A Lamb Amongst Lions

by Dexidoodle

Summary

Life was as comfortable as it got in Steelport. Until she got carjacked by the wrong guy...

Notes

The absolute first fic I ever wrote. Previously posted on FF.net but now it's here (without all of my lame-arise notes)
Based on Saints Row: The Third

See the end of the work for more notes
Chapter 1

It was late in the afternoon when Chris stepped out of the Department of Motor Vehicles Building and into the cool Autumn sunset. There was a celebrating teenager whooping on the pavement, a small piece of official looking paper clenched in his fist, a piece of paper which indicated the first step towards his independence. Chris had seen this sight quite a few times before, almost on a daily basis. That, and the looks of abject misery which meant that the piece of paper had not been won. She gave a small smile and shook her head. That's all this city needed, another crap teenage driver.

Her parents had been killed in a car accident only a few years before, when a careless teen driver had skipped a red light and crashed into them. If there were not a job shortage in Steelport, she would have left the DMV long ago, but as it was, she was stuck there.

She deftly evaded the still dancing teen and made her way to the staff parking lot. Her precious car was gleaming in the fading light, its Gunmetal finish looking pink in the sunset. She sighed to herself. This was what she had left of her Dad. He had built this car himself in the driveway of their home. He had loved it almost as much as he had loved Chris & her mother. She had the house as well now, but that was her mums pride and joy through and through. Everything had been decorated to reflect Daphne Worth, right down to the peach coloured exterior and 'Doris Day' nineteen fifties aesthetic.

The car was her dad, right down to a tee. Classic and classy with a good deal of grunt. Chris smiled at the thought.

Chris got into the car, threw her handbag into the back seat and grinned as she turned the key and the car growled to life. She loved to drive, especially this car. She waved at one of her workmates who was dodging the jubilant teen on the steps and reversed out of her car park and started on her way home, chuckling as the kid was now trying to do some kind running man move and was attempting to engage anyone who happened near. She moved out of the parking lot and headed south towards Bridgeport, noting as she drove the increased and slightly worrying activity on the sidewalks and by-ways.

When you lived in Steelport, there were a few inalienable truths. The most prominent of which was that the city was under the control of a conglomerate of gangs, or more specifically The Syndicate.

Comprising of three gangs who had merged to create a "Super Gang", they had carved up the city into their own little parcels. Morningstar controlled Downtown & New Colvin. They were into white collar crime and high end prostitution. They were the leaders of the gangs in general due to their immense wealth, influence and power. Today there seemed to be an increased presence of the gang called The Deckers. They were based on Stanfield Island and were big on cybercrime among other things. As she drove through Brickston in the south of the Island, she noted they were about in numbers and that they seemed agitated, shouting instructions to each other out of Black and Neon Blue vehicles and waving their guns about. Guns were also very common in Steelport. Everyone had one, even Chris had a shotgun in her closet at home.

It was probably best if Chris moved a little faster through the area.

Chris normally didn't take note of the gangs at all. They were, after all, a fact of life in this city, especially the Deckers who looked slightly ridiculous in their Emo/Anime/Cyberpunk get ups, but she knew that they were very dangerous and had no regard for the lives of the ordinary citizens of
the city. She lived in Bridgeport, in the area controlled by the Luchadores. The gang populated by steroid abusing psychopaths who wore army surplus gear and Mexican style wrestling masks. They were considered the most dangerous of the gangs. They were unstable and unpredictable and it seemed that even Morningstar had trouble keeping them on a short leash. They controlled Carver Island in the southwest of Steelport and Bridgeport was in the southeast of Carver Island.

Chris was a block away from the Carver Bridge, the way out of Decker territory, when she stopped at the last set of traffic lights. She sat gazing at the red light, waiting for it to change so that she could get out of this part of the city, when her passenger door was suddenly wrenched open and a large man leaped into her car.

"Get out of the fucking car." He grated menacingly, his teeth bared and an intimidating glower contorting his face.

"Fuck off" She hollered back, without thinking, "You get out of the fucking car!"

He blinked, his handsome face shocked that some peon had dared deny him. Most people would have leapt from the car and run screaming into the street. He produced a very large handgun and held it under her chin. "Get out of the car or I will kill you." He said more calmly and with more menace, his crystalline eyes narrowing.

"This is a mint condition, 1972 Hammerhead... you will take this car over my dead body" She replied through gritted teeth and with equal calm and menace.

What was she doing?

Her brain was screaming at her, 'get out of the damned car'. Her palpitating heart was yelling back, 'this is your dads car, You can not even comprehend letting it go'.

The man looked dumbfounded for a moment as he locked eyes with the stubborn woman when he seemed to catch a glimpse of something bad out of the front windscreen.

Very Bad Indeed!

"Drive! Drive! Drive!" He yelled suddenly, making Chris jump in her seat.

She looked out of the windscreen and saw that during their exchange the lights had changed and because the car hadn't moved, they were eliciting honks from the cars behind. They had also drawn the attention of a group of Deckers on the opposite pavement. Deckers that were now excitedly pointing and yelling… and leveling their weapons at them… at her.

Chris slammed the car into gear and planted her foot. The car screeched to life and zoomed into the intersection as the first hale of bullets began to rain. She could see the unmistakable neon blue and black of Decker vehicles move to block off the Carver Bridge. She quickly yanked on the handbrake and spun the car to the left in a cloud of smoke, smashed her foot down and sped instead towards downtown. She vaguely noticed her unwanted passenger scramble to hold on as she weaved through the traffic, towards the entrance to the freeway. They were definitely being followed at speed by a Decker convoy, she could hear bullets clunking into the rear of her car. They were hurting her baby and it made her angry.

"Can't you shoot back or something" She raged at the man whose fault all of this was.

"Nope" He said, calm considering the circumstances. He was however, snapping his seat belt into place. "I'm out of ammo"
The bastard had tried to bluff her out of her car with an empty gun.

Bullets pelted the car from all angles as Deckers seemed to sprout out of the landscape. Their cars weaved through the traffic in pursuit of the mystery man and his unwilling chauffeur. Chris elected to drive straight down the center line of the road, which left a wide wake for their pursuers to use as well. Her Hammerhead was faster and more maneuverable than their fashionable SUVs and she began to pull away from them. She swore loudly to herself when she saw cars emerge from the side streets ahead. She ducked her head suddenly as a stray bullet shattered the rear window, showering the interior with glass.

"Where am I going?" She yelled to her companion over the thunk of bullets hitting metal and jingle of shattered glass shifting in her back seat.

"Sunset Park" He yelled back over the screech of tires and the grinding metal on metal as they slid along the sides of other cars as the Hammerhead as it sailed past.

She swore again she definitely needed to get on the freeway which was quickly approaching but was also being blocked off by Decker cars. She quickly spun the steering wheel and entered the freeway via the off ramp... straight into oncoming traffic, which veered and squealed out of the way of the careening Hammerhead.

"What the Fuck!" Her passenger shouted, as a large cement truck bore down on them. Chris swerved in time but noticed in the rear view mirror, the truck smash through the barrier behind them and plunge into the channel below.

The man seemed to settle quickly, he was obviously used to things that would make an ordinary person die of shock. He pulled a cell phone out of his pocket and dialed, keeping an eye out the windscreen, prepared for a head on collision, though Chris was focused fully on negotiating the oncoming traffic.

"Pierce" He addressed whomever had answered "Forget the car, I'm on the move. We'll be coming in hot though so get me a welcome wagon ready, We'll be coming from Loren Square… Yes, I said we…"

Chris saw her opportunity to get onto the correct side of the freeway, a gap in the railing for service vehicles. She veered quickly through the rail and corrected the car near perfectly in the farthest lane. Her quick movement was too much for a Decker SUV directly behind them, which missed the mark and slammed into the concrete divider. The next two in line had to stop in a squeal of brakes as well, narrowly avoiding the explosion that followed. She raced on, carving through the rush hour traffic like a bullet.

"Holy Fuck." Her passenger breathed, in awe of the skill with which she was handling the car. He looked over at her with real appreciation.

They were almost to the Loren Square exit when a helicopter descended into the roadway. Chris screamed and wrenched at the wheel. The car slid sideways, narrowly missing the chopper and crashed sideways into the concrete barrier, grating against it for some time before she corrected it on the off ramp. The car became airborne for a moment as it hit the sloping exit too fast.

Her brain went quiet and time seemed to slow down in that moment and she calmly thought to herself; Sunset Park. Sharp right turn at the bottom of the exit, veer left, straight shot to the park itself. Her inner calm was surprising to her. Her car was kinda flying.

The car hit the tarmac with a crash and the tyres grip slipped a little before they finally grabbed
onto the road again. Time turned itself up to regular speed.

"Who are you?" She screamed at her unwelcome companion.

He just grinned in return. The bastard actually seemed to be enjoying himself.

Chris noticed that the Deckers had given up pursuit on the bridge into downtown but they had been replaced by red and black cars of the Morningstar, the most powerful gang in the syndicate. They were now in big trouble. The Morningstar had high powered luxury cars, with new technology that made her Hammerhead look almost stone aged in comparison and now there were also helicopters buzzing overhead as well, a testament to their wealth, casting high calibre rounds at her car with a callous disregard for her safety.

But she and her companion were no longer all alone in their desperate flight either. A hoard of Royal Purple cars zoomed through the streets, pulling along side of them and taking point in front and behind. They were knocking the Morningstar out of the way like skittles. Purple attack choppers growled overhead as well, they seemed to have RPG's and they simply blew the Morningstar choppers out of the sky.

Chris had a sick feeling in her gut at the sight of all of the purple surrounding her. She had a very bad feeling about her erstwhile passenger, even worse than him being simple carjacker.

She brushed away the thoughts and concentrated on the task at hand.

"Right, we're in Sunset Park, where are we going?" she asked him as they crossed over the invisible line between Loren Square and the Park. Her eyes glued to the road ahead, navigating the carnage.

"The Skyscraper Motel at the end of The Avenue, on the other side of the park" He answered before whipping off his seat belt and hoisting himself out of the passenger window.

She shot a quick, startled look at his lower half still in her car. 'What the Hell!' She thought, 'that was a very bad idea'. What was he doing?

"Hold on." She yelled to him as she threw the car around a tight corner past the park and again as she skidded into The Avenue, her car shrieking and squealing in protest the whole time. The building that was their destination loomed ahead of them and her passenger plopped back into the seat next to her. He seemed to have acquired more ammo for his handgun from a neighbouring purple car and he was swapping over the magazine.

He glanced through the windscreen, which had acquired a long crack and several big bullet holes but was still intact, as he thumped the new magazine into place.

"There are ramps to the underground car park on either side of the entrance" He informed her helpfully before heading out of the window again.

She could see the entrances to the ramps coming up fast and they were on awkward angles for their speedy and front on arrival. Her companion flopped back into his seat having emptied his gun and braced himself against the dash. She grabbed onto her handbrake and threw out the back end of the Hammerhead, hoping that the slide aligned her with the ramp to the right of the entrance. Not quite, but good enough she thought as she punched the car back into gear and zoomed onto the ramp. She heard the back end of her beloved car crunch against the wall and grind along it, sending up sparks. The ramp curved slightly and then opened out into the cavernous parking garage. She slammed on the brakes at the bottom of the ramp and came to a screeching halt about a foot and a
half from a set of elevator doors. Two young men in purple jackets who had scrambled out of the way of the car hurtling towards them, gaped at her through the windscreen with startled expressions on their faces.

Her companion was out of the car before it had come to a complete stop and she sat there of a moment bemused by what had just transpired and absently listening to the engine of her beloved Hammerhead gasping in pain. She had been driving home from work after a normal day. What had happened?

She was safe. For now. At least that's how it seemed. She still had a sinking feeling in her gut that she was out of the frying pan and into the fire.

She cut the engine, slowly took off her seat belt and opened the driver side door. It crunched slightly and made a cringe worthy grinding sound as it moved. She stepped out of her car and closed the door with another crunch. She turned slowly to look at the wreck that had once been her dads pride and joy.

"I should have got out of the fucking car" She said to herself softly.
Chapter 2

She ran her fingers along the gouged and scrapped panels of her beloved Hammerhead, from the drivers side door and back, until she came to the rear of her car.

"There are bullet holes in my car," She said it much louder than she intended, realising that she sounded quite stupid considering the war zone they had just traversed. She must be going into shock or something, to have said something so glaringly obvious.

Her erstwhile companion was back at her side surveying the once gorgeous vehicle. He grimaced a little at the large holes that peppered the whole back end from spoiler to bumper and everywhere in between. None of the windows had survived, the windshield finally caving when they had hit the wall of the parking garage entrance and there were several massive scrapes and dents where she had hit or been hit by a few random 'obstacles', large and small, while on their exciting little journey. He huffed, pulled out his cell phone and turned away from the car to make a call.

"Hey Tank," He said as the call connected. "I have a little repair job for you….. Nah, give it about an hour or so, there's a bit of heat here at the moment." He ended the call and then he turned back to Chris and gave her a winning smile.

"No worries" he said confidently, "I'll fix this."

She must have looked a little shaken, as his expression changed to one of concern.

"Hey, don't worry, you're safe now." He said softly, moving closer and putting his large hand on her shoulder.

This close, she suddenly realised in her bewildered state, just how large this man was. He was easily six foot four, more than a foot taller than her. She had to crane her neck to look up at his face. While in the car, driving for her life, she had noted that he was quite handsome and now that the fog of the chase was wearing off, she could appreciate how very, very good looking that he really was.

She shrugged off his hand and punched him hard in the chest.

"SAFE?" She blurted out angrily "You tried to jack me, you arsehole. You put a gun to my head… and then put me real danger… driving through a goddamned war zone, trashed my car... MY CAR! I wouldn't have to be 'safe' if it weren't for you… What the FUCK just happened? Who are you?"

The last came out sounding high pitched and a little hysterical.

He stepped back from the fiery little woman in surprise at her sudden venom and put both hands in the air. "Hey, hey..." He attempted to placate her, "You saved my life just now, driving like you did… I'm sorry I tried to jack you, I was in trouble... I'll get the car fixed, I swear." He stepped forward again and looked into her eyes. Even as angry as she was she couldn't help but notice he had hazel eyes which looked genuinely concerned and sincere.

"I didn't mean to put you in danger." He said quietly. "You saved my life and I am in your debt."

At that moment, a woman came storming up to them pushing through the crowd and Chris belatedly noticed that they were surrounded by people. Men and women dressed in splashes of Royal Purple and Fleur-di-lis symbols. She then realised her fears were confirmed; where she was
and whom she was with. Her heart skipped a little in fear. She was in the basement car park of the Headquarters for the Third Street Saints.

"What happened?" The as yet unnamed woman demanded of Chris' companion, who could only be the notorious leader of the Saints.

"Relax, Shaundi" He responded calmly, but with authority. "I got cocky and was caught in the open."

The woman began to speak but he cut her off.

"I was heading to Friendly Fire to get some ammo and was spotted by some Deckers who put out an alert… If it weren't for my new friend here, I would be a goner." He said indicating towards Chris, who stood to the side still seething slightly, though she was scared.

Shaundi glanced briefly at her, but dismissed her instantly and whirled back on her boss.

"You're not fucking bulletproof, Boss..." She began to admonish him, he let her continue for a while with a bland expression on his face before sighing and waving her off. 'Shaundi' still looked furious but backed off immediately.

He turned to Chris, who was warily eyeing one of the largest human beings that she had ever seen. He had come thumping down the car park ramp. She assumed he was human, though, she had never seen anyone so big before. The Boss followed her eye line and acknowledged the newcomer with a nod.

"They have all backed off." The giant said, with a heavy Russian accent "it looks like taking you on with a full contingent of Saints on their home turf was not something that they relished doing." The giant chuckled to himself and looked down at Chris with a curious expression. "... and who is this?" he asked pleasantly.

"My saviour..." The Boss said "... and one of the best drivers I've ever seen." He continued with admiration in his smooth voice, his warm eyes back on Chris' face.

"Ha! I knew that you weren't driving," A black man who had been examining the bullet holes in the back of the car piped up. "The car wouldn't have made it here in one piece..."

"Shut up, Pierce." The Boss said without looking at him, he was looking at Chris. "Look, we'll do some introductions upstairs. No need to hang around in the garage"

He looked at the people surrounding him "Good work everyone…back to your posts." The large group of Saints dispersed at his word.

He turned towards the elevator, indicating that Chris should go ahead of him. She wasn't too sure about walking deeper into the Saints lair and she hesitated.

The Third Street Saints were the new player in town but they had made a huge impression already. They were famous. They were a global brand. There were Planet Saints outlets all over the city. They were admired and feared all over, especially in their founding city of Stilwater and they were expanding their empire into Steelport. Chris had read in the paper that Phillipe Loren of Morningstar was killed by them.

The Boss had noticed her indecision at following him.

"Absolutely no harm will come to you here." He said reassuringly, his voice like a soothing balm.
"You saved my life…"

"But my car…" Her voice trailed off. It seemed silly to go on about the car, but he didn't know what it meant to her.

"I have Tank coming, remember…" He assured her, like that meant something significant, "Trust me."

He held out his hand to her and after a heartbeat she took it and was lead into the elevator. He didn't let go of her hand when the door closed nor for the whole trip up to the Penthouse, not even when the doors opened at the top. He led her into the vast and opulent Penthouse suite. She was aware that there were other people with them, but concentrated instead on the warmth of the large hand that had encompassed hers. She could feel his calm pulse and she liked the roughness of his palm. He led her down into a large living area before he finally released her next to a massive modular sofa. He indicated for her to sit. She did, noting that people were assembling around the couch or disappearing into different parts of the suite. Her hand still tingling from his touch and she focused on him as he perched on the edge of the sofa next to her. The giant and the black man, Pierce, sat as well, though Shaundi leaned against the wall with her arms crossed belligerently.

"Do you want a drink or something? You look like you could use one" The Boss asked and Chris shook her head in reply.

He smiled amiably and spread his arms out wide "Welcome to Saints HQ." He said expansively. "On the couch to your right you have Pierce Washington…" Pierce smiled cheekily and nodded his head. "…the mountain is Oleg" the giant smiled sweetly. "… and brooding against the wall there is Shaundi." Shaundi glared at him but did not acknowledge Chris. "…these are my lieutenants, there are a few more, but they are currently absent." He leaned forward a little, "I never did get your name though."

"Nor did I get yours" Chris said bluntly.

"He is the Boss." Shaundi interjected.

Chris glanced at Shaundi. "With all due respect ma'am," She said firmly, "He's not my Boss."

She looked back at the Boss, but before he could answer, one of his crew walked up.

"Boss, Tank is downstairs." The young man said, he looked at Chris with a shy smile and nodded in welcome. Chris was a little taken aback, this was not the sort of treatment one would expect from a notoriously violent and dangerous criminal organisation. These people were all very pleasant, except Shaundi that is.

"That wasn't an hour." The Boss said to himself, a little annoyed. He stood up. "We'll meet him in the garage." He held his hand out to Chris again. "Let's go see if we can sort this car out for you."

Chris took his hand and allowed herself to be hauled out of the couch. The warmth of his hand heated her whole body. Dangerous as he was, he was also very charismatic and extremely sexy. He held her hand again all the way down to the parking garage and when the doors opened and he led her out. They were greeted by a burly man in faded jeans and a ratty leather vest. He had a vast beard speckled with greys and wore sunglasses even in the dim garage. The rest of his head was wrapped in a grubby bandana. He was examining the big holes in the trunk of the Hammerhead.

"Hey Boss." He greeted, stepping towards the Boss with his hand extended. They shook hands and he turned immediately away towards the wreck of the car which was still sitting sadly where they
had left it and sighed dejectedly.

"What the fuck did you do to this masterpiece?" He growled as he began to stalk around the car.

"I said an hour, Tank". The Boss admonished, watching the man as he examined the vehicle in minute detail.

"Yeah… well" Tank replied absently, "I was at the branch around the corner… heard y'all coming flying in…"

He came to the drivers side door and leaned towards the car, squinting at something.

"Wait a minute, I recognise this car." He said suddenly. "This is Murray Worth's car."

Chris started at the sound of her fathers name.

Tank turned towards her with his eyes wide, "You're Christine Worth? Murrays daughter?" He exclaimed in an almost accusing tone.

She nodded, she supposed that she shouldn't be surprised that a car guy should know who her dad was. He must have seen the small decal of her dads initials on the drivers door.

Tank turned back to the Boss. "You arsehole!" he exploded. "Do you have any idea what you've done, you Dick!"

He leaned towards the car and started fussing over every knick and dent, and there were many. The car was more wreck than car.

