. Known for weeks now. I’m bored and high. What the hell are you doing here anyway? Shouldn’t you be teaching Piney the ropes of the afterlife or something?” She snarked back, putting the milk away.

JT sighed. “He’s fine. Resting.”

She huffed a laugh at that. “I’d think he’s resting eternally now, no longer having to haul flesh and bone around anymore.”

“Jesus. You have no idea.” He rolled his eyes.

She just looked quizzically at him.

JT shrugged, “Coming here, interacting with you. You, especially...it wipes us out. Not to mention when newly arrived without all that flesh and bone.” He explained with a wave of his hand.

“Huh? Me, especially?” She blinked at him, curious at what he just revealed.

JT shot her an annoyed look.

Realizing what she’d asked and how it sounded, she shrugged giving up. “Yeah, okay. I’m high, did I not mention that?”

“You’ve got a smart mouth on you, you know that right?” JT complained.

“It matches my smart brain, so there you go. Now, what are you doing here?”

“I’m here to make sure things are getting fixed. I thought you’d get shit done faster when I saw you last. Piney’s saying…”
“Oh. My. God. They’re in there right now reading your letters. Clay royally screwed the club up and whatever Piney is telling you, he has no idea himself. Chibs and I have been working to save as many lives as possible.”

She scooped up her cookies and milk, sweeping out of the kitchen. JT catching up to her. Cuchulain keeping between her and the ghost that seemed to be on a mission to drive her insane.

“That doesn’t explain why it’s taking so long...saving lives? Kozik? Piney? Good going there.” JT pointed out. “The rate you’re going, the entire club will be with me on my side than here.”

She halted abruptly, glaring angrily at JT.

“Don’t. Don’t you dare go there. You have no idea just how bad it is or could have been at this point. Piney made his decision. I begged him to stop. Chibs...Jax...we all did. And Kozik...it could’ve been any one of the other guys. I’m doing what I can. There is a thing called free will, remember?” JT looked pissed off that she dared to challenge him.

“You know what...it doesn’t matter what you think. You’re dead. What we do here is none of your concern anymore. So just leave me alone, I can’t believe this.” Waving her package of cookies in frustration.

“Uhhh, Seer??? You okay?” A careful voice came from the other end of the room. “Who’re you talking to?”

Rat still behind the bar, wringing his hands in the bar towel as he looked at her. The expression on his face said he thought she’d completely gone off her rocker and wondered if he might have to do something. Exactly what that would be, he didn’t look like he knew. God.

“No one...I’m fine. Headache…” She said vaguely, mentally blaming JT for making her look crazy in front of the prospect. JT just grinned widely at her, having a bit of fun at her expense.

She turned back to church. Frowning as she was confronted with the firmly closed doors. Cookies in one hand, icy-cold glass of milk in the other, no free hand available to open the freaking door. Her headache pounding behind her left eye on top of it all.

JT snickered at her, seeing her quandary.

Ass, she thought, carefully shifting the cookies under an arm and thus freeing a hand to open the door. Success at last. Sticking her tongue out at JT as she shut the door on him. Mentally sighing as Rat continued to stare worriedly at her.

She set her goodies down. Chibs helping her back into his lap, grazing her neck with a kiss as she took up the package of cookies.

Cuchulain stayed at the door, his attention to the doors made it look as if he could still see JT hanging out on the other side, giving a low growl of warning at the ghost. Sorcha joined Cuchulain, sniffing at the door.

“What’s with them?” Chibs asked.

“You don’t want to know.” She said, twisting the package of Oreos.

The cellophane packaging crinkling noisily as she wrestled to open it. Twisting it from one end to the other as the hermetically-sealed package refused to open for her. Growing frustrated as she turned it from one end to the other, yanking and pulling at the ends to get at the promised sugary
“Hey…” she whined as a hand reached out and snatched the package out of her hands. Staring at Tig who easily opened the package. Handing it back to her with a superior look.

Looking down at the now open package and back to Tig.

“I loosened it.” She defended her earlier attempts, thus making it easier for Tig to open.