The Boss looked back and forth between Tank and Chris "Who's Murray Worth?" He asked hesitantly.

Tank whirled on him with an exasperated gasp. "Only the greatest driver in the history of the whole fucking world, you Ballsack!" He announced, as if personally affronted.

Tank turned to Chris pulling off his bandana to reveal a shiny bald head, a sharp contrast to the forest of hair all over the rest of him. "It would be my honour to fix this beauty. I really respected your father, I think we may have even sourced a lot of the parts for this beast." He said gesturing towards the car. "It may take a while but I'll get her looking just like new."

Chris smiled warmly at the scruffy man. "Thank you so much Tank, this really means a lot to me." She gushed.

Tank beamed at her and then glared at the Boss. "I'll send a truck to get her in the morning. We'll tow her to Rim Jobs and start on her right away." He grinned quite viciously, "This is gonna cost you. Nothing but the best, 'original' parts are going into this old girl."

"Whatever it takes…" The Boss replied absently, looking at Chris with a speculative expression on his face.

Tank 'humpfed' but nodded in approval and then nodded at Chris "Miss Worth." He said by way of farewell before casting a last glance at the Hammerhead, shaking his head at her forlorn state and stomping off towards a powerful custom Hog. It started with a load roar before rumbling up the ramp and out into the street.

The garage was enveloped in silence in Tanks wake. The Boss was still looking at Chris
speculatively and Chris was looking back benignly.
"Soooo…” He said quietly "Christine Worth, eh?"

"Yep." she replied, popping her lips on the 'p'. "I'm named after the car in the Stephen King book."

"And he was a driver...?" He asked.

"Yep," She said again with pride, "And like Tank said, he was the best."

"Race cars?" He asked.

"Yep," she replied again, "and some stunt driving... he taught me everything I know." She said with a small smile. "This was the first time I've been able to put the knowledge to practical use though... I guess I should thank you for that... I guess." She glanced at her car with a grimace.

The Boss nodded still analysing her. She felt his eyes boring into her and she held that look boldly... it wasn't long before she realised that his look had changed. There was something else there now and it made her face flush and her skin feel too tight. She looked away, trying to break the tension and cut through the intensity.

"Look, it's getting late" She said, her voice a slightly higher pitch than normal and her eyes fixed on the far wall of the garage. "I have to get home. Can I get a cab or a lift or something?"

The Boss seemed to mentally shake himself. "Right, Ummm..." He said, his voice slightly deeper than it had been. "Right. Pick one" he said.

She looked confused and he elaborated.

"Pick a car." Waving his arm to indicate the garage full of vehicles.

She looked around at the variety on offer and caught her breath a couple of times at the luxury cars on offer. Most were purple, Saints-branded, high-powered monsters, but there were quite a few others, in various models and colours.

"Are you sure..." She asked, "some of these cars cost more than my house."

"Yeah, any one." He replied with a shrug. "It's yours, as payment for your service to the Saints"

"I'll take the Infuego." She said instantly.

The bronze beauty was parked near the entrance to the car park. It was the newest model, fully loaded and worth more than every house in her street put together. It was the sort of car that royalty was chauffeured around in. This would probably be the only time in her life that she would get the chance to drive something like it.

He gave a crooked little grin. "Rocco, get key to the Infuego for our guest."

It was only then that Chris noticed the heavily armed men scattered around the garage. On either side of the elevator, by the car park entrance and a couple more mingling in with the cars. It seemed that one was never alone here. The same young guy that had told them Tank had arrived came up to the Boss' side and produced a proximity transponder. Of course, a brand new car like that wouldn't have a dirty old key.

The Boss extended his hand to her again, she took it without hesitation. It seemed that he was taking every opportunity to touch her and she didn't seem to have a problem with that at all, which
was disturbing in itself, considering the events that had recently transpired. He led her over to the fancy car.

"I'll need your number." He said standing very close to her, she had to crane her neck a little to see his face. From this close, she could see a myriad of small scars on his face and a light shadow of stubble on his chin, a shade darker than his dishevelled chestnut brown hair. She could feel the warmth of his breath and the heat radiating from his body, there was a heady scent of cologne and manliness about him that made her throat tighten. His voice was whiskey smooth and rumbled through to her bones.

She swallowed audibly and stepped back to feel the cool carbon fibre exterior of the car press against her back. "What for..?" She managed to utter, glad that she had managed to get her voice to sound normal and unfazed by him, though, damn was he charismatic.

"So I can let you know about your car." He replied huskily, leaning closer.

Of course. She mentally face-palmed herself. She rattled off her cell and home numbers. He stepped back from her to enter them into his cell and then immediately stepped towards her again.

"I'll send a text to you in a minute so you can have my number as well. If you need anything… call me." He leaned in a little closer and lowered his voice. She shivered at his closeness "I owe you my life and for putting you in danger. That's not something that can be paid off with a car repair job and a new Infuego." He looked deep into her eyes. "...if you need anything…"

She nodded and looked around a little wildly for an escape. He must have seen her discomfiture and stepped away from her again. He opened the car door for her and she quickly slid into the drivers seat and had to adjust it to her small legs.

He smiled down at her "Drive safe." He said and clicked the door closed and stepped back from the car.

She started the engine, which was an almost inaudible purring, a complete contrast to her grunty Hammerhead, took a steadying breath and backed carefully out of the car park. From the rear view mirror she could see him standing by the elevator watching her progress. She grinned.

"Drive safe?" She said to herself in a huff. "Yeah, Right!"

She threw the car into gear and put her foot down hard. In a cloud of black smoke and with the hot smell of burnt rubber, she took off with a deafening squeal of tyres.
Chapter 3

Chris pulled into her own driveway with much more dignity and care than she had exited the Saints garage with. The people who lived in her neighbourhood worked for a living after all. She killed the engine and sat for a moment in the car, reflecting on the previous few hours events. Who could have predicted she would have been plunged into gang warfare, met the most hunky man that had ever lived and walked away with one of the most luxurious cars in the world, all within the span of a couple of hours. She shook her head in amazement.

On the quiet drive home, she had felt her cell phone vibrate in her back pocket and knew that she had received a text message from the Boss. She had cursed to herself, she never did get his name and she'd be damned if she would call him 'Boss'. She dug her phone from her pocket and glanced at the message with his return number.

*Nice Exit* was all it said. She smiled and keyed in the number under the header 'THAT man'.

She got out of the car and made extra certain that it was locked. She walked towards the porch in the front of the house. And then walked back to the car to check again. It was quite unnerving having a car of this calibre in her possession. She steeled herself and headed into her house. She dumped her cell and the transponder onto the antique hall table that her mother had carefully chosen for the entrance hall. She stood there for a moment her hand resting on the transponder. With her eyes closed, she took in a deep breath, remembering the subtle fragrance of his cologne mingled with the very powerful something else that accompanied it and the warmth of his hand as it enclosed hers. She then snorted in disgust with herself. Why was she fantasising about a man who not only tried to jack her car but also pointed a gun at her, granted the gun was empty but that wasn't the point. He was responsible for an epic car chase, endangering her life and trashing her precious Hammerhead.

Because he was sexy as hell she sighed. You don't become the leader of a Criminal Empire or be a Media sensation by being a slouch.

She had left her handbag in the Hammerhead, she would get in touch with Tank tomorrow to get it back. Her mind had been all over the place on the drive home. She had searched her memory for as much information as possible about the people that she had met tonight.

Tank was the owner of Rim Jobs, the largest chain of automotive parts and service retailers in the state. Despite his somewhat unkempt appearance he was a very rich man and she vaguely recall her dad talking about him fondly. She had seen Pierce Washington on TV in the Saints Flow and Planet Saints advertisements, Shaundi as well and she did a dating show too. Chris had recalled the name Johnny Gat as well, he was a famous Saint too but he hadn't been there though. He was apparently scary as all Hell, if the rumours be true.

She walked through her house to the kitchen and straight to the fridge. It seems weird to be doing such ordinary things after such a monumental afternoon. Before 5.30pm she had been processing paperwork for drivers licencing and registrations, talking to Beth about her weekend of doing as little as possible and theorising about the possibility of going to the movies soon for girls night out, swearing at the photocopier for being so crap and making about a dozen cups of coffee. Then she was embroiled in the criminal underworld of Steelport, getting shot at by snipers in helicopters with a sexy Criminal Boss and driving like a bat out of hell through downtown… she'd almost hit a cement truck!
Now she was cooking herself dinner... All in a day's work? She shook her head in wonder and began to rummage around for food. She was ravenous and if she were to admit it, exhausted. She would eat, do a little Googling and then go to bed... the Googling was essential, she needed to familiarise herself with the Third Street Saints.

She decided to whip up a bacon and asparagus frittata. She had all of the ingredients, which she began to gather up. She spilled it all onto her counter and got to work. Her father may have been a famous driver, but her mum had been a homebody through and through. Chris was not allowed to drive if she didn't absorb an equal amount of the domestic arts. So she had learned to cook and sew as well as tear up the roads.

In no time she was sitting in the lounge, balancing her laptop on one knee and her plate on the other. An image of the man that everyone called Boss flashed up on her screen after a quick search... she made it full screen and studied it as she put a forkful of frittata in her mouth and chewed slowly as she contemplated him.

He was so very hot. Tall with broad shoulders and narrow hips, his face was handsome and chiselled and his hair was artfully dishevelled and a rich chestnut colour. She remembered those hazel eyes boring into her and shivered. Best not to dwell on him, she closed the tab.

She found a Saints fan page, one of many, which made her laugh at the ridiculousness of it. She scrolled through the bios of his lieutenants and read through their sordid history, from their roots in Stilwater to their current attempted takeover in Steelport. The giant Oleg was from Steelport and formerly of Morningstar she read with interest, wondering how that change over had come about. She sat hunched over on her couch, munching her dinner and reading from the glaring screen.

There was not much about 'Him' on here. There were plenty of pictures and everyone seemed to know who 'He' was but there was no name and no back story before his leadership of the Saints. He was simply referred to as "The Boss".

She sighed as she placed the last bite of frittata in her mouth and chewed slowly, her face a picture of deep thought. Very unsatisfying, she thought. She snapped her laptop shut and dumped it on the couch next to her, got up and took her empty plate into the kitchen, she rinsed her plate and fork and put them into the dishwasher and pressed start. She stood for a moment at the kitchen bench staring out of the window at the intimidating Bronze Infuego sitting in the driveway.

It suddenly struck her how lonely her life was. Her dishwasher had dishes for one in it, she lived in this house alone, she didn't have a boyfriend and no friends outside of her work and until today nothing had happened to her since the fateful night that the S.P.D. had knocked on her door to tell her that her folks were not coming home. She had been different before then. But when her parents died, her boyfriend, Grant, had left. She's gotten rid of her apartment to move into the house and she had kind of, closed in on herself. She wasn't even sure why.

She realised that she was staring out the window at her neighbour from the apartments next door. She gave a small wave. He stubbed out his cigarette on the ground, flipped her off and then turned to slouch inside. She sighed.

There was not much point in staying up, she had to go to work in the morning and get back to her life after this small, but exciting blip. Besides, considering her evenings events, she was mentally and physically drained. She headed upstairs switching off the lights as she went. She wandered into her room and through to the ensuite, she started to wash her face and decided to jump into the shower instead. Under the hot water she washed away the thrilling memory of the day. Afterwards her skin was pink and squeaky clean, she felt fresh and snuggly and very ready to sleep. She put on her favourite and ultra cheesy satin 'little devil' boxer shorts and the fitting white
singlet that she normally slept in and slid between the cool sheets of her bed and pulled the covers up to her chin.

As tired as she was, as soon as she closed her eyes, his damned face floated into her consciousness. His striking hazel eyes and his lovely shaped lips, the tiny scars that spoke of a life lived in the edge, the splash of stubble that covered his jaw… oh and his strong jaw. She groaned and rolled over and buried her face into her pillow. He was perfect.

She was now restless and her hot skin seemed to grow warmer as she lay in the dark with pictures of that man in her head. Those big hands, rough but warm, sure and somehow secure despite the danger that surrounded him. The way his jeans had hugged his narrow hips… she groaned again. He had been so close, his head bent towards her intimately, if she had leaned forward just a little and got on her tippy toes, theirs lips would have touched.

She sat up abruptly and strained her ears, was that a sound downstairs?

She sat in the dark, listening intently. She heard a soft thump that could only have been a footstep and a whisper of a mans voice.

There was someone in her house!

She silently slipped out of her bed and tip-toed to her closet. She opened the door carefully, if you opened it too fast or too far, it squeaked noisily. She felt inside until her fingers brushed against cold steel. She gripped into her dads shotgun and pulled it from the cupboard. Almost everyone in Steelport owned a gun of some kind. She got down onto her knees and felt around on the floor until she found the box of shells. She opened the box carefully and quietly, listening all the while to the noises downstairs. She heard the unmistakable creak of the fourth stair and knew they were heading upstairs, whoever they were. The box only had two shells in it. She loaded the gun awkwardly, fumbling a bit in the dark but slid the shells home into the chamber.

She was kneeling on the floor in the corner of the room, in the dark, watching the door. Her heart was beating fast. Who were they? Was it the Saints? She was reluctant to ready the gun just in case... but surely they would have knocked…or let her know they were coming.

She didn't need to wait too long, her bedroom door started to open and she saw a big man dressed in a green muscle tee shirt and army fatigues. Most alarming was the Mexican wrestling mask covering his whole head. A Luchador!

The man looked at the bed and seeing it was empty and messed up started to look around the room. His eyes fell on her crouched in the corner of the room and he started forward arms extended.

"Killbane wants a word, bitch." He growled.

Click-Clack! She pumped the shot gun and levelled it at her intruder. She squeezed on the trigger and it boomed in her hands. The large man shot backwards as the spread hit him square in the gut. She hadn't braced the gun properly, so it leaped backwards and out of her hands with the recoil, thumping into her stomach, knocking the wind out of her before clattering to the floor. She clutched at her stomach and staggered to her feet. The sound of the gun had drawn shouts and thumping footsteps from downstairs… lots of footsteps.

She lurched into the ensuite and locked the door behind her. She looked around wildly. There was a small window above the bathtub. She could fit through it and it lead to the porch roof. She shook off the pain in her stomach and made for the window wrenching it open and going through it head first. She fell hard onto the roof of the porch outside. She looked back up at the window to see a
masked face looking down at her, he had broken through her ensuite door with ease and had been so close to grabbing her… she shuddered. The street was alive with Green and Black four wheel drives. She scrambled off the roof, hitting the ground harder than she'd hit the roof. Something inside her was damaged for sure now she thought, grunting slightly in pain. She could hear thumping in her house and shouts. They were coming out.

Ignoring the pain in her torso, she took off across the street towards the alleyway that led to the next street and hid there in the shadows looking back to see if they were following her, when she saw flameslicking at the back of her house.

"No!" she breathed in despair.

They had torched her house. Her mums pride and joy.

A massive group of burly men began spilling out onto the pavement, driven by a green suited monster roaring abuse. Gesturing wildly towards the burning house, the Bronze car and more wildly, at the streets around him.

She only made out two words, "Find her!"

She didn't have time to grieve for her home or even think, she just ran, her bare feet slapping on the asphalt. She could hear the roar of engines in the next street over as they began looking for her. The alleyway opened into a street that was walled off with shop fronts. She ran across the street and around the last building in the line and found herself on the waterfront walkway. She looked left. The bridge was already blocked by the Luchadores trucks, so she started to run in the other direction. She could see the headlights of more Luchador vehicles move to block that bridge too. She whimpered in fear and looked with longing across the water. There were men blocking both bridges and they were coming fast in the streets behind her. What was she going to do?

Across the water in the distance, Chris saw the lights of the Saints building in between the skyscrapers of Sunset Park, it seemed so far away especially with the enormous body of water in between her and it. She heard the sound of truck tyres in the road that she had just been on and without another thought she jumped over the concrete barrier and into the icy water below.

The cold hit her like a hammer and she floundered for a moment, before catching her breath and swimming for the far shore with all she had in her. It was late Autumn and the water was colder than anything she had ever experienced. The far shore was further than she had thought and she tired quickly. The cold stole her breath and made her body heavy but she ploughed on coughing and spluttering in the salt water as she fought to swim and breathe at the same time.

For what seemed an eternity she was lost on the water. Her numb fingers finally touched the slimy wooden pillars of the wharf on the other side of the channel. She was too tired and cold to pull herself out of the water. She tried in vain for a few minutes before giving up, her body was too numb and every ounce of her strength had been sapped on the swim over. She panicked a little as she clung to the greasy pillar in desperation. She closed her eyes ready to give up and leaned her forehead against the wharf when it came to her. There were service stairs under the bridge her brain sputtered. You jumped off them on the Carver Island side when you were a kid there had to be some on this side too. She swam as quickly as she could towards the bridge, casting scared looks upwards, hoping that the Luchadores didn't think to look over the side. She reached the stairs and started out of the water and her legs failed her and she sank to her knees, exhausted. She summoned every once of strength and forced herself to her feet and up the stairs to the street. At least the cold had numbed the pain in her gut.

There was a walled alleyway directly across from her, she made for it looking over her shoulder as
she ran. She stumbled on the gutter and fell painfully to the ground, grating her body on the gravel strewn concrete. She dragged herself to her feet and sank into the shadows of the alleyway. They didn't seem to be following but she had better keep moving just in case.

She limped as fast as she could down the alley towards the Saints building. It was only two blocks from the water, but it seemed to take forever. Luckily the alley way stretched a whole block behind the tall building. She tried not to think about what was on the ground that she walked on in the unlit alleyway but she shied in pain as something sliced into her bare foot, maybe a broken bottle maybe something worse. She also saw movement next to a dumpster, a sleeping homeless man. She quickened her pace as much as she was able and when she reached the last street that stood between her and her destination, she stopped and looked both ways looking not only for the Luchadores but also any sign of the Morningstar, their traditional cohorts. The coast was clear so she bolted across the road and into the side street that led to rear of Saints HQ. She was well passed exhausted, shaking with cold and dragging her bare feet on the concrete, willing her body to just get her there. She sobbed outright when she spotted a man in a purple jacket, even better, she recognised him for earlier in the day in the penthouse and in the garage.

"Rocco" She gasped breathlessly.

The young man turned at the sound of his name and his eyes widened at the sight of her scrambling down the street at him. Soaked to the skin, bleeding, filthy, blue and shaking with cold.
Chapter 4

He was sitting cross legged on the floor of his room, a large sniper rifle in pieces before him. He looked at it helplessly... it was easy enough to take it apart, now he wasn't so sure how it went back together. That bit was obviously the barrel... he picked it up and turned it over in his hands... and put it in back down again... Where hell did that spring come from?

There was a light knock at his door and he sighed with relief. He'd get this guy to put it back together for him. Result!

One of the boys poked his head around the door.

"Boss" He said urgently, "That lady from today is here... Rocco's bringing her up."

He got to his feet and walked with exaggerated casualness out to the foyer in front of the elevator, leaving his man sitting on the floor putting the gun back together.

He hid his pleasure at the prospect of seeing her again... it wasn't becoming for the Boss to jizz in his pants over a random woman he had only met that afternoon. A lesser man would have fidgeted and grinned like an idiot in anticipation of seeing such a fascinating young woman again. But not him, he stood stock still in front of the elevator, a mildly curious expression on his face. He wondered what was up... What could she need at this hour that warranted a visit? Maybe she wanted to see him, he smiled inwardly. He noted that his boys had drawn their weapons as a precaution and he waved them away.

The image of her from this afternoon popped into his brain. She was small and delicate with a curtain of rich dark chocolate hair and large expressive baby blue eyes. Eyes that could turn to ice in a second as he recalled, because damn, she was fiery.

The elevator dinged and the doors opened as if in slow motion and he held his breath in anticipation. The sight that greeted him was drastically different from this afternoon and his mouth dropped open in shock.

She looked so small and pathetic. She was wearing a pair of black boxer shorts with little pictures of red devils holding pitchforks and the words 'Horny Little Devil' emblazoned across them and a torn and dirty white singlet... both of which clung to her as she looked like she had recently taken dip in the harbour. She was filthy and blue with cold and wrapped loosely in Roccus oversized Saints jacket. She was covered head to toe in cuts and bruises. Worse, her feet were cut to pieces and bleeding freely all over the glossy marble floor and she had a huge graze on her leg which oozed blood as well as being caked with gravel and grime. Her hair was plastered to her head, which was bowed in exhaustion. Rocco hovered at her side ready to catch her if she fell, which it looked like she would do at any second.

The doors of the elevator opened fully and her head snapped up and her eyes locked on him, burning with icy fury. The tiny woman strode up to him the jacket falling from her shoulders and her injuries forgotten in her haste to get to him.

"My house," she began quietly "is on FIRE!" The last word screamed deafeningly before he took a powerful slap to the jaw that belied her size and condition.
He grabbed hold of her wrist to halt another slap and looked down at her. "What happened?" He asked, still shaken by her appearance but holding fast as she tried to yank her hand away to deal another blow.

She ceased struggling fruitlessly with him and glared up at him now fighting back tears.

"Luchadores happened." She spat, "They came into my home and tried to take me and when I ran away, they torched my house."

"Where?" He asked, as he looked over her head at a group of Saints who were watching proceedings in astonishment.

"The corner of Cook and Matthias in Bridgeport" She replied, her wind slowly going out of her sails. "You can't miss it, it's the one on fire." Her legs gave out from under her and the Boss caught hold of her before she hit the floor.

"Check it out." He said to the guys and they all filed into the elevator.

He looked down at the woman in his arms, she had begun to cry and his heart tore up at the sight. He picked her up and carried her to an armchair and set her down in it carefully and knelt before her.

"I'm sorry." He whispered to her. She looked up at him her eyes ravaged with emotion but she said nothing. She was done. Defeated.

"I can fix this" He said quietly, desperate to engage her again. "Look, we have to get you cleaned up, warm and rested."

"Nita." He raised his voice, calling one of the Saints to his side. A pretty Latino girl with impressively inked arms appeared at his side and looked down at her with concern. "Can you run Miss Worth a hot bath, get her some warm clothes and get the doc here." The girl nodded and disappeared from view.

"Come on." He said gently and he went to lift her from the chair.

"I can walk." She said weakly.

"Yeah, I know." He said, hoisting her up into his arms, she weighed almost nothing.

She hated being useless he thought, but she was on the verge of hypothermia and was in shock, so she was just going to have to suck it up. He carried her into his room and into the bathroom where Nita had the bath well underway and she had her cell tucked under her chin. He sat her on the edge of the bath and stood back. Nita allowed the phone to fall onto a pile of towels.

"Doc's on his way," she said. "Now go away Boss. I got this"

He backed out of the bathroom reluctantly, hearing Nita gently inform her patient that there was lavender oil in the bath which would act as an antiseptic and help calm her nerves. He took a mental note to thank Nita later.

He walked back into the foyer and saw the bloody footprints drying on the floor and Rocc's jacket still in a heap. He picked it up and flung it over a sculpture and went into the kitchen to find a mop. This was a novelty for him, he'd never mopped a floor before, but there was no one else around and he had to busy himself. He had just finished up when his cell rang.
"Hey Boss," the man at the other end answered when the call connected "Yeah, so they were still on the bridges when we got here, we ran them off. We're guessing she swam the channel, there was no other way across for her on foot. The house is as good as gone, fire crew said it's under control and that there was a body inside… she may have taken someone out. Neighbour said that there were three Luchador cars at the house and we think that Killbane himself was here. They were tailing her from HQ… in your car."

"Thanks." He said "Come back, we're going to have a bit of a meeting shortly… Do me a favour and pick up Angel on your way back."

"Sure thing, Boss"

He ended the call and cursed at himself. He shouldn't have let her take his car, that was dumb. But she had wanted it and he was a little chuffed that out of all the cars in the garage, she'd picked his… His cell rang again "Doc's here, on his way up with Lance"

'Doc' was actually a plastic surgeon. He was an MD but discovered he could double his earnings by doing boobs and noses. He had founded the Image by Design group and had acted as the Saints personal physician since they had bought out the business.

The Boss met him at the elevator, he gave Doc the rundown and Doc nodded and walked over to the Boss' room and knocked politely. Nita met him at the door and let him in, closing the door behind him.

The Boss was on the phone calling all of his Lieutenants to him. The first of them had arrived when the Doc came out of the room.

Pierce and Oleg had already returned to their ongoing chess match while they waited for the meeting to convene. Voila reclined on the couch nearby flicking through a magazine and for some reason, Josh Burke was leaning nonchalantly against the wall. The Boss gave a shake of his head and turned toward the Doc.

"She's OK." Doc said to head of the impending barrage of questions. "She has broken a couple of ribs. She said that a shotgun recoiled into her abdomen so I'm guessing that's the cause, that or the fall from the window. Her feet were cut up pretty bad, I've had to stitch a few and I gave her a tetanus shot. Try and keep her off her feet to let them heal. I need those dressings kept clean and dry and make sure she takes her antibiotics and keep her warm and rested, she was hovering on the verge hypothermia, the channel is cold this time of year. Keep an eye on those ribs, they will cause a lot of discomfort. And she will ache for days, she has extensive bruising. Rest and warmth is what she needs most."

"Thanks Doc." The Boss said processing the information. He indicated for Lance to take the Doc back downstairs, he head was reeling from the information. Shotgun? Falling out a window? And swimming the channel? The elevator dinged, opened and Angel, Zimos and Shaundi stepped out. Kinzie would arrive in her own sweet time, she always did. Lance hustled the Doc in to the elevator, who turned away with a nod.

"Aw, What the fuck is he doing here?" Shaundi exclaimed, looking a Josh with undisguised venom.

"I don't know." The Boss shrugged, Josh was a mediocre actor who had the hots for Shaundi. She despised him but he followed her round like a little puppy regardless.

The Boss walked with Shaundi into the lounge area.
"Hey." He got every one's attention and sat down on the coffee table. They all gathered around him.

"The Syndicate have made a direct strike against the Saints… problem is they didn't strike at the Saints." He started.

They looked confused.

"You guys have all heard about what happened today?" He asked.

Everyone nodded.

"Valderrama did a great piece about the car chase on the news." Pierce chipped in.

"Yeah, well the woman that did the driving was attacked tonight" He started. "They tailed her from HQ to her house, tried to take her. She fought them off and came here. They torched her place"

Oleg looked outraged and Pierce gave low whistle, but Shaundi shrugged disinterestedly. They were the only three who had met Chris after all.

Viola snorted, she had seen the shrug "You don't get it Shaundi. They identified her as a Saint asset rather than what she was, an innocent bystander. They went after her because they thought that she was important, it doesn't matter that she's not..." She shook her head in distaste.

It was Shaundi's turn to be outraged… she didn't like being called out anymore than she liked to be worried... which is what she had been this afternoon when the Boss was in real danger. It took her a while to get a grip on her emotions.

"That's right, a simple case of mistaken identity has cost this lady her home." The Boss agreed, "So what do we do about it?"

"Nothing." Kinzies voice came from behind them. She walked around the sofa and sat cross legged on the floor. "If we retaliate we will continue the illusion that she is important… If we do nothing, the heat goes away... in theory."

"Nice of you to join us." The Boss said snidely.

"I have further to come than everyone else." She pointed out.

"Kinzie's right though," Viola continued. "We should do nothing. Otherwise they will take it as confirmation that she's important and will continue to pursue her to get to us."

"Fuck that, I can't just let this go." He said.

"You'll have to." Oleg interjected, "Or you may well put her in more danger and you will have to protect her from your enemies in perpetuity."

"We give her some money for a new house and new stuff and then send her on her way. I'm sure we can put her up in a safe house 'til her new place is sorted… but other than that we cut the cord." Kinzie explained.

The Boss wasn't sure, it seemed wrong somehow. While he could see their point, he didn't want to let Chris out of his sight… he didn't want to let that fact out to his crew.

Shaundi was watching him closely "We're not ready for a direct confrontation with the rest of the syndicate, Boss." She said softly. "We can't go at them off the cuff and without a plan, the way we did with Loren. They're more prepared now and they still have the home court advantage."
"Add to that, Killbane is not as restrained as Phillipe was..." Viola noted bitterly. Killbane had killed Viola's twin sister Kiki after Phillipe's demise, leading to Viola joining the Saints.

"I guess this meeting's for nothing then." The Boss said. Looking at them in turn, a helpless and frustrated look in his eye.

"Not really." Angel said quietly, "It's nice to catch up."

"Next time though... make it during the day." Zimos's electronic-assisted voice chipped in "I had to leave some very fine ho's sleeping in my crib."

The meeting ended with that statement and they all stood up and milled around a bit before slowly filing out. The Boss noticed Josh Burke try to sidle up to Shaundi as they left... she thumped him hard and shooed him away. The Boss felt a little sorry for him, but not too much.

The Boss found himself alone in the penthouse as his Lieutenants left... well, as alone as a gang boss could be... the usual guards stood at their posts and a few more low ranking Saints milled around in the kitchen and dining area, Nita included, but most were sleeping on the lower floors the Boss decided to look in on their guest. After such a traumatic night she must be fast asleep by now. He was proved wrong as she wasn't in his bed nor, after more investigation, anywhere in the penthouse. He looked around a bit wildly. Had she left?

He was about to shout to the guards and head downstairs when he saw a lonely figure out on the helipad. How had she got out there?

He walked across the patio and around the pool and out across the pad. She was sitting right on the edge dangling her legs over into the void. They were thirty floors up but she didn't seem the slightest bit phased. She was dressed warm sweats, her feet drowning in his oversized socks and wrapped up tight in a blanket in the cool Autumn air. She held a crystal tumbler in her hand and was sipping it liberally while looking out at the city.

"You have a Helipad." She observed quietly, when she heard his footfalls stop behind her. She sounded tired and dejected.

"Yeah, it's for the helicopter." He replied lightly, trying to inject some whimsy.

She didn't look up at him, but continued her contemplation of Downtown.

"What are we drinking?" he asked, still standing.

"Brandy." She replied and he noted the bottle sitting next to her then. Louis XIII Cognac. Viola had given it to him... it was more than forty grand per bottle.

She was holding the glass up over her head. He took it and emptied it as she opened the bottle again.

He sat down next to her and moved to hand the glass back but she took a long draw directly from the bottle.

"So, what happens now?" She asked, handing him the bottle.

He put the glass down next to him and took the bottle. "Well," He began, taking a large gulp. "First up, you have to rest, Doc orders. You can take my bed and I'll go downstairs." He said "Tomorrow, after a significant amount of sleep, we'll get those dressing checked and then we'll go and get you some clothes and sundry items and then we'll see Legal Lee and sort out your house. You don't
have to do a thing about it. I've got it covered"

He didn't hand the bottle back. "Right now though. Sleep."

He got up and carefully helped her to her feet. She winced a little and he instantly lifted her up into his arms. She didn't protest. What she didn't feel before due to the cold and the adrenaline flooding in her system, was finally coming home to roost. He carried her back into the penthouse and into his large bedroom. He sat her down briefly, pulled back the covers and picked her up again before placing her gently into the bed. He pulled up the sheets. She snuggled down as he watched her. She looked up at him looking down at her. A little time passed before he realised that she was expecting him to leave and he had been looking down at her for way too long. He turned awkwardly and strode from the room, closing the door softly behind him.
Chapter 5

It was almost lunchtime when Chris opened her eyes and groaned in pain. She stared at the ceiling and moved each aching limb one at a time. She was as stiff as board and her feet throbbed horribly. She struggled to sit up, she was still wearing the thick sweatpants, thick sports socks and turtle neck top that she was given by Nita last night, the blanket that she had held around her last night was in the bed with her too. As a result of all of the insulation she was hot, thirsty and she needed to pee. She swung her feet over the edge of the bed wincing as her poor ribs protested at the movement. She set her feet on the floor gingerly, they hurt but it wasn't too bad. She stood up and waited for her head to stop spinning... She had a dull ache behind her right eye, probably from dehydration.

She hobbled carefully into the luxurious bathroom and put her head directly under the faucet to drink gratefully. She finished her ablutions in peace and hobbled back to the bed. There was a bottle of painkillers and one of antibiotics on the bedside. She read the labels carefully and measured out her dose onto her palm and hobbled back to the bathroom stopping briefly to pick up one of the fine cut crystal tumblers she had sourced the previous night. She took her medicine and stood for a moment looking at herself in the mirror. She shuddered and turned away. She looked like an emo ghost, with dark ringed eyes, a pasty complexion and limp dark hair hanging from her head like a veil.

She couldn't put it off forever. She needed to get something to eat with her painkillers anyway. She opened the bedroom door and was greeted by Nita, who was lounging in a chair outside.

"Umm Hey." She said.

"Hey." Nita said back. "You're up earlier than I thought you'd be." She observed, "You hungry?"

Chris nodded eagerly.

"Did you take the pills the Doc left?" Nita asked.

"Yes."

Nita seemed to have taken on the role of nurse, either willingly or made to by her boss.

Nita nodded approvingly. "Hey Terry!" She suddenly shouted, making Chris jump. A big black man appeared and picked Chris up. She was too shocked to protest. She was carried across the penthouse to the dining area and placed in one of the comfy dining chairs at an expansive marble topped dining table.

Terry sat down next to her, gave her a wink and made a show of making his pecs dance. Chris smiled at him and looked at Nita questioningly.

"Doc said you have to stay off your feet to let them heal" Nita explained, "Terry volunteered to be your wheel chair."

Chris looked at Terry who grinned back and made his pecs dance again.

"There's really no nee…” Chris started, but Nita held up her hand, halting her protest.
"Boss' orders." She said firmly, as if that was the be all and end all. "What do you want to eat?"

"I don't know… just sandwich or something?" Chris didn't want these people to go to any trouble. She vaguely wondered at the logistics of going to the bathroom with Terry looming over her and she didn't really want them to cook and clean up after her. It wasn't their fault she was here… It was HIS fault.

Nita had got up and was wandering around the well appointed kitchen. "Boss had groceries delivered this morning… he got, like, vegetables and fruit and shit." Nita proclaimed, disappearing into a side room. She emerged a few moments later carrying an armload of ingredients. "Ham OK?" Nita asked.

"Yeah, great thanks." Chris replied. "What do you guys normally eat if you had to get groceries in?"

Nita shrugged as she assembled the sandwich. "We eat out, and there's like, snacks and drinks here"

Chris let it go… Her mum would be shocked. She wondered when they all last had a nutritious home-cooked meal.

Nita came back to the table and placed a ham and salad sandwich in front of her along with a cold soda, an apple and a packet of chips.

"Thank you." Chris said gratefully. She took a big bite of her sandwich. "So, where is he?"

"Dunno, he comes and goes." Nita said. "He'll be out doing something awesome."

"What's his name?" Chris asked, taking another bite.

"Boss." Nita replied.

"Surely he has a proper name, I can't call him Boss."

"He's the Boss." Nita insisted again.

Chris sighed and continued with her meal. Terry was eyeing up her chips so she pushed them in his direction. He took them and dug into them, pointedly ignoring Nitas angry glare. When she was done, Chris pushed her plate away with her apple core balanced on it. Nita took it to the kitchen and dumped it in the sink.

"We need to check your feet and your leg." Nita ordered in a business like tone. She was blunt in everything she said, she was tough and brokered no argument.

Terry lifted Chris gently out of her chair and carried her to the couch where Nita carefully pulled off Chris' socks and then the dressings. Chris got a chance to see what the fuss was about, she didn't remember getting most of the injuries and she was a bit dazed when the Doc had taken care of them. Most of the cuts weren't too bad and would heal in no time, but there were three that were long, deep and stitched together, probably a result of whatever she'd run over in all of those alleyways. They were the ones that warranted her being carried around… it wouldn't take too much pressure to bust a stitch. Nita cleaned them and put new dressings on. Then she rolled up the leg of the sweatpants to get to the graze on her leg… she remembered getting that one on the curb after getting out of the channel. The Doc had said that it needed to be watched because it had been so dirty with a few chunks of gravel needing to be dug out. It looked better in daylight, though the skin around it was now black with bruising. Chris was unconcerned on the whole. Nita cleaned the
wound and recovered it and nodded in satisfaction.

They had just finished when the elevator opened and the Boss strolled into the penthouse carrying a couple of logoed shopping bags.


He saw them on the sofa and changed direction to head towards them.

"You're up early." He observed, "We expected you to sleep 'til later this afternoon."

He sat down next to her, Nita and Terry got up and left them. His very presence seemed to be a command.

"I got you a couple of changes of clothes." He indicated towards the bags, Planet Saints and Leather and Lace bags. "I bought you shoes too, but you can't wear them yet."

She was eyeing the Leather and Lace bag warily. He followed her eye line and laughed.

"It's sensible underwear, I promise." He said merrily.

"How did you know my size?" she asked.

"You're about Shaundis size… a bit shorter is all." He replied as he picked up the first bag and began showing her the contents.

He had good taste. There was nothing purple in the bags, she noticed. He was wearing a purple shirt today underneath his very fine black three piece suit, showing his Saints colours and there were little silver fleur-de-lis buttons on his vest. He looked very smart.

"Thank you." She said sincerely, "I'll pay you back for them."

"No, you won't." He said firmly. "Do I have to remind you that the tank top and boxer shorts that you arrived in last night are the only things that you own in the whole world now?… because of your association with the Saints, because of me."

She stared at him.

"Except your car…" He added. "Which is in good hands I might add. Tank picked it up this morning."

He opened the other Planet Saints bag and extracted her handbag. "This was in the back seat. It's probably lucky that you forgot it considering."

She took her handbag from him and cradled it in her lap. This, her car and the boxer shorts and singlet were all she had now. She rifled through it, taking stock of her belongings. Lip balm, deodorant stick, small perfume bottle, nail clippers, nail file, half a bottle of aspirin, car charger for her cell phone and her wallet, containing five bucks, her credit card, drivers licence and a myriad of receipts and coffee and loyalty cards. She sighed. Her cell phone had been on the hall table so the charger was useless.

He had been watching her, watching the deflated look sweep over her face.

"Hey, it's not all bad." He said encouragingly, but he didn't elaborate which didn't fill her with much hope.
"Legal Lee is going to be here at four." He added. "You can rest, look around the penthouse, freshen up and change into your new clothes… not that an oversized turtleneck and sweatpants aren't sexy and all…"

She smiled at him. She should be angry, devastated and weeping at everything that she lost, but for some reason she was calm and though not OK with it, she had accepted it with relative ease. She should have been terrified by the events of the previous day, but for some reason her nerves were not in the least bit fragile and she couldn't explain it. She had cried last night in his arms, but she attributed that to shock and exhaustion. Perhaps she was stronger than she had assumed that she was.

He was still watching her. She was sitting there staring into space, her face completely neutral.

"I think I killed a man last night." She said quietly and inexplicably. She felt her eyes filling with tears and begin to overflow.

He was suddenly next to her, carefully manhandling her into his lap and holding her close. She burrowed up against him and cried. She hadn't thought about the Luchador that she had shot in her bedroom. She was suddenly overwhelmed with guilt. She didn't have to shoot him… she could have gone with them, what's the worst that could have happened? She wasn't a Saint, what could she possibly give them?

The Boss held her close and let her cry. He had killed a dozen people yesterday, but he even knew it should be a big deal to kill someone, even if they were trying to kill you. After a while he picked her up and carried her into his bathroom. He wet a face cloth and wiped her burning eyes as she sat on the edge of the bathtub sniffing.

"Let me tell you something." He had knelt in front of her and was looking her in the eye, his face serious. "They would have taken you, they would have tortured you and then they would have killed you." He said it so matter of factly that she couldn't help but believe him. "I would have tried to save you, but I can't promise that I could have. You will never forget, but you have to forgive yourself, it was self defense."

She looked deep into his eyes, hypnotised by him. It was terrifying to hear what may have happened, but it was also terrifying to hear that she had in fact killed someone. His tone confirmed it. She had never even seen the mans face. He had been masked and she didn't know if that made it more bearable or not, did it dehumanise her victim? The Boss was sincere and trying to get her to see. He had probably killed hundreds of people. The thought made her shudder. She had not thought about that either. He was a killer, though it was hard to believe when he was kneeling at her feet on the bathroom floor trying to comfort her.

"What is your name?" She asked quietly, out of the blue. Where had that come from? She asked herself.

She saw the hint of a smile at the corners of his mouth and he drew breath to answer.

"Boss, a word?" A voice said unobtrusively from the door.

They both looked up at Pierce, who was standing in the entrance. He looked apologetic at least.

The Boss hauled himself off the floor. "I'll send Nita in with some clothes." he said by way of goodbye.

Goddammit!
Chapter 6

'Legal Lee' turned out to be a leggy blonde woman who dressed and groomed herself with impeccable care.

Chris sat at the dining table looking across at her. She had changed into a pair of brand new jeans and a light shirt in a warm cream colour. Her hair was tied in a high pony tail and her face was freshly scrubbed. Nita had applied a little bit of makeup too and Chris was really happy with the result… until she had been carried into the kitchen by Terry and had seen this unworldly Amazon.