Chibs breathing hitching as he tried to keep from laughing. Jax shot her a smirk that reminded her of JT just a few moments ago. Tig slapped a hand to his forehead but pointedly went back to his reading.

Shrugging she took up an Oreo and dunked it into the milk. Careful to not let the milk drip onto the table as she took a bite of the cookie. Taking in the simple pleasure while everyone finished their reading so that they can begin the real work.
A stealth war was underway. A hand sneaking out towards her package of Oreo’s. She tensed, watching. Waiting to see if it dared to cross the line of demarcation she had drawn in her mind.

The hand hit her no-cross zone, she didn’t hesitate. Swiftly taking hold of Chib’s wrist, using his hand to slap the cookie thief’s hand away.

“Hey!” Jax huffed, drawing his hand back.

“Oy.” Chibs groused, shaking out his hand. “Will the two of ye’ calm the fuck down.” He grumbled.

She gave her man an apologetic look, buzzing his cheek with a kiss. He gave her a dark look but forgave her twisting to kiss her back only to go back to his reading.

Jax smirked his pout as she shifted her cookies further out of his reach, setting an arm as a barrier from further attacks. He’s so like his father, she thought darkly, dipping another cookie in her milk.

Tig crashed his chair back suddenly, drawing everyone’s attention. Reading the last letter clutched in his hand. The paper shaking.

Tig dropped the letter down onto the pile before him. His ice-blue eyes, pained and broken, looked to her. Fighting to keep his emotions at bay.

JT must’ve left the building because their level of attention to the door had relaxed about twenty minutes ago.

Tig dropped the letter down onto the pile before him. His ice-blue eyes, pained and broken, looked to her. Fighting to keep his emotions at bay.

Silently begging her...pleading with her to deny what he’d just read. To allow him to keep believing in the lie. That he hasn’t been used by the very people he considered family. In turn, been made complicit in the events that shaped the history of the last decade.

She held his eyes grimly. There was no more hiding from the truth. Tig took another half-step
back, knocking into his chair almost tripping.

“Tig…” Jax said.

“Don’t. I...Fuck.” Tig shook his head wildly as he opened the door, starting to walk out.

“Church isn’t over, Tiggy.” Chibs warned.

“I. Need. A. Fucking. Drink. Christ.” Tig’s bit out over his shoulder, the sound of his boots striking the floor further indication of how upset he was.

Juan and Happy turned back to their reading. Urgently wanting to know for themselves the reason Tig was so upset. But they didn’t have the same history with Clay and Gemma as Tig had.

Jax started up out of his chair to go after Tig.

“Give him a few.” She advised.

Jax slid her a questioning look, trusting her advice, he sat back down.

Happy’s stern face set stonily as he rubbed at his forehead, finishing his reading.

Juan looking green. “Jax, this...this is a Mayhem vote.” Juan dared to verbalize.

She shot Juan a hard look, Jax mirroring her, Juan dipped his head most likely wishing he hadn’t said anything. Chibs swearing softly.

“He’s right, Jax.” Happy growled, setting down his last letter.

“I fucking know.” Jax seethed.

“God.” She breathed around the rising anger wafting off of the men in the room. The bond she had with Tig flared from his hurt and anger.

“Shite. Hold off until Tig’s back.” Chibs growled, glancing towards the door.

“Alexander Emil Trager! Get your ass back in here now!” She yelled, glaring at the open door. Unable to take Tig’s unhappy absence a moment longer.

“Emil?” Jax couldn’t help smirking at the new factoid about their former SA.

“Christ.” Chibs sighed, recognizing the distraction brewing.

“God Fucking Dammit!” They heard Tig swear as he came storming back into the room. A bottle of beer in his hand as he slammed the doors shut, pacing the room, unable to sit still. Shooting her a searing look. “Only my mother calls me that. And she’s dead.” He complained, waving the bottle at her.

“She sighed, distracting herself by taking up another cookie. She didn’t like how out of control this bond was between her and Tig. And she didn’t have enough time to think about it at all. Time to let it settle, maybe die down with time, let it scab over or something.

“If I sit down, I’m going to explode. I can’t believe this. This has to be a mistake.” Tig ranted, taking a pull of beer, swallowing hard.