She was dressed, head to toe, in Chanel, perfectly tailored to fit her perfect form. She was graceful and smart and cultured and Chris liked her... because she was just plain nice. The Boss talked to her with familiarity which boasted years of friendship and god knows what else. Chris looked between them with something akin to a grimace.

"So," Lee smiled brightly, though her tone was business like, "Are we all happy with these arrangements?"

She looked at Chris and then at the Boss. He was looking at Chris expectantly. She had been a little dazed by the proposal. Lee had taken charge of Chris' house. A new house was going to be built in a nice part of the city and decorated to her taste. Her dads memorabilia would be sourced from collectors and museums and returned to her. She knew there was a picture of her folks from when her dad won a global endurance race that was on the wall of the car museum in Stilwater. The Saints would pay in full for the house and contents and the insurance money would be deposited into her bank account.

She would live rent free in one of the Saints buildings until her home was completed and she would have a weekly allowance for her personal expenses. She merely needed to choose where she wished to stay. Or if that wasn't palatable, she could stay in motel of her choice. As it may be that her life may still in danger, she could also choose a personal bodyguard to serve her as well.

"Where are these Saints safe houses exactly?" She asked the Boss curiously.

"There's one in Brickston. There's the penthouse above Safeword, Zimos building in New Colvin, Angels Gym, which I don't recommend, it smells like an armpit... or here." He replied.

"Safe word is a BDSM club." She said flatly, "And Zimos is a pimp, nothing against him personally, I'm sure he's a very nice pimp, but I would rather not be housed in his brothel." She took a deep breath and thought on it for a moment. Brickston is where Shaundi hung out most of the time and considering her apparent malice for Chris, she would have to dismiss that even though it was so close to her work. She didn't really want to stay in the building equivalent of an armpit, so she also dismissed the gym, it was also right smack-bang in the middle of Luchador territory. That left HQ or a motel.

Pros for HQ; it was a nice place, she was surrounded by friendly people who would protect her. Cons…He was here. She supposed that she could avoid him. If she chose a room on one of the lower levels, there would be no need for her to get involved with their business at all or she could choose a motel close to her work. A motel could be just as nice, but it would be expensive to put her up for that long and she would be putting the life of one of the saints at risk, who would be honour bound to protect her weather she wanted it or not, she suspected.
"It's a bit of a hike from here to my work…but I guess I can stay here." She said hesitantly, surprising herself, considering she had already chosen the motel in her head.

"We've already contacted your employer to advise that you are not fit for work at the moment…we have had Doc send over a medical certificate. You are officially on sick leave with full pay for the next six weeks." Lee had thought of everything. Chris supposed that she was paid to.

The Boss was still looking at her quietly.

"For six weeks? My ribs will be almost perfect in three. What am I supposed to do all day?" She asked a little exasperated.

"The first thing would be to heal." Lee suggested gently. "And then whatever you want, you're a guest not a prisoner, though I believe that leaving the Penthouse would be risky and your bodyguard can't be wearing Saint colours if you do… Now, who would you like to look out for you?"

"I don't know." Chris didn't want to burden anyone.

"You won't be burdening anyone." Lee advised, reading her mind. "The one you choose will be compensated for their time... I can get a list of volunteers if you want, but it would be pretty much everyone."

"I'll take Rocco then." Chris replied.

The boss looked surprised and then scowled. He opened his mouth to object but Chris cut him off.

"Nita and Terry are too valuable to your operations or so I understand and I would never monopolise your lieutenants. Rocco is already a guard and we already know each other." Chris explained her choice. "He's young, fit and wanting to prove himself. He was the first person that I saw last night, he practically carried me up here…"

"Fine." Lee continued, giving the Boss warning look. "Then we'll talk about what you want in your new home and I will arrange for an architect to draw something up for you."

The Boss continued to scowl.

The next hour or so was a blur of living areas, extra bathrooms and adequate storage. When Lee was satisfied with the information that she had received she began to gather up her things and then rose from the table with unearthly grace. The boss rose with her, not nearly as gracefully. Chris stayed sitting her ribs were aching and she had a stinging pain in her left foot. She was not surprised when Terry appeared at her side and carefully plucked her out of her chair and followed the Boss and the lawyer to the elevator. Chris stopped him and indicated that she wanted to go the sofa, Terry changed directions.

"Thanks Terry." She said, as he deposited her on the couch.

"Anything else?" He asked softly, looking down at her. Chris had been surprised that the big black man was so softly spoken, She almost had to strain to hear him.

"You're not my servant, Terry." She said in earnest.

"If the hardest thing I have to do today is carry a tiny beautiful lady who weighs about as much as a kitten, then I'm having the best day ever." He said with a grin.
She smiled at him in return, noting out of the corner of her eye the Boss had kissed Lee on the cheek before she boarded the elevator.

"I'm good Terry." She said "But can I please have the medication out of his room and a glass of water."

"Are you in pain?" he asked with concern in his quiet voice.

She could tell he would blame himself if she said yes. "Not yet." She said with a reassuring smile.

Terry hurried off.

She reclined on the sofa, she was aching all over again. She closed her eyes. She would have loved to go to sleep but she didn't have a room of her own in this place yet, so she would have to wait until one was assigned to her. She wouldn't sleep in His room again.

"You need to get some rest" The Boss' warm voice interrupted her peaceful moment.

"Point me to my room and I will" She said, taking the pill bottles and water from Terry, who had also arrived at her side.

"You can have...." He started. She stopped him.

"No, I can't have your room." She said a hint of steel in her voice.

"It's OK," He said, "I'll sleep downstairs."

"No" She said more firmly, digging her heals in. He gave her a hard look that seemed laced with irritation. He was a man who was used to getting his way and she was not complying with his wishes. She looked right back, putting every ounce of stubbornness that she possessed into that look.

"Fine." He grunted. "Terry, can you please take Miss Worth to the 27th Floor, 2704 is free. And get Rocco from downstairs... He's now her shadow." He turned and walked away without looking back.

Terry had been standing to the side with a grin on his face. He waited for Chris to take her pills and then carried her down to her new home for the next few weeks. He was going to tell Nita later that the little lady stared down the Boss like a tiny pitbull.

The Saints HQ was also a fancy hotel. The top levels had been used by the Morningstar, but when the Saints had arrived in Steelport, they had cleared out the Morningstar and had entrenched themselves there instead. There was a lower floor that had an indoor pool, gym and Beauty Spa. There was one that was occupied by a couple of restaurants and bars. There was a grand ballroom and conference facilities. The penthouse occupied the top two floors, there was a storage floor below and the five floors below that were reserved for the suites. The rest was single or twin rooms. She was taken to the southwest suite on the 27th floor. The room was very nice with a humongous bed in one room and a generous living area with comfy lounge suite and fashionable occasional furniture. There was a huge flower and fruit display on a big sideboard and a fully stocked bar in the corner. Everything was in hues of cream, walnut and cappuccino. The windows were floor to ceiling and looked in the two directions and she had a marvellous view of the ocean. There was a beautifully decorated bathroom with a massive freestanding claw foot bathtub and a shower built for two. There was another bedroom too, but she didn't bother to look into it, it would be her bodyguards room. This would do nicely, she thought.
There was no kitchen though and she wondered if it would be OK to go up the penthouse to cook her meals. She wouldn't eat in the restaurant everyday. Her mother would have considered that crass. She would ask Him later. Terry deposited her on the bed and went out again to find Rocco. She snuggled down into the satiny comforter and immediately went to sleep.

Rocco touched her shoulder lightly to wake her. He smiled shyly down at her.

"Ma'am," He said apologetically, his handsome young face was very expressive. "You have to take your pills and Nita needs to check your bandages again."

It took Chris a wee while to figure out that she had slept for almost a full twenty four hours when it seemed that she had just closed her eyes for a moment. It seemed that events were catching up with her. She was still fully dressed, slippers and all, on top of the covers of her new bed. She moved stiffly to sit up. Seeing her struggle, Rocco put his arms around her to help. The Doc had said that she would get her stitches out in about a week but her ribs would be an issue for about three to six weeks depending how she looked after herself. She looked forward to the day when she didn't struggle for breath and didn't ache like an old woman while doing the most simple of things like… sitting.

She finally sat up with her feet over the side of the bed. She came face to face with a wheel chair. She snorted with disgust.

"I'm not using that." She said irritably.

"With all due respect ma'am," Rocco replied. "Yes, you are. I'm not as strong as Terry and I can't carry you everywhere and you can't walk until the stitches come out of your feet next week. Humour me." He said with a grin.

"You chose me, remember." He added.

She shot him a rebellious glare before nodding reluctantly.

Rocco passed her her medication and poured a glass of water from a jug that had appeared on the bedside. She took her pills and drank the water down gratefully. Rocco saw her gulp down the water and poured her another glass. He helped her into her chair and wheeled her to the bathroom. Someone had moved a shower chair into the cubical, so she didn't have to stand to wash. Rocco stood there awkwardly for a moment... when he had agreed to help her, he hadn't thought about this. In spite of herself she laughed out loud, before grunting at the sudden pain in her torso.

"I don't need to you to help me pee, Rocco… or shower." She said with amusement.

He glowed bright red and fled the bathroom.

She gingerly moved around the bathroom. She didn't smell bad so she skipped the shower, she also didn't have any waterproofing for her dressings. She noted that the bathroom had been stocked with all sorts of stuff that she would need, she also guessed that her clothes had been moved here. All while she slept, which kind of freaked her out for some reason.

"Hey Rocco," She raise her voice slightly. "Can you please pass me the yoga pants and a tee-shirt and some clean … umm… under things?"

She heard him move around the suite. The door opened a crack and he shoved his arm through her asked for items dangling from his hand she took them and the arm shot back through the door at impressive speed. Poor kid, she thought. She should have thought it through more thoroughly. Maybe she should have chosen a woman to be her 'bodyguard'. She wondered as she painfully
She called out that she was done changing and Rocco opened the door hesitantly, visibly exhaling in relief when he saw her fully clothed.

They chatted on the way up to the Penthouse and she was glad she had asked for the kid, he was really grateful for the opportunity to do something other than guard duty for once. He told her that he had been with the Saints for three years, since he was only fifteen. Before that, he had lived on the streets with his dad, until his dad had been stabbed by another guy in a fight over a handful of change. The Saints gave him security and friends in exchange for his skills, acquired by years of living on the street, not all of them strictly legal. He'd only been in one shootout, which he thought was pretty exciting. He told her all about it, his eyes bright with the memory.

Once in the penthouse Nita told Rocco off for bringing her up, as Nita had planned to come down and bring dinner as well. Chris reclined on the couch and ate her sandwich and fruit as Nita checked and cleaned her wounds. Once done, she was told to go back down to her suite. She was advised that they would bring food down to her and help her with her washing until her dressings came off and stitches came out and then she would be free to do what she wanted. Until then, she should stop being such a baby and submit to Nitas ministrations and use Rocco as her gopher.

Chris stayed in the Penthouse the rest of the day instead and looked around properly for the first time The Boss' bedroom suite occupied one side of the Penthouse on one side of the large living area, with the kitchen and dining area on the other. A huge bar area occupied one side of the second floors and there was a large gym and office on the other. The back of the second floor was filled with a big atrium filled with plants and water features. Chris spotted something in the bar that made her snort with derision.

"Is that a stripper pole?" She asked Rocco, indicating the item in the corner of the room.

"Yep." He replied.

"Why?" She asked, amused.

Rocco looked at her puzzled. "For the Strippers" He said it as if she were stupid.

She had to keep reminding herself that this was a gang. Strippers, hookers and drugs were all common place for them. So were weapons... everyone either had a gun in their hands or stuffed down the back of the jeans.

She dismissed the pole and had Rocco wheel her out to the patio, which had a pool and hot tub. On the other side was the helipad that she had wandered out to the other night. She hadn't needed a stupid wheelchair then, she thought a little bitterly.

She eventually got tired and adjourned to her room, Rocco pushing her along, the two of them chatting away to each other. She occasionally burst out laughing at some of his observations which were kind of endearing.

The Boss leaned against the wall outside of his room and watched the pair of them get into the elevator. Thick as thieves. He scowled. Rocco was a good kid, but he was too young and too damn good looking for the Boss' liking. He would have preferred if she had chosen anyone else as her bodyguard. He'd thought she'd choose Terry or Nita.

She should have chosen him.
Chapter 7

Not much happened for the next couple of weeks. Her feet healed beautifully under Nita's care. Her ribs became less and less of a hindrance and soon she was wandering around the building at will, with young Rocco at her side at all times. He was taking his job very seriously though she was never in any danger inside of the Saints HQ and she was yet to actually leave the building.

She had approved the plans for her new house in Henry Steel Mills and had already gotten several pieces of her dad's memorabilia back. Including a great picture of him with Tank, that Tank had given to her when he had returned her car… which was in better condition now than it had been before that fateful car chase that had landed her here.

She spent most of her time in the penthouse now as that was where everyone was, the central hub of activity. The lieutenants came and went daily. Shaudi had warmed to her and Chris began to understand her initial standoffishness... and the reason she had never seen the legendary Johnny Gat. He was dead, killed in a confrontation with the Morningstar that ultimately led the Saints to relocate to Steelport from Stilwater in the first place.

Chris actually got on well with everyone and she had to remind herself that these were gang members. Pierce and Oleg were hilarious and she had received lessons in chess from them both. One such lesson resulted in Pierce being suspended by his ankle off the edge of the helipad by Oleg, who had disagreed strongly with one small piece of innocuous advice that had turned into a insult laden shouting match. The Boss had intervened, one of the few times that Chris had seen him in the time she had been there until then, and Pierce had not been dropped off the side of the building on that occasion.

The Boss was barely around but when he did make an appearance he didn't speak to her in any depth, hello and goodbye was all. He was just there and then he was gone. She didn't know what he got up to, though she heard that he was causing as much trouble for the Syndicate as was humanly possible. She never really noticed him, accept once when she had sought him out on her own.

Chris had made a big impact on the Saints in the short time that she had been amongst them, starting from the day she walked into the kitchen and found a kid called Tony eating goop out of a pot. Upon closer inspection she had discovered that it was burrito buddy. She had exploded, burst into one of the semi regular meetings that the Boss conducted with his crew, ranted about proper nutrition, demanded groceries and stormed out leaving them all standing in awe.

She was given access to the online 'housekeeping' account that day by Kinzie, an IT genius and former FBI agent, and was able to get groceries delivered. From then she kept herself busy cooking and baking for them, making her feel less like an inconvenience. Suddenly the Penthouse was overfull with Saints, each gravitating to HQ in search of home cooked meals and treats. Rocco got first pick of everything she made until she suggested that maybe one Salted Caramel muffin was a better idea than eating a whole tray, though the bugger didn't put on an ounce of weight, there were grumbles from the others and they weren't above shooting him.

Once her stitches were out, she got to go out and see the building site and watch the surveyors stake out the house. The boss had driven her, careful to take a little used route and making sure to be as inconspicuous as possible, but he hadn't said anything on the way there or on the way back. She was a bit confused by his behaviour. She thought that maybe he was keeping his distance now
because he had paid her back and it was not in his best interest to involve himself with someone who would be out of his life soon.

So he was ignoring her, until one warm winters day in an almost empty Penthouse.

She was sitting on the couch reading a book provided by Oleg. She had glanced up and she'd noticed Rocco was sitting not far away, taking a handgun apart. She'd got up, putting her book aside and walked over.

"What are you doing?" She asked as she took a seat next to him.

"Just a bit of maintenance." He replied without looking up. "You have to take care of them."

"Can you show me?" She asked, picking up one of the pieces and turning it over in her hand.

Rocco looked at her and smiled widely. He put the gun back together quickly and handed it to her. "Sure."

Under his tutelage she took the handgun apart by herself, he reached over every now and then to show her how different parts detached. They cleaned and oiled all of the parts and then he watched to see if she could put it back together alone. She did, but she knew she was gritting her teeth at one stage and had her tongue sticking out for the rest of the time. She finally had it done and she smacked the magazine into place and she smiled at him jubilantly. Rocco got up from his seat and hunkered down next to her, his head close to hers.

"A handgun is different from a rifle, they're not as accurate, especially over distance." He supplied helpfully, "But they are light and easy to conceal and carry."

He took hold of her hand and the gun and showed her how to hold the weapon to keep it steady and make a better shot. She held it the way he showed her without her finger on the trigger, with one hand on the grip and the other cradling it underneath to support it. She arms were extended but her elbows soft.

"It's only a 9mm, so the kick won't be too bad." He advised.

He was just showing her how to sight her shot when the Boss' hand came down on Roccos shoulder.

Rocco jumped.

"Hey kid. Take a break." He said his voice was oddly tight and he looked a little pissed off. Rocco scampered off without a word and the Boss sat down next to Chris. His expression changed almost instantly to a charming smile.

"Do you want to fire it?" He asked pleasantly, his voice low.

Chris looked at him in surprise. "Uh, Ok..." She said hesitantly.

She was a little taken aback; first by his sudden appearance, his somewhat cold dismissal of Rocco and now his warm eyes smiling at her. He took the gun from her hand and then he stood and held his hand out to her.

Oh I see, she thought, we're back to the hand holding then? She still remembered how his hands felt. They were warm, rough and all encompassing. She slipped her hand into his and allowed herself to be gently hauled out of her seat. He didn't step back and she found herself pressed right
up against him. She looked up into his face and he grinned cheekily before stepping back and leading her to a set of stairs that went down to the floor below.

There were boxes and crates of stuff stacked about, most of which looked appallingly dangerous. She gawked open mouthed at what looked like a RPG leaning against a wall. This was the Saints storage floor. It looked like 'storage' meant munitions dump. The Boss led her through a row of explosives to an almost hidden door. He opened it and pulled her through. There was another door and that opened into a small shooting range that seemed to take up half of the floor.

The Boss took her to one end of the range.

He let go of her hand and turned to face her. He handed her Roccos 9mm, put his hands on her shoulders and turned her towards the targets at the other end on the row.

"Show me what he showed you." He said softly.

"Should I have earmuffs or something?" She asked, remembering a trip to the range she'd taken with her dad years ago.

"Uuumm…" He paused, looking around. He spotted a box in the corner that had earmuffs and safety glasses in it. He grabbed two sets and bought one set to her while donning a set himself.

He looked apologetic. "I don't normally use the range." He said by way of explanation for his oversight, implying that he preferred his targets to have a pulse and be wandering free-range about the city. He stood next to her again and indicated for her to begin.

She held the gun the way Rocco had showed her, one hand under the other cradling and supporting it, she remembered to not lock her elbows as she extended her arms and she tried to sight the target at the other end. She lowered her arms suddenly and laughed. The targets were mannequins decorated to look like zombies. She shook her head with a snort and took her stance again. She focused on the zombie target and fired a shot…. and missed by a mile.

She glanced at the big man standing next to her. He wasn't looking at the target at all, he was looking at her… intently.

She felt her breath catch in her throat. How could hazel eyes burn like that? She felt her face heat up and her heart begin to patter in her chest. They stood there looking at each other for an awkward amount of time before he seemed to shake himself and turned to look down the row.

"Try again." He said a bit unsteadily but loud enough for her to hear with her earmuffs on.

This time he watched where the bullet hit as she pulled the trigger again. He nodded.

He took her by surprise again when he moved behind her, his hard body pressed against hers. He took hold of both of her arms and extended them in front of her. He adjusted her stance by tapping her ankles with his toes until they were where he wanted them. She lent herself to his ministrations as he moved her around like a marionette. When he was finally done, he leaned his chin on her shoulder, moved her earmuff and breathed into her ear. She shivered at the sensation.

"See the sights on the barrel?" He whispered to her.

She nodded, swallowing loudly. His soft voice rippled through her entire body, leaving her light-headed and struggling to breathe, coupled with his hot breath on her neck and her sensitive earlobe. She found herself not concentrating on anything, let alone the handgun or the distant targets. He slowly ran his hands along her arms, igniting mini lightening storms where he touched. She
thought that she had stopped breathing all together when his hands covered hers and she felt that his body had enclosed hers completely. She closed her eyes, enjoying the heat of his body cocooning her in his embrace.

He corrected her aim with his dexterous warm hands and whispered, "Squeeze." He placed the earmuff over her ear again but didn't pull away.

She opened her eyes looked down the barrel to see how it was aimed and then squeezed the trigger.

The gun fired with a 'boom' and the head of the zombie target in her sights bounced off its neck, thumped to the floor and rolled around a bit before coming to rest. She turned her face toward him, smiling proudly, though he had practically fired the gun himself. She found his face only an inch away and though she was too close focus on his features, she knew that he was as breathless as she was. So close, she thought, wanting to close that tiny gap. She didn't need to.

He moved his mouth forward ever so slightly and lightly brushed her lips with his. It was soft and brief and he jumped away immediately as if scalded.

He looked confounded for a moment, his eyes darting around the room a little wildly.

"Yeah… So …" He murmured hoarsely, before clearing his throat. "So…You should practice that stance for a while." He said as if he were a school master handing out assignments. "I'll check back with you later, I just have to…"

He turned quickly and strode for the door. He stopped abruptly and turned back. He walked purposefully to the cardboard box and deposited the earmuffs and glasses in it, before turning again and fleeing the room.

Chris had not moved.

It felt as if her mouth had been seared, the most infinitesimal touch had rendered her incapable of speech or movement. She skin was still getting over the caressing movements of his hands on her arms, the tickling sensation of his breath on her ear and the feel of his whole body surrounding her with heat as he moulded her into a pistol shooting machine. She thought about it for moment when her brain began to function again and she had to admit that she felt a little ripped off.

That could have been a full-on kiss, she could have gotten more involved and made it something really hot. She could have wrapped her arms around his neck and clung to him until that initial heat turned to something molten. They could have started a real fire, if that tiny meeting of lips on lips had the power to do what it did as it was. Just imagine what could have happened if it'd had a chance to intensify. She sighed.

She looked at the mannequin head on the floor down the row. She walked over and picked it up. She looked down at it.

"What the hell?" She asked it. It didn't reply, they seldom did she supposed.

She took the head back to its body and attached it firmly, thumping it a few times to make sure it was on properly.

She walked back to her line and moved her body into the same stance that the Boss had manhandled her into. Her body remembered what he had done with her and where he had wanted her. She looked down the barrel sights and fired off another shot. She was rewarded with a puff of plaster as the round bit deep into the shoulder of the zombie mannequin. She made the tiny correction and shot again. The zombies head fell off with a resounding thump.
Chapter 8

He was avoiding her again.

And Chris was exasperated by it all. He was the leader of a major crime organisation, a killer and all round ratbag and yet he couldn't handle a little peck on the lips? That HE initiated!

Fine, She had thought… If that's the way he wants to play it then, fine by me.

She was in the kitchen again. Pierce was hovering around the oven, waiting for a batch of white chocolate and macadamia cookies to come out. He had asked if she would teach him to bake and she had willingly obliged. He had taken off his crisp white jacket immediately, rolled up the sleeves of his purple silk shirt and put on the bright purple apron that Nita had handed to him with a bemused look on her face.

She had guided him through the steps and now the fruits of his labour were almost ready.

The warm aroma of home cooking had drawn a crowd as well. Some wanted to see Pierce successfully cook something with their own eyes… some just wanted cookies. Oleg was in both camps.

The Boss wandered into the kitchen to find out what was going on. He had taken one look at her and retreated into the other room. She stepped away from the counter advising Pierce not to open the door early not matter how much he wanted to. He made a face and went on hovering, he checked the timer again as she left to follow the man himself.

"I have a question for you." She said as she caught up to him.

He stopped walking and looked down at her expectantly. If he was wary, he was good at hiding it.

"What is your actual name?" She asked. There was no one to interrupt them this time.

He smiled knowingly. "It's a secret. I'd have to kill you if I told you" He replied, turning to walk away.

She grabbed hold of his arm and turned him back towards her.

"If you don't give me a name other than Boss," She said threateningly "I'll call you Dirk Meatwhistle."

His eyebrows shot up, but he remained silent.

"I'm not calling you Boss." She said stubbornly, wanting to stamp her foot petulantly.

"Dirk Meatwhistle it is, then." He said with a wide grin. He turned and walked off without a backward glance.

She ground her teeth. What was the big deal? Was his name really girlie? Like Meredith or something? Or did he think the mystery added something to his reputation. It was stupid, whatever it was.

She heard a yelp and a clatter from the kitchen followed closely by a round of raucous applause.
She sighed to herself and rushed back to the kitchen.

"Oven mitts, Pierce." She said resignedly. She shoved his hands under the cold water faucet to dull any scorching and stooped to pick up the cookies and hot tray. The crew didn't seem to mind that the cookies had been on the floor. As soon as she placed the cookies on the counter, the crew gathered them up and dispersed amidst Pierces protests that they hadn't left any for him. He dried his hands and took off after them, his purple apron askew. A small pitched battle ensued in the living area.

Oleg watched them all leave but remained in the kitchen and helped her to do the dishes. He didn't want floor cookies.

"You cook very well." He observed, as he helped her load up the dishwasher. "But I fear that the Saints will get too used to you looking after them, that they will all die from malnutrition when you go."

She stopped what she was doing for a second. She hadn't actually thought about going, even when she saw her new house going up at break neck speed. She shrugged.

"I'll teach Pierce properly and he can become the goodie provider." She said a little absently.

"If today is anything to go by, I wouldn't count on it." Oleg rumbled. She chuckled quietly.

"I know why I have to get back to my regular life." She said after a companionable silence. "I know that the Saints have to show no relationship with me for my own safety but I'll miss you guys. You've looked after me and made me feel not only welcome, but like I'm a fully fledged and respected member. I'm even a decent shot now"

She laughed unexpectedly. "I'm going to miss being an honorary Saint." Then she sighed and continued rinsing the cookie tray.

Oleg patted her on the shoulder gently "You know what Russians do when they are sad about an impending departure? Or about anything for that matter?" He asked trying to lift her spirits.

She shook her head despondently.

"They drink!" He proclaimed, throwing a dishcloth on the counter and extending his massive boat of a hand towards her.

"Sounds good." She said with an impish grin.

She put the tray on the counter to dry and took his hand and they walked off to the penthouse bar together.

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The Boss looked up from his cell phone and cocked his head in curiosity.

There was some kind of loud wailing coming from outside of his room. What was that bloody awful sound coming from the living area? He hauled himself out of his chair and wandered out of his room to investigate... Maybe someone was badly injured and needed his help? Maybe someone was dying?

The sight that greeted his eyes was even more disturbing than any pain-wracked Saint could ever be.
Oleg was kneeling in front of Christine Worth as she reclined in one of the comfy tub chairs in the bar. He was holding her hand aloft and crooning. Crooning! The big guy was singing her a Frank Sinatra ballad, badly. Her face was flushed and she had a hand to her throat in appreciation, looking for all the world like a damsel accepting a marriage proposal from some fucking knight.

He felt his brain explode in his head and he stormed over to them.

"What the fuck is going on?" He interrupted rudely.

"Dirk Meatwhistle." She greeted him expansively, her voice slurring and her eyes slightly unfocused.

Oleg chuckled as he got to his feet a little unsteadily.

"We," She said pausing between each word in an attempt to appear much more sober than she was. "Were discussing contemporary music and the evolution of rebellious expression through sound… from country music to hard rock and beyond."

"I was making a case for the rat pack in the sixties." Oleg supplied, while he attempted to squeeze into one of the tub chairs and failed. He went to put is foot on it to purvey a nonchalant air. He missed the chair the first time but corrected that on the second attempt.

"It looks like the discussion has also included the sampling of beverages." The Boss observed wryly.

"The rat pack as individuals were guilty of rebellion and general bad behaviour but that wasn't expressed in their art. They mostly sang ballads and shit" Chris argued with Oleg, ignoring the Boss completely.

"L is for the way you look at me…" Oleg began to croon again.

"That's Nat King Cole, you twit!" Chris giggled. "He wasn't even in the rat pack, Sammy Davis Jr was..." She face went deadpan. "I'm pretty sure that's racist." She said flatly, before cackling drunkenly.

The Boss looked at one and then the other, scowling darkly and then stomped off, leaving them laughing at each other.

It was a little later that evening when the Boss was interrupted yet again, this time by a high pitched, laughing squeal. He walked out into the living area to see Chris perched precariously on Olegs shoulders, her arms wrapped tightly around his big bald head. She was whooping with delight.

"We're going to smash some Karaoke" Chris shouted gleefully, swaying dangerously from side to side.

Oleg lurched unsteadily for the elevator, holding onto Chris' knees to stop her from toppling backwards. They squeezed into the elevator, Chris had to scooch down and bend sideways to fit in, though she was hard against the ceiling.

"Later, Bitches." She hollered, just before the doors eased closed.

The Boss stood staring at the closed doors. Their musical debate had obviously degenerated into something else entirely, he thought to himself.
"Aww, Fuck." He cursed and pulled out his cell.

After dialling, he heard two cell phones ringing from different parts of the penthouse with different ring tones. Shaundi was looking at hers as she came out of the gym, she had a generic ringtone and Pierce was looking at his as he came out of the kitchen his was Montell Jordans 'This is how we do it'. They both noted who was calling and looked up at him questioningly.

"Good, you're both here." He said urgently as he disconnected the calls, "Oleg and Christine have gone rogue. We have to get them back here before she's seen with him. He's very recognisable"
Chapter 9

The car pulled up to the curb outside The Broken Shillelagh. Tt was the Saints regular haunt in Steelport, there was a chalk board on the side walk proclaiming that it was Karaoke Night with half price cocktails for the ladies. The Boss eased out of the car and eyed the sign and bar warily. Shaundi and Pierce flanked him as he walked up to the door and opened it.

He stopped so abruptly on the threshold that Shaundi and Pierce slammed into his broad back. My God!... It was all so horrible.

Oleg was standing on the little stage squinting at the little screen, jerking backwards every now and then to keep from toppling forwards. He was deeply involved in a terrifying rendition of 'I touch myself' by The Divinyls. Chris sat at a round table in the front row waving a lighter in the air, swaying dangerously from side to side in inebriated appreciation. The DJ sat off to one side with his head in his hands. The four other patrons in the bar talked on as if nothing out of the ordinary was happening, as if there wasn't an eight foot Russian monster singing bad karaoke in their midst's.

The Boss stood in horrified wonder, watching the scene with a kind of open mouthed awe. Shaundi gave a loud disbelieving laugh and Pierce pushed passed them and made a beeline for the computer to find himself a song. Oleg's song mercifully came to an end and was greeted with enthusiastic applause from Chris. The DJ looked up and started pressing buttons. He turned on his mike as Oleg weaved back to the table and a waiting bottle of Vodka. As he sat, he was energetically patted on the shoulder by Chris who was obviously enjoying herself immensely.

"That was awesome." The DJ said in a dull monotone. His jaded voice echoing around the almost empty bar, "Now we're gonna call up Alice for a bit of the Eagles... yay"

Alice was an older woman with greying blonde hair and a massive bosom. Alice mounted the stage with a little grunt and stood in the spotlight to the opening strains of Hotel California, her somewhat strained sequined top winking brightly.

The boss started for the table as Alice began caterwauling. Chris and Oleg were laughing at something uproariously and Oleg put his hand in the air to call for more drinks. It seemed Chris was working her way through the cocktail menu as Oleg drank straight from the vodka bottle.

"One Quick Fuck and a Slippery Nipple," Oleg called as the Boss reached them, leaving Chris in a giggling mess. "and another bottle of Stolichnaya."

The Boss stood over them for a moment and they blinked up at him owlishly before collapsing into a fit of giggles all over again. Shaundi had pulled up a chair at a neighbouring table and had ordered herself a beer and was watching Pierce hand a scrap of paper to the DJ, before taking a seat next to her, watching the stage with anticipation.

"You can't be out in public." The Boss said sternly.

Oleg looked affronted "You think I'm too ugly, don't you." He moaned dramatically. Chris laughed.

The Boss ignored him as he looked at Chris with exasperation.
"Christine." He continued.

She craned her head up to look at him "Don't worry 'bout it, Dirk," She slurred. "Oleg will protect me, aye buddy?"

"Da." Oleg nodded emphatically. "With My Life, Kotenok"

"I wanna sing." She cried, leaping to her feet.

Alice gave the group a glare from the stage as she tried to sing her song. Chris put her finger to her lips comically and made an exaggerated shushing sound and sank back into her chair.

"Dirk?" Shaundi asked, looking intrigued. The Boss ignored her.

"Fine, you can sing one song." The Boss compromised. "Then we go back to the Penthouse."

"What about me?" Pierce objected.

"You can stay." The Boss replied, sighing heavily.

Shaundi chuckled into her beer bottle.

Chris sat back on her chair with a smug expression on her face. The barman bought over their drinks. Chris had her two cocktails placed in front of her, she knocked back the Slippery Nipple and handed the Boss the other, which he in turn handed back to the barman with a shake of his head. Oleg opened his bottle of Vodka with his teeth and gulped down a quarter of the bottle after spitting the cap onto the floor. Alice was finishing up her song and soon returned to her seat at the bar to wait for her next one.

"That was awesome." The DJ intoned, not really caring what was going on around him. He had lit a cigarette and it was hanging precariously out of the side of his mouth. "Chris is going to wow us with her rendition of 'Natural Woman' by Aretha Franklin." He seemed quite unenthused by the idea.

Chris leaped to her feet with a whoop and bounded up to the microphone. She turned around and faced the 'crowd' with a delighted and vacant smile on her face. She was shifting from one foot to the other in excitement. The introduction of the song rang out and as Chris started to sing, looking closely at the little screen to follow the words, the whole room went quite and turned to watch the stage. Even the DJ looked up from picking at his fingernails.

Damn! Could the girl sing. Even as plastered as she was… and she was really plastered, every note was perfect, her voice was deep and soulful and the power of her lungs belied her little frame when it came to the chorus.

The Boss was stunned. He had never heard her sing, she had never sung at the penthouse. She had been living under his roof for weeks and she had never uttered a peep. Yet here she was, sultry and smooth. He was mesmerized.

When the song came to an end, the whole place; the barman, the four people at the bar, the crew in the front row, three guys who had been playing pool in the back, the DJ and the two people who just came in off the street, burst into applause. Chris grinned and bowed, and promptly fell on her face.

The Boss leaped forward and collected her from the floor where she lay chortling and cast a look over his shoulder at Shaundi and Pierce.
"I'm getting her out of here." He said. "Can you wrangle him?" He asked eyeing Oleg, who was staring at the ceiling still clapping absently. "After Pierce does his song…” He added after affronted Pierces look.

Shaundi looked dubious, but Pierce nodded enthusiastically. The Boss got the impression that they would probably stay there for a few more songs.

He helped Chris totter out of the bar... pausing by the barstools to hug everyone she walked passed. He deposited her in the passenger seat of the car and walked around the front. When he opened his door, she was in the process of climbing over the gear stick to get into the drivers seat.

"No!" He said crossly. "Get back in your seat… Sit, stay."

She slumped back into the passenger seat and began playing with the buttons on the console. The Boss sighed and got into the car. He smacked her hand and turned off the windshield wipers and then took off back to the penthouse. She was fiddling with the radio. She stopped on The Mix when Bonnie Tylers husky voice came out of the speakers.

"Yussss!" She breathed, "Where have all the good men gone and where are all the gods…” She started to sing along.

The drive to the penthouse didn't take long and he hoped that no one had seen her on her little excursion. They pulled into the parking garage as the song was coming to its climax. She was in full voice, dancing along in her seat and giving him meaningful looks complete with eyebrow waggles. He cruised to a stop and watched her with an exasperated smile. She stopped all of a sudden and looked hard at him, her eyes narrowing.

"I need a hero…” She whispered in time with the song before stopping completely.

She swooped at him and locked her lips on his. He was stunned for a second, but only a second. His whole body went on high alert, his hands reached for her and he manhandled her into his seat. She made a discontented sound in her throat and awkwardly contorted herself until she was comfortably settled on his lap, her knees straddling his narrow hips. Her hands caressed his cheeks before burying themselves in his hair. Her tongue danced on his bottom lip, before darting into his mouth. He ran his hands up her sides from her bottom up to her ribcage, his hand catching on her shirt on its travels and he felt her exposed skin, hot beneath his fingers.

She moaned against his lips and pushed herself even closer against him. He was breathing hard, his heart pounding fast but he caught himself. He couldn't help but taste the alcohol on her mouth, her tongue was practically one hundred proof and he reluctantly... very, very reluctantly eased her away from him.

"Christine." He gasped harshly.

Her face was flushed and her lips swollen and glistening. As he feared, her eyes were not at all clear, betraying her level of intoxication. He knew he was not going to take advantage of her in this condition as much as he wanted to. Fuck, did he want to. From the very first day he had seen her, shocked and indignant in her fathers car, he had wanted to kiss her the way he just had and he had dreamed of being kissed by her, but the reality had far exceeded his expectations. He cleared his throat.

"You're drunk and not in control right now." He murmured, trying to remain steady while keeping her at arms length.
She snorted indelicately and opened the car door, stumbling a little as she alighted. She lurched unsteadily towards the elevator where she was met by a frazzled looking Rocco. Rocco started to tell her off for leaving the building, but she patted him fondly on the cheek, kissed him softly on the tip of his nose, put her arm around his shoulder and walked, leaning heavily on him, onto the elevator chatting animatedly about her impromptu night out.

The Boss stayed sitting in the car. While he had control of his brain, his body was very unhappy with his responsible decision and he needed to regain control of his wayward crotch.

She was amazing. She was smart, funny, she could drive like a demon and sing like an angel. She could cook and she was so damned mentally strong. She charmed everyone that she met; Rocco would die for her, Oleg too. Add to that, she was beautiful and unconsciously sexy as hell and kissed like a hand grenade. She made his heart stop and beat like a techno bass line all at once. He looked down at his pants, this was the wrong train of thought.

He summoned an image of Oleg taking to the stage. It flitted though his head and quickly cooled his ardor with a shudder.

He could not get involved with her. She had to slip out of the Penthouse and back into her own, safe life, never to be seen by a Saint again, especially him. For her safety… like the crew had said.
Chapter 10

The winter morning dawned bright and clear, Chris glared out of the window at it and wanted nothing more than to die. Her head was pulsating with unbearable pain, she had thrown up several times already and after hydrating, thrown up some more. She had settled her stomach now but she needed to get back to bed and sleep…. Or die, that was definitely still on the table as well.

She was waiting for Rocco to come back to the room with pain killers and then she could try and sleep some more. She’d had hangovers before but nothing had ever come close to the Armageddon that was going on in her body right now. Even her eyeballs hurt... they felt several sizes too big for their sockets and they felt oddly dusty. She yanked the curtains closed against the beautiful morning and shambled back towards the bed. She lay down face first and groaned as her stomach churned again. The feeling passed thankfully.

She remembered being in the penthouse bar, Oleg was putting away whole bottles of Vodka, lulling Chris into a false sense of security, making her think that the booze wasn't that strong. Forgetting, of course that he was a literal giant... and she was not. She remembered HIM coming into the penthouse bar looking angry. It had spurred her to drink more… she didn't remember anything after that. She had woken in her bed… fully clothed, which meant that Rocco had put her there, he would never have had the nerve to undress her. She was thankful for that for a number of reasons.

She cracked open an eye when she heard her door open and close quietly. Rocco had a pitcher of water and a bottle of pills that Chris secretly hoped were cyanide, a plate of fruit and some crackers. He grinned widely at her.

"I saw a movie once…” He said quietly, as he laid his burdens on to the bedside cabinet "an old one about Dracula… your eyes look just like his did … there are no white bits left in them, they're all red" He said it matter of factly… trying not to sound amused.

"Was it very hard to get me to bed?" She voice was croaky from throwing up, but she meant to sound apologetic and appreciative.

"Nah," He said holding out a glass of water and a couple of little white tablets. "You where happy enough to get to your room after the Boss dropped you off in the parking garage."

She had put the pills in her mouth and washed them down with a sip of water.

"Dropped me off?" She asked in surprise "Dropped me off from where?” She didn't remember going anywhere.

"Ummm… you went to a bar with Oleg… to do Karaoke … you don't remember." It wasn't a question, Rocco now looked amused.

It seemed a bit more happened last night than she had originally thought.

"Oh God," She groaned in genuine pain, "What did I do?"

Rocco laughed quietly "Nothing too bad... you're a really good singer." He said encouragingly.

She ignored that. "Tell me what happened after that man left us in the Penthouse bar?"
Rocco looked confused for a minute and then clicked about who she meant.

"Oh Right." He said. "The Boss when back to his room and then you and Oleg kept drinking, you
decided that you needed music to sing and Leon said it was Karaoke night at the Shillelagh and
you and Oleg decided to go out and the Boss went after you and bought you back, you went to bed.
Oleg, Pierce and Shaundi came back a few hours later… You didn't do anything embarrassing," He
reassured her, "You made out with the Boss in the car, you sang in the elevator up here and I put
you in bed. That's all."