“It’s true, Tig. Everything we’ve been told for years has been a complete lie.” Jax mollified.
Tig shook his head. Still wrapping his head around. “I just…”

“You’re talking about over ten...fifteen years, Jax.” Happy said.

“I know. What you’re feeling now...that’s how I felt when I first read these.”

“Why the fuck didn’t you bring these…” Tig exploded. “You said, you read them after we got out...after we came back from Illinois...why the hell have you kept these all a secret all this time? And how can you sit there eating those goddamn cookies!?!?” Waving his arms around wildly.

She raised her brows at Tig, swallowing down her bite. Calm in the face of Tig’s rage.

“Tig…” Chibs and Jax started on top of each other as she took a sip of her milk.

Setting her glass down, giving Jax and Chibs a look that she’s got this. They both glanced at each other, settling back giving her the floor.

“Tig,” she said in a calm voice to Tig’s sturm und drang performance. “You aren’t angry at Jax for keeping these from you.”

“The hell I’m not!” Tig countered heatedly.

“You’re hurt and angry because you know that you should have seen this in your former best friend. You, his right hand, all these years. The one who helped Clay solidify his hold onto that gavel.”

Tig slowed his pacing, as everyone regarded him in a new light.

“No. I...I never knew that. Clay never said…” Tig definitively shook his head.

“You were sooo keen on being SA...of being in Clay’s confidence. Like being accepted to sit at the cool kid’s table. You let yourself believe what you wanted to believe. To hear what you wanted to hear.” She led, taking up another cookie, separating it. “Willing to do things for him. For the promise of such a coveted role.”

Tig froze as she spoke, the wheels grinding to a halt as she spoke.

“It’s heady to have that kind of power, to be so close to the man in charge. To have his ear, to have him take your counsel. To have his trust. Correction, to think you have his trust.” Dropping the cookie back down, getting up to walk to Tig.

Tig flinched when she stopped before him.

“Only to find out that it was all a lie. That you were just a tool to be used. Disposable, when you’ve lost your...usefulness.”

“No. I...it isn’t...wasn’t like that. We were at war...the Mayans, we were fighting for our lives…” Tig uttered, rambling fragments of reasons, of what things were like from his memories.

“Ah, yes, the ‘infamous Mayan War’.” She mocked, with a raise of her hands.

Everyone looked at her, shocked at her mocking of a dark time in the club’s history. Even Jax shot her a warning look.

“Yes, the war with the Mayans, we were lucky we survived.” Tig latched onto, his voice strengthening.
“The perfect diversion to cover up the murder of a club President.” She cut him off.

“Holy shit.” Jax breathed.

“You’re saying, Clay started a war just to…” Juan fit together.

Tig frozen, staring at her in growing horror. “JT...it was an accident…” He said weakly.

She stared up into his eyes. “It was murder.” She corrected swiftly. "And you were duped into helping. Clay letting you get riled up to whip up the war, the entire club looking in the completely opposite direction. How convenient for Clay. Nobody none the wiser. Well, except one. And you greedily and without question took up the mantle of that job off Clay’s bloodied hands...like a good soldier. Promised that flash if you succeeded in that job. And succeed you did.”

Tig fell to his knees, beer bottle knocking to the floor as Tig covered his face with his hands. The silence was deafening.

“Oh God...Lowell Sr.” Jax groaned. “Tig...he was the only mechanic that JT trusted with his bike.”

“I...” Tig keened and rocked a little on his knees.

“Gemma told me today, thought that Clay paid him off, threatened him to sabotage the bike.” Jax finished his thought. “You killed Lowell Sr., didn’t you?”

“Jax...Clay...he said...he was a junkie...was ratting on the club...” Tig stuttered what he’d been told, what he believed.

She held up a hand to Jax. Looking back up into Tig’s lost eyes.

“Stop, it’s worthless to listen to what Clay told you. We know it was a lie. You know it was a lie. Stop giving voice to a lie.”

“But…” Tig gasped painfully, looking up at her.

“It wasn’t your fault. You didn’t know the facts. You thought you were doing the right thing, protecting the club. It wasn’t your fault.” She banged into Tig’s head.