She began to splutter on a piece of sliced melon from the fruit plate.

"I. Did. What?" She choked.

He knew what she was meaning and he grinned widely, "You made out with the Boss in the car?"

She must have looked mortified because he suddenly looked concerned. "You're all good, the Boss
put a stop to it." He said reassuringly.

"Put a stop to it?" She squeaked incredulously.

"Well, yeah, I mean you were drunk and he knew you didn't mean it."

"I didn't mean…" She wanted the building to fall down around her right now. "You mean I kissed
him?… Rocco… I kissed him?" She buried her head in her hands, groaned and rocked back and
forth in shame.

Her head snapped up suddenly, jarring her already damaged brain as she had a chilling thought.

"You didn't say kissed did you?" She said quietly, "you said 'made out with'... "

Rocco looked hesitant to say anything else. He had not expected her to freak out like this and now
he was a little wary of the consequences.

"What exactly does that imply?" She asked, not really wanting to know the answer.

Rocco started to get up, he looked very much like he wanted out of the conversation. She caught
hold of his wrist and the look she gave him was pleading.

"Well… ah…" he started, already knowing what her reaction was going to be. "When I came down
in the elevator I saw you guys in the car and then you sort of… ah…. leaped on him and then you
were like… in his lap and kissing and stuff and … ah… he sort of stopped it and you got out of the
car and …" he trailed off…

"Leaped on him..." She said dejectedly, "kissing and stuff..."

How in Gods name was she supposed to face him ever again? She had drunkenly molested him in
his car and he'd had to peel her off him and put her out of the car… How Embarrassing!

While she had been staring into space, Rocco had made his escape. She looked around the room
and he was gone and the door was closed. She felt sick again, not from the hangover this time. She
had made a fool of herself. What else had she said to him in her drunken state? She shuddered in
horror at all of the x-rated things that she had thought about her handsome host, things that she
could very well have told him last night before 'leaping' on him.

She moped around her suite for the whole day. She showered, dressed and then comatosed in a
chair in abject humiliation. Her brain worked overtime, dreaming up worse and worse scenarios of what happened in the car and what would happen when she saw him again. She ate the fruit and crackers eventually and her hangover abated, and though she did not even leave her room that day, she went to bed feeling drained. The next morning after an unsatisfying sleep she had resolved to rejoin the world.

"Good morning, moy angelochek." Oleg greeted her cheerfully when she entered the penthouse kitchen. "I hope you are feeling better today."

"Yes, thank you." She smiled warmly at the massive Russian and her cohort. "How were you yesterday?"

"I was very well." Oleg replied offhandedly, "I had a very enjoyable evening and completed many projects yesterday."

"Didn't you get a hangover… you must have drunk at least ten times what I did?" Chris asked, already knowing the answer and very impressed with the giants metabolism.

"Net," Oleg laughed, "I have not been hungover since I was a small boy."

She chuckled (small boy?) and began rummaging in the fridge. She needed a good breakfast to fortify her. She noticed a covered tray on the benchtop. She pointed at it and raised an enquiring eyebrow at Oleg.

"Pierce made muffins this morning." He supplied.

She lifted the cover and found some beautiful Blueberry muffins and what looked like Cheese and Bacon. Good Job, Pierce!

No, she thought to herself… she'd had nothing but booze, a small plate of fruit and a few dry crackers in the last two days. She needed something substantial.

She turned to her shadow who had taken a seat next to Oleg. He always seemed to appear when food was on offer. "Can I make you an omelette too, Rocco?"

"Yes please, ma'am" He replied enthusiastically. He had loved the fact that she could cook.

"Oleg?"

"Net, moya lyubov', but thank you, I ate much earlier."

Chris pottered around the kitchen, chatting away as she made two fluffy cheese and mushroom omelettes with a yummy side salad. She thought that she covered very well, though her thoughts were turbulent beneath the surface. She would see him today, she knew it and she knew that she would shrivel in shame when she did. She placed a plate in front of Rocco and watched him hoover it with gusto. Despite his love of sweets, Rocco didn't seem to put on weight at all. Chris gave a small smile and started on her own breakfast, with a little more decorum.

Olegs cell rang and he excused himself as he left. He was replaced quickly by Terry and two other saints that Chris didn't know very well... Karl and Joe? Terry looked expectantly at Chris' plate of half eaten omelette… she sighed and pushed the plate towards him. He grinned at her and took her fork from her. She grabbed some fruit instead.

She relayed her plans to cook a massive feast when she left, the boys all nodded enthusiastically and each piped up with their favourite menu items and helped her plan the farewell meal. She kept
an ear out for activity in the living areas, knowing that He would show up there eventually.

He did about twenty minutes later, the elevator dinged and he stepped out. He was dressed casually in dark jeans and a black tee shirt, which looked like it would burst open around his biceps at any moment. She noted the tattoo sleeve that covered his whole right arm. She had never seen his uncovered arms before.

Chris mentally injected steel into her spine and followed him into the atrium.

"Umm... Excuse me... ah... you?" She said from beside the potted ferns.

He turned at the sound of her voice. "You?... What happened to Dirk?"

She looked confused for a moment and then remembered the name that she had given him two days previous. She must have used it more than once during her drunken excursion. She decided to ignore the question.

"I just wanted to apologise for what I assume was my appalling behaviour the other night. I have very little memory of the evening but I assume considering how I felt yesterday, that it got a little out of hand." She said in a rush. "Rocco told me that you got me home safely. So... ah, thanks for that." She smiled weakly at him.

He had crossed his arms and leaned one of his narrow hips against a potted palm tree. His lips had hitched up on one side in amusement. "It was quite an enlightening night." He said brightly, but with an irritatingly sly edge.

"I honestly don't remember a single moment of it." She said truthfully, she didn't remember, but she had been told and it made her shrivel inside that he was so amused by it.

The Boss uncrossed his arms, stood up and walked slowly towards her, stopping inches away... "Pity" he murmured quietly, his warm gaze fixed on her lips.

"Just so you know... whatever I said or did," She rushed on, "I would never do under any normal circumstances... ever."

She turned and left the atrium as fast as her legs would carry her, leaving him looking after her in disappointment.
Chapter 11

Progress on her house flew forward. She saw it take shape at almost every step. The shape was familiar. It was a simply larger version of her parents original house in Bridgeport. The designer had gone to great pains to find the same or similar furnishings and features. It seemed that no expense was spared to make it exactly as she wanted, though with an extra bathroom, more storage and slightly bigger rooms. She had been delighted when she had been taken to the storage container to see the things that had been collected for her. Pictures and memorabilia all pertaining to her father and even an old lifestyle magazine cover showing her mother proudly holding up a garishly decorated cake. Everything had been carefully preserved and the pictures carefully framed and packed, waiting to adorn her new home.

Rocco had driven her to the container and had hovered over her as she examined everything that had been gathered for her. He had sat next to her and held her hand while she had a feeble cry over an antique loveseat that was exactly like the one in her mothers craft room.

Soon she would be leaving the Saints forever and she would never see her new friends again… except maybe in passing or on the news. But for her safety, as it was drummed into her again and again, she should never acknowledge that she knew the Third Street Saints as anything other than an infamous criminal organisation and global media and commercial sensation. She was a little sad about that. Oleg, Pierce and Rocco had become very close friends and confidants. Nita was tough and amazing. Terry was as well, though he tended to haunt her whenever there was food on offer, even if it was only intended for her.

And then there was Him. The bastard that had started it all. She was definitely going to miss that man. She knew that he would miss her too. He might go for days without seeing her, but she knew that he did that to keep her at arms length.

She wasn't an idiot. Would he have gone to all of this trouble for any other ordinary Steelport citizen? She knew he was as attracted to her as she was to him. Every time he looked at her she could feel his eyes burning. Every touch lingered longer than it needed to, every time they spoke his voice would deepen tellingly. He would never admit it or make a move on her again though. For Her Safety.!

That one time, in the firing range when he grazed her lips with that tiny hot brief kiss was the only time he had let his guard slip and he had erected that wall back up right quick. Even when she had made a drunken play for him in his car, he had set her aside. Though she didn't remember that incident, she fervently wished that she could as it would be the only time she had really had the opportunity and gumption to try such a thing. She wished she could remember the feel of his lips and taste of his mouth, the caress of his tongue…

She sighed when she thought of it. Now she would never know.

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The time finally came when she had word from Legal Lee that the house had been completed and everything was ready for her to move in. Chris was excited and sad. She and Rocco whipped around her suite and collected her clothes and the various odds and ends that she had collected during her extended stay in the Saints HQ. Rocco dragged his feet and frequently whined about her leaving and why couldn't she stay. Everything she owned was packed and piled next to the door of
her suite all ready to go by the following morning.

Chris and Rocco wandered up to the penthouse. She had promised that she would cook a farewell meal for them all as thanks for their hospitality. Most of it had been done, she had spent days prepping for it so it would be easier to put it all together tonight. It turned out she had a lot of help. Pierce, who was becoming something of a gourmet, was already working in the kitchen. His purple apron tied tightly about his waist as he julienned some carrots with quick knife movements. He was a little too familiar with knives for her comfort, she thought. She took up her post next to him and they chatted about the upcoming meal.

The rest of the Saints who were going to be around that evening engaged in activities that they were very unaccustomed to. They were tidying and setting the table. Very different than engaging in a drive by shooting.

By early evening, the meal was laid out on the massive boardroom size dining table and it almost groaned under the weight of all of the food. Chris watched in satisfaction as the Saints gathered and seated themselves, talking loudly and intently picking at the plates taking choice pieces and nibbling on them in urgent anticipation of starting. She was forced to take a whole platter of potato gratin from Terry and set it back on the table as he had started to attack it voraciously with a large serving spoon.

She looked around and noted that He wasn't there. Kinzie, Oleg, Angel and Pierce were there. She was about to look around the penthouse when Pierce told her that he was out with Voila and Shaundi and not likely to get back until much later. Oleg piped up that he would have the Boss' share as he seated himself at the head of the table. She was deeply disappointed and more than a little hurt. There was avoiding her and then there was being just plain rude. The meal was to thank the Saints and he was the leader of the Saints. He should have represented. He should have been there to say goodbye after everything. She shook herself and took her seat next to Rocco. His loss.

Oleg stood up and raised a toast to her and with a clink of champagne glasses, most filled with some kind of hard liquor instead of sparkling wine, the carnage of a street gang dinner party began. She put the absence of her host out of her mind and joined in and by the end of it all, there was a mass of empty dishes and a room full of overfilled gangsters all complaining about eating too much. She had an immensely good time.

The room slowly emptied as the Saints went back to their duties or headed out into the city to wreck some kind of havoc. The rest waited and made a half-hearted attempt to clear the table and store the leftover food for those who couldn't come to the meal.

Then, there were hugs and goodbyes from those who wouldn't be there tomorrow to see her off. There were even a few gifts, much to Chris' surprise.

Oleg gave her a CD of Rat Pack classic songs and winked at her before clasping her in a massive hug that took her off her feet and he kissed her soundly on both cheeks before setting her down again. Pierce gave her a signed Saints Flow poster. She smiled and thanked him. Angel gave her a pair of purple boxing gloves and then stepped back shyly. Kinzie came forward and gave her a pretty little silver pin with a little fleur-de-lis and a new cell phone to replace the one she had lost in the fire.

Rocco came forward last. He had tears in his eyes as he handed her a heavy wooden box, inside it was a black 9mm pistol. So she could protect herself when he wasn't there anymore. He sniffed loudly and she hugged him warmly and kissed him softly on the cheek.

She took her gifts back to her room and packed them away with the rest of her things. She had
come to the Saints HQ in a singlet and boxer shorts. Now she had several bags and boxes of stuff, most of it very expensive, and some of it, she suspected, not exactly obtained by legal means. She sat on her bed and thought some more about her time with the Saints. Her mind wondered invariably back to that man and a lost opportunity.

She sat there and stared at the wall opposite her. She remembered the little lip brush and the sparks that had flown as he had shown her how to hold the gun. His body wrapped around her, his fingers trailing up and down her arms, the feel of his breath in her ear and the light touch of his lips and the fire that it had ignited in her.

She strained to try and remember the car episode but couldn't. She got the impression from Rocco that it was pretty hot. She didn't even have that memory of him to take away with her and she wouldn't get the chance again.

She sat there for a long time before an idea began to form in her mind. Why couldn't she have another chance? She wasn't leaving until the morning. She was no seductress and she wasn't normally the type of girl that went for a one night stand. It was totally out of character for her. But if she were honest with herself she would have to admit she wanted him. And if she didn't have him she would always wonder. She stood up suddenly and walked with purpose to the bathroom mirror. She looked like she had spent most of the day either packing or sweating over a hot stove. Which she had. Pierce had said he would be back tonight. She looked back at the fancy clock at her beside. It was just after nine. She made up her mind and stripped off her clothes and jumped into the shower. She scrubbed herself clean and tried to wash away her lingering doubts as well. She was going to do this. He might turn her away but she was going to take the chance or she would regret it. She would never see him again anyway. So, if he said no... He was attracted to her, he had made that crystal clear. She got out of the shower and towelled off, before drying her hair.

She remembered that she had packed everything but the clothes she was going to wear tomorrow. She cursed her efficiency. Jeans and a tee shirt didn't quite make the statement that she intended. She decided to be as brazen as she could and shrugged the robe over her clean naked body. She looked back in the bathroom mirror, she looked much fresher, though rather than looking like she was about to make a sexual conquest, it seemed like she were about to settle down to a good book. She sighed as it was the best she could do. She exited her room and made her way up to the Penthouse… What if he didn't come back to the penthouse that night? He didn't always sleep here? What if he was here and he just didn't want her? What if he was here and was with someone else? Her mind raced all the way up to the Penthouse.

It was quiet up there, the guards by the elevator greeted her warmly as she stepped off. She smiled and asked if He was back yet.

Nate said that he'd got back about ten minutes ago. She thanked him and headed to His room, almost turning back several times.

She stood outside of his door for a moment. Her courage slipping away suddenly. What was she doing? This wasn't her at all.

She looked at the wooden door in front of her and took a deep breath. For better or worse. She would never have to see him again. This was a one off thing, weather he turned her away or took her roughly on the floor.

She nodded in resolve and opened the door without knocking.
Chapter 12

He looked up when he heard his door click closed. Chris was standing with her back against the door. She was wrapped up in a fluffy white robe with the hotel logo embroidered on the left breast in gold and her feet were bare. She looked small and fragile and a little afraid. He was off the bed in a second and walking towards her.

"Are you OK?" He asked concerned.

"Stop." She said firmly but but with a tremor in her voice. "Stay there."

He halted in the middle of the room, confused. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing." She replied unsteadily. "Just... stay there."

She had no real plan, she just stared at him, eyes wide and her bottom lip trapped beneath her teeth. He just stood there obediently baffled and watching her in return, his eyes trying to figure out what was wrong. She looked him over head to toe. He had taken off the jacket and vest he had been wearing earlier in the day and had lay them over the back of a chair. He had unbuttoned his shirt, it hung open to show the white singlet beneath. He was still in his jeans, which hugged his hips, the top of his underwear peeped over the top of the low waistline, he had removed his belt and his shoes and socks. She was instantly curious as to what he looked like without the shirt.

She walked forward slowly and stopped in front of him. She reached out hesitantly and eased the shirt off his shoulders. He didn't move, so she slid it down his arms and tossed it to the side. She stepped back again and admired him in the white singlet. His shoulders were broad and heavily muscled but not all veiny like a body builder. Everything was firm and sculptured. He had more tattoos other than the fleur-di-lis on his neck and his whole left arm. Now she was closer to him. She could see the left arm was actually was covered in highly detailed Celtic knot work and he had big cross on his other arm knotted as well and it had a Fleur-di-lis in the center. She was curious to see if he had any more tattoos. She stepped forward again and pulled the singlet upwards, releasing it from the waist of his jeans. He acquiesced by lifting his arms. She had to stand on tippy toes to get it up over the top of his head and he lowered his arms to help her remove it completely. It followed the shirt to the floor.

She drew in a deep breath at the sight of him, he was perfectly chiselled. His chest bulged and his abdominals rippled but there were no other tattoos on his front, so she walked slowly around him. He followed her with his eyes but didn't move otherwise. He didn't know where this was going but he liked it.

He had a star on his right shoulder... She reached out her hand and touched it briefly noting that his spine stiffened a little at her feather light caress. She liked the reaction and slid her cool finger tips slowly over the rest of his massive and muscular back. His skin was hot to the touch and so very firm. There were a few glossy scars here and there, a testament to his perilous life. She ran her fingers over a large circular scar on the right side of his lower back that was obviously a bullet wound, the skin was super soft and smooth. She saw goose flesh rise and she smiled.

She wondered if the bullet had gone right through and, keeping her hands in contact with his skin, she walked back around to his front. There was a scar to match on the front, the bullet had gone through. She traced the scar in wonder before continuing the exploration of his body. Neither of
them had said a word. He stood very still but his muscles were taut under her hands. She didn't look at his face, just concentrated on everything else. She saw a scar that was just visible above the low waistline of his jeans, it looked like straight cut that descended below the waistline. She wanted to know where it ended. She needed to know.

She ran her fingers down over his washboard abdominals to the top of the scar. She heard his quick intake of breath and watched the muscles ripple in response to her movements and soft touch. He was trying so very hard to stay still, but he moved restlessly, shifting his weight from one foot to the other. With one hand she flipped the button free and drew the fly down on his jeans, pulling the fabric away from the scar, she traced its path downwards. His jeans puddled at his feet, leaving him in a pair of grey boxer briefs, which bore the Planet Saints logo. The scar disappeared under the briefs and reappeared midway down his thigh. Wow, he had big thighs.

Her attention was instantly captured by the very visible bulge cradled inside his under garments. Suddenly, the scars and tattoos didn't seem so important.

She hooked her thumbs into the band of the briefs and slowly lowered them, releasing him carefully from their confines. It seemed that he was big all over, and for a moment she had second thoughts. She was quite a small person and she wondered if she were physically able to accommodate him. She glanced up at his face briefly. His hot eyes were boring into her and his breathing was heavy. She had just walked into his room and stripped him naked, she was not going to turn and walk out again. She reached out a hesitant hand and touched him, running her fingertip the rigid length of him and heard a soft growl issue from him. She felt her own body purr in response to the sound.

She stepped back from him, taking one step and then another before she stopped and looked him in the eye. She took hold of the folds of her robe and slowly opened it, revealing her naked body beneath. She let the robe slip slowly off her shoulders and down her arms, until it dropped to the floor leaving her completely exposed to his scrutiny. She had seen the strippers, prostitutes and gangbangers that frequented the penthouse. She was in no way as endowed as those women. She was curvy, but not augmented like them. She hoped he was as happy with what he saw in her as she was with him.

The Boss was holding his breath as the robe slipped from her perfect compact, body. She was like a delicate flower, small and graceful with curves in all of the right places. Her breasts were pert and firm and her skin was like Ivory. His mouth went dry as she looked back at him. My God she's beautiful. He wanted to take her right away, Now! On the floor! But her whole approach to him was exciting and he wanted to know what she would do next. So he waited for her to make her next move, but she had better not be too long about it.

They stood facing each other, both naked and taking in as many details as possible.

She finally took a hesitant step towards him and then another. She reached out her hands and gently touched his face, drawing him down to her. He didn't resist, far from it, he moved towards her in anticipation and when their lips touched, there was nothing on earth that could have stopped them. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her hard against him. Their bodies moulded together and he ran his large hands over every inch of her that he could reach. The small portion of his brain that was still working told him that this kiss was so much better than the one when she was impaired by alcohol. Patience wasn't his virtue and it ran out when one of her fingertips gently caressed his earlobe. He cupped her buttocks and lifted her easily off her feet and carried her towards the bed. She clung on to him, her arms locked about his neck and her fingers buried in his thick hair.
He sat down on the edge of the bed and she sat on his lap straddling his wide thighs. She released his lips briefly to kiss his neck and let her lips trail up to his left ear. She nibbled gently on the lobe which sent a shudder through him. He had sensitive ears it seemed. His large hands seemed to be touching her everywhere at once, they swept up her back, down to her hips and back up and around to her breasts, each sweeping touch scorching into her core, melting her from the inside out. Fuck foreplay! She was ready… Now!

She gripped onto his shoulders with one arm and ran her other hand down his chest between them and down further, until she felt his hot, hard cock scorching her fingertips. She gripped him tightly in her small hand and changed her position slightly, canting her hips and letting him ease inside her. His eyes widened and they sought hers as he slid into her wet sheath. She groaned and pushed herself down onto him and he filled her to capacity.

She kissed him with an uncharacteristic ferociousness and began to ride him with an even more uncharacteristic abandon. He kissed her back with desperate need and held her as close as he could, bucking his hips up, in time with her.

The first time she came it was a surprise, it happened so fast. The second time sent ripples through her whole body as she ground down onto him and she convulsed from the tips of her fingers to the tips of her toes. She shuddered in release. A moment later with a deep groan and a mighty upward thrust he shook with his own great release, cocooning her in his enormous arms and holding her as if he wanted to meld them together.

He kept on kissing her as though he couldn't get enough of her taste. He lifted her off him carefully and lay her gently on the bed. He loomed over her, continuing to kiss her, touch her and, if she was much mistaken, make love to her... until they were both exhausted and fell into a sated sleep in each others arms.
When he woke up, it must have been late in the morning. The sun was much higher in the sky than normal and shone directly into his eyes. He stretched out his hand, clutching at the sheets to find her but she wasn't beside him anymore. He sat up and looked around the room, he saw his clothes where she had tossed them on the floor but her robe was gone and he grinned with the fresh memory. What a night!

He had decided earlier in the morning, before they had finally drifted off to sleep that he was in love – totally fucking besotted – with Christine Worth and he was going to keep her. No matter what. He wondered what she was doing right this second. It was too late for breakfast and she was an early riser, he already knew that. He was going to have shower and then go and find her. He almost laughed when he thought that it was normally the guy that snuck out of bed the morning after.

Under the hot spray he couldn't help but remember and revel in what had happened only a few short hours ago. Every touch, every word that was whispered, every kiss on every inch of her skin and he was pretty sure that he had covered every inch. He remembered they way she had looked when she'd come into his room, they way she looked when she had dropped her robe to the floor. He felt himself getting excited again, so he flipped the dial on his shower to cold and swore at the instant chill. He didn't have time for any solo action. He had to go and find her and then maybe some more of that could go on.

He dried off and dressed quickly and he practically skipped out of the door.

The penthouse was almost empty which was odd for that time of day. She wasn't in the kitchen or by the pool, so he headed down to her room. He wondered on the brief trip down to the twenty seventh floor if she would consider moving into his room or was it too early for that?. He knocked on the door to her suite and waited. There was no answer. He tried the handle and the door opened easily. He poked his head through the door and looked around.

"Christine?" he called. He went into the room and looked around. Hers was the bedroom on the right so he walked in there and looked around at the strangely sparse room. He was getting a bad feeling, a bad feeling that lead him straight to the wardrobe and made him open it. It was full of empty hangers. He panicked and practically ran from the room. He jumped into the elevator and took it down to the garage. The door was barely open when he squeezed out and stared at the empty spot where her Hammerhead had been sitting.

"You OK, Boss?" A voice asked behind him.

He whirled on Rocco.

"Where is she?" He ground out, Rocco flinched back.

"She's gone, Boss." Rocco said in a little voice. "She packed up last night and left this morning. I thought you knew."

Rocco shrank away from the Boss as he drew a long audible breath like he was about to breathe fire.
"Thank you, Rocco." The Boss strode over to one of the royal purple Justices, got in and roared out of the parking lot, leaving Rocco standing there bemused and a little scared. He pulled out his cell and flicked off a quick text. 'He's coming'.

The Boss turned the car north towards Henry Steel Mills and Chris' new house. His jaw clenched for the whole journey, he heard police sirens at one stage after he went through several red lights. But the cops broke off pursuit when they realised whom they were chasing. Giving a ticket to someone was one thing, giving a ticket to someone who would shoot you in the face was something quite different.

He swore a few times to himself. He had wanted to impress her with how easily it was to get a fancy house built quickly, he hadn't thought about the fact that the faster it was built, the faster she would leave. And then she just snuck out! Fucked him and bolted. He knew he shouldn't be going after her. He knew that she was supposed to sneak away and slot herself back into her regular life... but he couldn't let her go like this. No one had told him that she was going today. She wasn't supposed to sneak away from him now! Fucking Hell!

He pulled up outside her house, leaped from the car and stomped up to pound on the door. There was no answer. Who leaves their house the day that they move in? Shouldn't she be unpacking her shit or something? He wanted to howl in frustration. But he just stood there and glared at the door for a full minute. It was a nice door, she had good taste.

He suddenly had a thought that maybe she had returned to her job... the house was already fully furnished, she didn't have anything to unpack but the clothes he had bought her. She had said that she worked in the DMV in Brickston. That was near where they had first met, she had been heading home from work when he had tried to jack her.

He got back in his car and headed for the bridge over to Stanfield but he was even more frustrated after he spoke to the cowering people at the DMV. Christine had quit, not long after going on extended sick leave. Her lawyer had had her things collected a couple of weeks ago. Legal Lee. He had left his cell at the penthouse in his haste to find Chris, now he had to drive to the legal office in Loren Square.

Was one night with one woman really worth all this hassle? He asked himself. An image of her with her head thrown back, eyes closed and mouth open in ecstasy confirmed it for him. Yes, it really was.

He had a face like a thunder cloud when the elevator opened in Legal Lees office foyer. The receptionist went pale and depressed the electronic door control without a word. The doors into the bowels of the building opened and he stormed through. Lee was in the hallway to meet him, being amply warned of his impending arrival.

"I know what you're going to say," She started.

"Where is she?" He interrupted.

"Boss," Lee snapped, her voice becoming steely. "She is back in her own life... It's over, just like we agreed."

"I need to talk to her." He grated.

"Too bad." She said with finality. "Don't go to her house, don't go her work..."

"She's not at her work." He stated.
"I acquired her a new position." She advised him coldly, "She didn't like the DMV."

"When did you do that?" He raged. "Why wasn't I told?"

"One of the many times I visited her and you weren't around." She said aloofly. "Listen, go back to your crew. Move on. She will, and she will be safer without you haranguing her."

Lee turned on her heel and marched back into her office. The door clicking decisively closed behind her. The Boss briefly contemplated grabbing that bitch by her leg and dropping her out of her office window, but then, who would sort out the legal issues involved with that?

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The Boss had returned to the penthouse and had proceeded to stalk around it like a bear with a sore head. He snapped and glowered at everyone and as a result, everyone was keeping their distance. He had sequestered himself in his room for most of the week and when he finally emerged he was stone cold calm and icily distant. Everyone knew why. Chris had gone. This is how he coped.

He had planned to go out tonight and see if he could stir up some trouble for Morningstar. He had heard of a high end escort operation that ran out of a mansion in New Colvin, He thought he might rock on up and take it from them. They were weakened and struggling to keep their territory now that Loren was dead and a little carnage and mayhem would take his mind off Christine Worth.

He had called in Kinzie and Viola and waited for their arrival sitting on the couch, the rest of the Saints giving him a wide berth. As he went through the messages on his phone, deciding that he might also take over that crack house in Stanfield and stick it to the Deckers as well. He noticed a message from an unknown cell phone. He stared at it for a moment heart in his mouth. Was it her? There was a video file attached so he tapped it to activate it.

Killbanes masked face filled up his screen. The Boss sneered.

"Well, Hello Saint." He started benignly. "It's been a while so I thought I'd catch up and see how you were… How are you?"

Killbane paused in the video as if he were waiting for a response.

"Good, good…You and I have a mutual acquaintance it seems…” He continued. "You remember Miss Worth, of course?"

The Boss took a quick inward breath and stared intently at the small screen with dread.

Killbane moved out of shot and the camera focused on a woman stripped to the waist, suspended from the ceiling by chains around her wrists. Her head hung down, her long chocolate coloured hair covering her face. Killbane came back into frame next to the woman and grabbed a fistful of hair, pulling her head back sharply and revealing her tattered face. It was Christine, though it was difficult to recognise her in that state.

The Boss growled deep in his throat and he heard horrified gasps coming from behind him as well. Kinzie and Voila had arrived. Oleg was looming over him as well as a small legion of Saints. They had gathered behind him in silence as the video had begun.

"Say hello to the Third Street Saints, Christine." Killbanes grating voice taunted them all. The camera zoomed in on her.

Chris face was contorted with bruises and swelling, her lips were cut, her nose broken and the
blood that had previously flowed freely from above her left eye and had dried into a horrendous dark mask. She opened her right eye slightly but struggled to focus on what was going on around her.

Killbane came back into shot, blocking her from view again.

"Christine would love to see you, Saint." Killbane purred, "So we're going set up a little date for the two of you. I'll work out some details and get back to you… How 'bout that?"

The screen went dead and the Boss sat staring at it in slack mouthed horror. He suddenly leapt to his feet with a roar and threw the phone against the wall in a towering rage. Kinzie rushed over to collect the phone and then she dashed from the room.

The Boss stood there shaking with impotent rage, wanting nothing more that to have Killbane in his hands right now so he could slowly tear him to pieces. He was so overflowing with wrath, he couldn't even think. He needed to find her. He needed to save her… Where was she?

"Where is she?" He rasped out loud, his voice quiet with barely controlled fury.

Kinzie was back, her laptop in hand.

"I put a tracker in her new phone but they killed it shortly after they sent the video. I thought I could trace it from your phone..." She said, concentrating intently. She looked up triumphantly "They didn't find the pin though."

The Boss turned on her with more force than he meant to and she jumped back with a surprised cry.

"I gave her a lapel pin with a tracker in it as a going away gift. I told her to wear it all the time. A little silver Fleur Di Lis. Tasteful" She advised. "Her pin is at The Three Count." She turned her laptop screen around and pointed to the flashing red dot.

"Would he hold her at his base of operations?" Shaundi asked. "When he did the interview with Valderrama last month he did it from an abandoned building with no ties to the Luchadores."

"Her pin is there…” Kinzie insisted.

"If she was wearing it on her shirt, they may have just discarded it without looking." Oleg added weakly. "It could be in a dumpster onsite or on the floor right next to her…but it's a start."

The Boss was struggling with his roiling emotions.

"I am going to unleash All Hell on that Motherfucker." He grated. "Get everyone together… The Saints are gonna wipe the Luchadores out of existence!"
Chapter 14

Chris had mopped about for a long while in her new home. She had managed to flee the house just in time on the morning after her night with Him, thanks to Rocco's timely text message. She had known that he would try to talk to her after that night. She could not face him.

Today, a few days after her departure from Saints HQ and their emotionally confusing Boss, she was excited to start her new job. Legal Lee had gone above and beyond to secure her a position at the Henry Steel Mills Library and Chris chose not to question how, considering there had been no positions available there. She had arrived early on her first day and taken a quick tour of the facility and was now sitting comfortably in the office processing invoices for new books. The team here were welcoming and they didn't question how she had acquired the position when it hadn't even been advertised.

Most of the office ladies were older, a couple nearing retirement. The store men, custodians and security guards were all older gentlemen. Chris was the youngest on staff by a couple of decades and her co workers seemed like they would baby her for the duration of her employment.

She was a little sad as well though. She would miss the Saints; Rocco and Oleg and everyone else and she felt bad about creeping out of His room that morning and slinking away. It was cowardly and she wasn't normally a coward. She had not even mentioned to him that she was leaving. He would have woken that morning and thought God knows what about her.

She didn't want to dwell on it, she was supposed to forget about them all. She concentrated on working instead. The day was moving along quickly, before she knew it, it was lunchtime. She retired to the staff room to join the ladies and gentlemen (she couldn't help but think of them as such) in the mid day meal. Pierce had messaged over a beautiful batch of red velvet cupcakes the day before. He was becoming an accomplished cook. She had one of those and also had a yummy sandwich.

She sat down at the end of the table next to June, a heavy lady in her late forties. She was a jovial sort and chuckled after everything she said and laughed uproariously at everything everyone else said. She had recently divorced but was taking it very well. Lunch was an enjoyable affair filled with banter about knitting patterns and lawn bowls. It part way through a disagreement about wool textures that everyone in the lunchroom began to notice that there were some rather odd sounds coming from the library proper.

They all went quiet and listened hard. They all sat there wondering what was going on... and then leaped to their feet when they heard a very distinct scream followed by more screaming.

Travis and Burt, the security guards, went out the door first, Chris was not too far behind, she told the other ladies to stay where they were and lock the lunch room door. She stopped at the lockers outside of the lunch room and extracted the 9mm pistol that Rocco had given her before she had left, during his tearful goodbye. She checked the magazine was full and clicked in back into place, she clicked a bullet into the chamber and flicked the safety off and headed out into the library and the source of the scared screams. She pushed through the swing door that led to the staff and administration areas and stealthily snuck through the rows of books until she could see the foyer. Her blood froze at the sight.

There was a crowd of masked Luchadores armed with automatic rifles holding the visitors and staff
hostage. In the centre of the semicircle that their dispersive pattern had formed, stood a towering man in a clover green suit and an elaborate Luchador mask. His massive hand clutched at the throat of Burt, the small elderly man clutched breathlessly at his thick wrist and squirmed in his hold and to the side, Travis lay motionless at his feet. She knew who the monster was, there were enormous billboards of him all over Steelport promoting the wrestling spectacular 'Murder Brawl.' It was Eddie 'Killbane' Pryor, wrestling legend and infamously evil gang leader.

He turned his attention from Burt for a moment and addressed the crowd.

"I am looking for Christine Worth." His gravelly voice boomed, reaching every corner of the library. "Hand her over to me and no one will get hurt... no one else..."

She scanned her gaze around the library foyer and silently counted the men in green. Killbane had a dozen men that she could see and she knew that they would gun down the library patrons at his command and without hesitation or remorse. She drew in a deep breath and stepped out from between the rows and raised her small handgun.

"I'm here, what do you want?" She spoke loudly as she took slow steps towards him. She glanced at her co-workers and motioning in a way to indicate that everything would be OK. Their faces were pale and scared but they were all shaking their heads at her, willing her to stay hidden.

"Miss Worth... We have had the pleasure before." He purred.

"I don't recall actually meeting you before." She said sidling over to stand in front of Killbane, her gun still pointed at his masked face.

"It was memorable for me, you killed one of my men."

"As I remember it, your men broke into my home. I was defending myself against your minions. I also remember that my house was burned to the ground and I was pursued for no reason." She grated out.

"You are a known associate of the Third Street Saints."

She snorted in derision. "Associate?" She spat. "I was carjacked by some guy and forced to drive him to their hideout. I was lucky to get away with my life."

"Hmmmm..." He smiled grimly, "and the experience was so terrifying for you that you went out singing with Oleg Kirrlov."

She remained silent and glared down the barrel at him, silently defeated. She had been seen that night. She had been out with the all but anonymous Rocco a dozen times, but a few short hours out with the infamous Russian giant had ruined all of the hard work of keeping her off the grid.

"It comes down to this Miss Worth." He advised. "Either you come with us now willingly or I will get my men to open fire on all of these good people and we will drag you out of here by your hair when they are all dead." He smiled again. It was not a nice smile.

Chris glanced at the people around her, they were all terrified. She noted in particular a young mother crouched on the floor, clutching a small girl hard to her. She looked at Burt who still clutched at Killbanes wrist in a fruitless attempt to ease the pressure on his throat. She was not about to sacrifice the lives of all these people. She knew it and so did Killbane. She lowered the gun, letting it swing from her finger before depositing it on the floor. Two big men took her arms from each side and hauled her over to Killbane who looked down at her chillingly.
"You may as well kill me now and save yourself the trouble." She told Killbane brazenly. "They won't care, they won't raise a finger to save me from you."

"We'll see." He replied, amusement plain in his tone. He looked absently at Burt dangling from his fingertips, casually snapped his neck and dropped him to the floor like dirty rag.

Chris gasped and choked in horror at Burt's lifeless body in a crumpled heap on the floor.

"You're a fucking coward." She grated, her voice shattering with emotion. "To scared to go up against him yourself. You have to bring a gang of thugs to a library to scare little kids and murder old men. You're Pathetic." She snarled with tears beading in her eyes.

Killbane walked up to her and looked menacingly down into her face. She glared back, pouring all of her hatred into that look.

"Well, well," He said smoothly. "Aren't we the little hell cat? I can see the attraction now." He ran his finger down the side of her face and she jerked back in disgust only to have the two guards haul her forwards again.

"It's going to be fun breaking you, my little filly." Killbane whispered.

He turned abruptly and stormed out of the double doors, Chris was dragged along behind him. At least everyone else was safe, she thought as they manhandled her into the back of a massive Green and Black Compensator.

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After that, Chris wasn't sure where she was most of the time. She was taken somewhere in the armoured vehicle and once at their destination, where ever that was, they moved her around. She was initially in a concrete room for a while. She was hung from the ceiling in what she imagined to be a basement and later, chained in the dark sitting in pool of brackish water. She was also unconscious a lot... She had been beaten on her arrival to her prison. Killbane had said that it wouldn't have made an impression on the Saints if she had been seen to be sitting on a sofa looking pretty. She didn't know what he had meant until they made a short film on the cell phone that Kinzie had given her.

The first punch had been the worst, one of the masked men had struck her forcefully in the face, her nose had crunched and her eyes had filled with tears but she was proud of herself for not crying out as her nose was broken. She hadn't made a peep throughout the whole episode, she wasn't going to give them the satisfaction. She simply let them smack her about in silence, permeated with the odd grunt and the expelling of air, they became angrier as the beating went on but she wouldn't cry out. She was eternally grateful when darkness finally overtook her.

She had woken in the concrete room. She was bound hand and foot with a coarse rope, blood had been pouring from a gash in her head and she couldn't breathe through her nose. She thought they may have re-broken her ribs. She couldn't focus her vision and she had to spit blood a few times as it filled her mouth, she swore to herself when one of her teeth clinked to the floor. She had wept to herself, crawled as best she could to the wall and hugged herself until she had blacked out again. When she woke once more, she had been hanging half naked from a chain, her arms above her head, her shoulders aching from supporting her own weight. She didn't know how long she had been there. Killbane was talking nearby, his boorish voice indistinct… she gasped sharply as her head was yanked upwards by her long hair. She tried to see what was happening, the room had been dark but she had seen the tell tale red light of a recording device. When the recording had been done, she had quietly asked for water. They had put her in the room that she later would call the
toilet. She had been pushed to the floor and chained to the wall. The room was flooded with about
of foot of water. She didn't dare drink it though, it didn't smell very good, salty and old. She was
very thirsty.

She had cried then too, cursing her weakness. The pain was numbed a little as she was cold in the
water. She tried to stay awake… she didn't want to accidentally drown, but it was so hard to keep
her eyes open. Her eyes were fuzzy and she saw flashes of light in the dark, maybe concussion?
She thought about hypothermia as well. It couldn't be good for her to stay in the water like this.
She tried to stand but her own weight and the weight of the water in her jeans, dragged her back to
the floor. She was so weak.

She tested the length of the chain around her wrists. It may be possible to reach to the step by the
door. She would have to keep her arms extended out in front of her, but she would be out of the
water.

She moved painfully out of the water and sat herself on the step, but she had to hunch forward to
compensate for the chain attached to the wall. It made her ribs ache and it was hard to breathe. She
sobbed loudly and plopped back into the water. She tried to get as comfortable as possible. She
woke some time later her teeth were chattering from the cold. She had no idea how long that they'd
had her, days? or mere hours? She just wasn't sure. She was thirsty and hungry... they had bought
her nothing to eat or drink. She knew that she was as good as dead, she was not getting out of this
affair alive. She thought about drowning herself and getting it over with but reasoned that
hypothermia would be better. She would go to sleep and not wake up and that sounded like less of
a trauma. She laughed weakly to herself... Less of a hassle.

She sat in the darkness just thinking as the cold took hold of her. She thought of her favourite
songs. She thought of her folks; Her dad laughing until he peed himself when she had run over the
neighbours motorbike with his stunt car. Her mum smacking her hand as she stole a hot cookie off
of the cookie sheet, fresh out of the oven. She remembered her time with the Saints… she
remembered her time with Him. She wanted to lock everything in her memory.

Pierce crowing in triumph when his soufflé didn't sink. Oleg singing Frank Sinatra songs to her,
despite her protests. Shaundi showing her how to roll the perfect joint, while Josh skulked nearby,
his eyes fixed on Shaundi in puppy dog adoration. Zimos showing her how to twirl a pimp cane.
Angel showing her how to put Rocco in a headlock. Viola and Kinzie pointedly ignoring her, for
most part. Terry's dancing pecs and Nita's tattoo art and blunt way of talking. Rocco youthful face
blushing as he had helped her change her shirt.