“Clay…” Tig tried again.

“Clay lied to you. Used you. Just like he’s always done. And not just you, Tig. Clay uses this club. He and Gemma, both. But you know now. You know the truth. You can’t hide your ignorance anymore. You can’t hide your actions behind Clay’s orders. You can’t hide behind Gemma’s manipulations anymore. They don’t hold any regard for you Tig. Not like you do for them. They aren’t your family, they aren’t your friends. Because you aren’t to them. You are just a tool to be used and manipulated. And if they decide you are a problem for them, well, you know what happens to people who make themselves problems.”

“Holy shit.” Juan uttered as she and Tig stared at each other. Neither one of them acknowledging Juan.

“You knew though. It’s why you had me read that book. Why you’ve been hounding me with all this thinking shit. You’ve known this whole time and didn’t say anything!”

She let him vent, yelling his rage at her. It was his way of releasing some of his guilt and horror. Ripping a band-aid off can hurt.
“Tig!” Chibs stood up.

“It’s fine.” She waved Chibs back.

“You fucking knew!” Tig exclaimed. His eyes wide, blinking rapidly as he stared at her.

“Of course I knew.” She rolled her eyes. “Hi. Seer. Nice to meet ya’.” Waving her hand jauntily.

Tig just scowled at her, not amused by her attempt at humor at the moment apparently.

She shrugged helplessly at Tig.

“Why the fuck didn’t you just tell us? Tell me? All these weeks...was all this some sick joke to you?”

His accusation cut at her. That she took pleasure in all of this, that he even thought she enjoyed it.

“How dare you.” She wanted to grab him and shake him. Not just this afternoon she stopped him from doing something so colossally stupid. Now, trying to shift the blame off his hands to hers.

Idiot.

“I’m sorry.” Tig flinched back from her, realizing his mistake.

But he got her good and angry. Her head splitting open wasn’t helping.

“I know you’re hurt and angry…” she took a deep breath. “but you don’t get to accuse me of enjoying your pain from any of this. Why we didn’t tell you? There is more going on than just the letters, Tig! Things that we couldn’t tell you until now! Because until Clay was out as president, there was no way in hell we could get the club out of the mess it’s in. We needed time. We had to do things to try and protect people’s lives. To try and get Clay and Gemma to admit their fault on their own. To, by some miracle, grow up and take responsibilities like the adults they think they are.” She was breathing hard, her entire body zinging and flaring. She clenched her jaw, her triskele tingling harshly as she fought to keep under control.

Tig had rolled back, fear in his face and eyes.

Chibs must’ve gotten up, because she felt his hand at the back of her neck. His arm wrapping around her waist. His low voice rolling and thick with gaelic as he spoke into her ear. She felt herself dropping down inside herself. Fuck. What the fuck, she thought as she clung to Chibs. Her legs unable to hold her upright, Chibs taking firmer hold on her.

“I don’t enjoy any of this. Not one bit. I didn’t start the war. I didn’t lie to you. This mess isn’t mine to clean up. Yet here I am. Helping clean it up. Because if I didn’t, your daughter would be dead. Burned alive in front of you. Don’t you dare lay your guilt at my feet. And I didn’t tell you, Tig, because, until today, you were still sycophant to Clay and Gemma, even fucking Wayne. Believing what they tell you. You don’t get to judge me.”

“I’m sorry.” Tig heaved, tears running down his face. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

He sounded like he’d been saying that for a long time and she was just hearing it.

“Don’t be sorry. Fucking help us.” She said tiredly.

“Oh, come on.” Chibs said firmly, sweeping her up in his arms. Sitting back down in their chair.

“Hap, Juice, help Tig.” Jax ordered.
The two men getting up without question, taking hold of Tig and setting him back down in his chair.

Silence hung over the table. Everyone unsure of what to do or say next.

“So, what else don’t we know?” Happy questioned.

End Notes

Comments are appreciated, will do my best to respond back.

All characters and places, besides my own, belong to Kurt Sutter. Go buy his DVD’s and merch to support his creative talent.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!