The Boss' hands on her body, his lips caressing hers. That one perfect night that she had given
herself and shared with Him… She started to cry again.

If she hadn't left, she wouldn't be here now. She should have stayed in his bed, curled up next to
him reveling in the heat of his skin. She closed her eyes in regret and passed out again.
Chapter 15

Chapter 15

There was no plan. The Boss was running on pure fury and when he was like this everyone just grabbed a gun and followed him. This mood toppled empires, he'd proved it time and time again and the bodies would pile up behind him as he moved forward. The best idea was just to have his back and get the fuck out of the way.

Oleg, Shaundi and Pierce were with him as they sped towards the Three Count Casino on Carver Island. Oleg was too big to fit in the purple Criminal and so he stood on the back holding onto some custom handles. A contingent of Saints vehicles fanned out behind them. The roads were packed with cars and people but the Boss simply drove through them... and over them, his brain focused on a singular location and a singular purpose, his eyes cold and dead. Nothing could slow him down or stand in his way.

They crossed the bridge onto Carver Island, directly into a Luchador blockade. The Boss ploughed through them without even slowing. Several of the Saints cars followed him on, some stayed to duke it out with the Luchador gang members. The streets began to turn red with blood as Saints and Luchadores violently tore each other up with bullets. It was an all out war.

When The Three Count loomed ahead, the Boss planted his foot, speeding towards the conflict with relish.

The only thing on his mind was Chris. It was because of him. It was all because of him. If not for him, she would be safe, living her life in her parents house, with her old job with nothing but a passing knowledge of the Third Street Saints. He had turned her world upside down, destroyed everything that she loved and cherished. He would never forgive himself for what he had done to her, all because he got careless one day... because he'd let himself get involved with her.

The tyres screeched and burned on the tarmac as the big car skidded to a halt at the front steps of the Casino. The Boss leapt from the car, twin pistols in hand, firing with skull shattering accuracy at anyone and everyone that got in his way. Luchador or otherwise, he wasn't particularly picky. His crew were with him every step of the way but he was only vaguely aware of them. The Luchadores may have been 'roided up psychopaths, but the Boss was a force of nature. Everyone that came before him, fell in a hail of gunfire and drowned in a rising sea of blood.

The crew went through the casino like a tidal wave. It was soon all but empty save the wounded lying on the floor groaning as they slowing died or stragglers and those hiding from the vengeful Saints. The search began then. Saints splintered off and tore the casino apart looking for any sign of Christine. The Boss spotted Nita and Rocco interrogating a hapless croupier and strode over into their midst.

"Where is she?" He demanded coldly, his voice was terrifying in its calmness.

The croupier shrunk into himself and his eyeballs bulged in fear. He began to jibber incoherently and the Boss fed him a bullet to put him out of his misery. He didn't have time for jibber.

Rocco and Nita took off to find someone else to question. The Boss stood in the center of the casino floor, circling to find the elusive doorway that would take him to her when Shaundis raised voice found him.
"Boss." She called, "There's a basement entrance inside the vault." She had a cashier up against a wall, her gun wedged under his chin.

The Boss turned, ran and shoulder charged through the door leading into the cashiers kiosks and again through the doors leading to the vault. The massive steel doors of the vault were closed. Oleg and Pierce joined him in front of the imposing doors, Oleg placed a call to Kinzie who was standing by for such an occurrence. They waited in tense silence, the Boss began pacing in front of the door like a caged animal, eyes fixed on the control panel. The light flashed from red to green as Kinzie remotely overrode the security system and Oleg dragged the heavy doors open. They entered the vault and Shaundi joined them dragging the unwilling and terrified cashier with her. She threw him ahead of her and he slammed into the far wall and crumpled, groaning onto the floor.

"Where's the entrance to the basement?" The Boss asked frostily.

The cashier, shaking to his bones with terror, crawled across the floor and pushed a hidden button under one of the cash pallets. The floor split in half and flipped slowly up to reveal a stairway down into the dark. The Boss was first down, the others following in his wake, leaving the trembling cashier to scamper away.

The Saints stalked along a short corridor that opened out into a circular room of sorts, there were three doors off of it. The Boss shoved one of the doors open, it was a small room flooded with water and an empty set of bloody shackles rested on the top step. The room opposite was just a plain concrete box. The third door revealed another corridor, and it was filled with masked Luchador thugs.

As soon as the door was opened, the Saints were assailed with a volley of bullets. They ducked back for cover sending shots raining back in the other direction. The Boss was getting angrier as the moments past. They were keeping him from her and that shit just wouldn't fly. He loaded two new magazines into both of his pistols, took a deep and angry breath and launched himself, headfirst into the Luchador laden room.

When she woke, she was hanging from the ceiling again, she knew that she wasn't alone, though she couldn't see anyone. Her brain was too tired, too wracked with trauma to feel anything. It had been days of this. When the Boss had said that the Luchadores would torture and kill her on the night that she had swam the channel to escape the Luchadores, he had been so right. She just wanted it to be over now, her body was numb to the torture, she just wanted to die.

But she still had a tiny bit of steel in her spine. The one that told her that she wouldn't give them the satisfaction of hearing her scream, no matter how much she wanted to. The bit that still held out hope that she would be rescued somehow, that He would stroll through the door with that cocky and arrogant walk of his and carry her away to safety.

For now, Killbane was content to beat her. She was OK with that. She had been punched and kicked and she had felt the unmistakable sting of being whipped. That kind of pain, she seemed to be able to cope with, even as horrible as it was. But she dreaded what it may have been building to. Killbane was actually getting off on hurting her as much as he could. She knew that soon he would give into that lust and rape her as well. She didn't want that. It was what she truly feared, she knew she would scream if he did.

She hung from the ceiling, just waiting for the next strike that she knew was coming.
Somewhere outside of the room, a far away sound began to enter her consciousness. A popping sound like a lot of balloons bursting. She heard a shuffling noise behind her and saw from the corner of her half closed and puffy eye, a figure in green lumber for the door on the wall to her right. Her foggy and exhausted brain didn't understand what the sound was until the popping got louder and became very discernible gunshots. The steel in her spine began to spread through her and she surged with hope. Had he come for her?

Killbane came back into the room, he strode up to her with purpose. He was not armed that she could see but that meant nothing, he could kill someone with his bare hands just as easily as he could with any weapon, as he had already proven with poor Burt. He grabbed hold of her hair and yanked her around to face the door as he stood behind her, his arm wrapping around her throat. She knew he meant to snap her neck, but for now he waited, using her tattered body as shield as he intently watched the door.

Her voice croaked as she forced a few words from her swollen lips. "You're so fucked."

He was splattered with blood and worse when he rejoined his crew. The hall was now littered with corpses which they picked their way through carefully. At the end of the hall there was yet another door. The Boss tested the handle and it opened easily and he risked a quick look into the room with his pistols raised. The sight that greeted him made his heart sink and took a lot of the wind out of his sails for a moment. She was hanging from the ceiling like a side of beef... just like she had been in the video. Her half naked body cut, bruised and caked in dried blood much worse than it had been before. Killbane stood at her back using her as a human shield and gripping onto her throat with the crook of his arm. The Boss' rage returned with a vengeance and knew no bounds, How dare he lay his hands on her. He noted that her eyes were open and had a clarity about them that shouldn't have been there, especially in her current condition. She was very aware of what was going on around her now. There was no fear in her eyes, there was total trust… in him… and there was something else there too, something that he didn't recognise.

He tore his attention from her and turned his cold stare on Killbane.

"You can dismiss your people." Killbane said, inclining his head towards Shaundi, Pierce and Oleg, who hovered in the doorway behind him with their weapons at the ready. "We need to chat."

Oleg made a low growling sound. The Boss waved them off, keeping careful watch on Killbane as he did. He heard the door click closed behind him.

"So this is a new low, Killbane," The Boss said quietly, "Beating up helpless ladies… I thought you were a fighter, I thought you were better than that."

"A means to an end, I was simply getting your attention, Saint." Killbane replied conversationally from behind the safety of his human shield. "You've been neglecting us of late."

"I'm here now. Why don't we settle this once and for all?" He discarded his pistols and waited for Killbane to respond to his challenge.

The two men faced each other over her for a moment. Killbane smiled slowly, released her throat and stepped around her. He looked the Boss in the eye and reached out a hand towards her, cupping her breast and giving it a squeeze and whispering. "When I'm done with him, little lady. We can get to know each other even better… intimately."

She wasn't looking at Killbane, She was looking at Him. At Killbanes movement and
proclamation, His face flushed with rage. She knew that Killbane had prodded the bear. She needed the Boss to keep his head, she didn't want him to get careless.

The legendary gang leaders stood watching each other for a beat more and then they launched at each other and began to brutally tear each other to pieces with their bare hands.

Chris was battered about a bit when they knocked into her suspended body, the chain about her wrists swung out of the restraining hook that held her aloft. She hit the floor with a heavy grunt. The two men didn't notice that she was down as they continued to go about murdering each other. She lay still for a moment unable to move, but she summoned her strength and crawled as best as she could out of the way of the wildly thrashing bodies.

The Boss was younger, stronger and faster than Killbane, though Killbane had years of fight experience and training. The Boss used every dirty street tactic that he knew, even biting, to pound Killbane to death, but Killbanes skills were hard to counter. One moment Killbane had the upper hand, the next, the Boss. Chris watched mutely in horror as they rolled around the room pummelling each other. She cowered against the door, wanting to run away from the terrifying spectacle but not wanting to leave the Boss alone. She wanted to help, but had no actual strength nor idea of how.

The Boss had Killbane by the throat, punching with his free hand, blow after blow after blow into the wrestlers masked face. Killbane knocked the Boss off him and the Boss hit the ground with a painful thud. Killbane was on him a breath later, both hands wrapped around the Boss' throat, squeezing the life from him. The Boss' teeth were bared in a hideous caricature of a grin.

The Boss saw his moment to get free but there was a suddenly a deafening boom that left his ears ringing and Killbane toppled sideways. The Boss scrambled back in surprise, looking down at Killbanes suddenly lifeless body. He looked towards the door and Chris was standing there, leaning heavily on the door and one of his guns smoking in her still bound hands. He looked from her to Killbane and back again.

"You guys were taking too long." She said weakly, before sliding towards the floor.

The Boss was up on his feet and across the room in a second. He knelt next to her and eased the gun from her trembling fingers, removing the chain from around her raw and raggedly torn up wrists and started to gather her gently in his arms. She gasped as he did, his strong arms putting pressure on her shredded back. He had not seen the vile welts left by Killbanes belt. He released her quickly and examined the open and oozing wounds, wanting Killbane to be alive, so he could kill him again.

She couldn't walk possibly out of the casino on her own steam and he couldn't carry her so that she wouldn't be hurt.

"I can walk." She whispered. "Can you help me?"

He nodded, his eyes filling. He pulled off his shirt and draped it carefully around her, not wanting to damage her open wounds but wanting to cover her body. She may have forgotten that her breasts were bared and he knew she wouldn't have wanted to be paraded through the casino. She was so strong. He thought, helping her to her feet and waiting for her to steady herself and draw some cleansing breaths.

He started to lead her to the door. But she stopped.

"Wait." She spoke weakly, but with authority. She walked painfully towards the crumpled body of
her former captor and squatted unsteadily next to him. She reached out and wrenched the Luchador mask from his head and looked hard at the man's strangely nondescript face. She nodded and let the Boss help her to her feet again. She clutched the mask in her fists as she was led into the hallway. It was slippery with Killbane's blood and had a large hole on one side where her bullet had ripped through his skull. She ran her finger around that hole as she walked.

Oleg, Shaundi and Pierce were waiting just past the first door. Weapons trained on the door ready for whatever may possibly come through it. They sighed in relief when they saw the Boss and his bloodied companion though they weren't terribly surprised.

Shaundi was instantly on her phone, placing an urgent call to the Doc. She seemed deeply effected by Chris' tormented appearance.

They followed the Boss as he slowly led Chris from the basement and then vault. The rest of the crew were on the casino floor. The Saints all turned as one when the Boss and Chris emerged from the cashiers kiosk. Chris heard Rocco's sobbing and sought him out in the crowd. The handsome young man had tears streaming down his cheeks. She smiled reassuringly at him, knowing that it probably looked more like a grimace. He hurried to her, wanting to throw his arms around her but the Boss shook his head warningly. Rocco held back, now knowing it would both hurt her and potentially hurt him if the look in the Boss' eye was anything to go by. He instead took up sentry on her other side and helped her walk.

Their procession moved slowly through the casino, Chris setting the painfully slow pace. She stopped the group when she spotted Angel hovering by the entryway to the foyer. She veered towards him and handed him Killbane's Luchador mask and then continued out into the Steelport sunshine.
Chapter 16

He was always there. She knew it without even opening her eyes. Every time she woke, no matter where or what time, He was there keeping watch over her.

They had taken her to the Docs clinic. The Doc had meticulously gone over every inch of her cleaning and treating every cut, bruise and broken bone. She was out for most of it, smashed on painkillers but she knew it took a very long time.

She stayed at the clinic for days to heal. Her nose was set as were two of her fingers. Her ribs were wrapped up tight. Six of them had been broken. She had some internal bleeding and fluid in her lungs. Almost none of her had escaped Killbanes touch. She was covered with bruises and her back and the top of her thighs had been torn up by repeated and relentless lashing. Her face was contorted with swelling, her lips were split and her eyes were almost impossible to open.

She woke once and he was standing by the window, looking out into the night. The next time, he was sitting in the chair next to her bed watching her, his expression unreadable. She never caught him sleeping. He was like a silent sentinel.

After about a week, Doc released her from the clinic and the Boss took her to the Penthouse in Sunset Park. He put her in his bed and then continued to watch out for her. To watch her heal. The Doc visited and asked her how she was feeling and checked over all of her injuries. The Boss hovered over them both. Pierce was her personal Chef, Oleg read to her and they discussed music and chess together. Shaundi and Nita came in to talk, help her wash and change clothes. The Boss was there for all of it. Standing unobtrusively off to one side or sitting in a chair watching. Once she woke and found him laying on the bed next to her, on top of the covers and staring at the ceiling with his hands tucked under his head. She had cradled her head into his shoulder and had fallen back to sleep aware that she was completely safe as she had listened to his steady, strong heartbeat.

She was up and about in no time. She looked awful though, the swelling was mostly gone but the bruises were turning yellow and purple giving her an unhealthy greenish cast. The cuts on her face were healing clean, there would be very few scars except the one on her forehead that had bled so viciously. Her back was another story entirely, most of those lashes would leave deep, raw criss cross scars on her forever.

She was always in the care of the Boss, but Rocco also took to haunting her as well. He was her second shadow. He was quiet at first, just hovering near but she told him off sternly for being so morose and they were quickly back to being as chatty as they had been before. Everyone was adjusting to the way it was before Killbane had taken her. Terry routinely wandered off with her food, Pierce shouted questions at her from the kitchen, Oleg became as jovial has he had been before, though she was careful with alcohol around him. The only person who still treated her like a delicate and rare porcelain doll was the Boss himself.

She knew why, Shaundi had discretely told her. The Boss was eaten up by guilt. He was in love with her but now too scared to touch her. She was OK, she thought, truly. Apart from a few bad dreams, which always ended with her being saved by him anyway. Killbane might have done a number on her physically, but mentally, she was serene. The Boss had come for her. She had put a bullet in Killbanes head. The Luchadores had been decimated. She was safe, she knew it deep in her bones. She would have to see how long it took him to snap out of it.
He didn't know what to do. Every time he looked at her he felt as if he had been punched in the gut. And now... he couldn't take his eyes off her. Not for a minute. His eyes were drawn to her.

As Shaundi and Nita helped Chris out of her night gown to wash, he had seen the deep gashes scored into her back. Her perfect body was marred forever because of him. He remembered running his hands along that back revelling in the smooth, silky skin. She was getting better every day but he couldn't get past what had happened to her. One night as he had lay wide-eyed next to her on the bed, she had snuggled into him and mumbled something he couldn't hear and gone to sleep again. He would have wrapped his arms around her and held her close, but he was so scared of hurting her even more. He had stayed still and left his hands where they were under his head.

He didn't care about the bruises and cuts. She was the most beautiful woman he had ever known inside and out. He'd watched Nita brush Christines hair and had wanted to take the brush and make Nita leave so he could do it himself. He had snorted at the thought. He was the head of the most dangerous Criminal Organisation in the world. A murderer, thief and general all round puckish rouge, he shouldn't want to brush a ladies hair.

He watched as everyone accepted Christine back into the fold as if nothing had happened. He saw her become closer to everyone again. She started to smile and laugh again. Her cuts healed and the bruises faded. He watched her as she taught Rocco how to waltz. The young man holding her close and tripping over his feet in an effort to get the steps right. They laughed a lot, they had always been close.

He sighed bitterly. He should tell Rocco that Christine was available. The Boss wouldn't get involved with her again, it was just too dangerous and simply not right for the beautiful young woman to be thrown in with criminals and now that Killbane was dead and she was more safe. Rocco was a sweet natured kid and he could go straight. He wasn't hard enough to really be a Saint.

The Boss had watched her for weeks now and it was finally time to look away. The Saints would always protect her, she was too entwined with them now, but he needed to move on. He had damaged her too much to expect her to want him again. So he needed to let go and get back to business. He nodded his head in affirmation and turned away. She would never be hurt by him again.

Chris had laughed so much that her sides hurt, not to mention her still tender ribs. Rocco sat on the floor where he had fallen. She held out her hand and helped him to his feet. He wasn't very coordinated when it came to dancing. Oleg fiddled around with his phone, resetting the song that he had been playing for them. He was offering advice as well. They had tried to dance together to show Rocco the steps but they had looked rather ridiculous and it was quite awkward. Oleg was well over eight feet tall and Chris was only just over five foot. Oleg had eventually just lifted her off her feet and smooshed their cheeks together and as he swirled around the room, her feet dangling in space.

Rocco had impulsively asked a sales clerk he had been eyeing at Planet Saints out on a proper date. He had said that they should go dancing. She had accepted with a giggle and a shy smile and Rocco then realised that he had better learn to dance right quick. Chris would come to the rescue.

They made good progress after Roccos bum stopped hurting from his fall and he was a passable dancer by the time dinner rolled around.
"We'll have another go tomorrow," She offered Rocco, "By Saturday, you'll be a pro."

Rocco grinned widely and took off to the kitchen to feed his never ending appetite. Chris thanked Oleg for his help and then sent him off as well. She looked around the penthouse but she couldn't see the Bossman anywhere. Since the Three Count he hadn't let her out of his sight. Now he wasn't there. She frowned and started to look for him. The search didn't take long. He was sitting on his bed, looking out at the city.

"Hey," She said brightly as she approached him. He didn't look up and she felt an odd chill in the air, "Is everything OK?" She asked warily.

"Fine." He said coldly. "You seem to be fully recovered. We should probably move you back to your own home again." He said finally looking up at her. His normally warm hazel eyes seemed to look right through her. She was taken aback by it.

"Right... OK" She said hesitantly, mirroring his detached tone as best she could. Two could play this game, she thought, adjusting her mindset to match. The freeze out had begun, it seemed. "I'll be out of your hair by noon tomorrow if you're that set on getting rid of me." She continued flatly. She gave an icy smile and turned to leave the room. He let the mask slip for a moment and she saw the heartache fill his eyes for a split second.

She knew it! It was like in a movie... when the little boy wanted the dog to get away, he would yell and throw stones to drive his beloved friend away... for his own safety. Well, she wasn't a dog and she was quite capable of making her own decisions. Fuck HIM!

She turned back suddenly. "You're an idiot." She grated at him.

His eyes flew open and he stood up to face her.

"I've made my own choices." She flared, "I make my own mistakes and I live with the consequences. You don't get to make any more decisions on my behalf, you Jerk."

She turned on her heel and stomped from his room, slamming the door with a resounding crash that turned every eye to her. He would follow her, she knew he would.

She was almost to the elevator when he emerged from his room after her. Saints began to emerge from rooms and alcoves all over the penthouse to see what was going on. Some of them had drawn their weapons at the racket and were standing at the ready. Right, she thought as her audience had gathered, It's showdown time.

She stopped at the elevator and wheeled on him again, puffing herself up to her full height. "Do you feel that Killbane has despoiled me or something?" She ground at him. "Am I not good enough? Have my scars made me so hideous to you?"

He suddenly looked horrified and began to shake his head but she ploughed on.

"So... before you couldn't keep your hands off me. Now, you can't touch me because I'm so repulsively disfigured."

"No." He cried, almost in despair.

"Do you not want me anymore?" She asked him outright. The Saints around the penthouse all held their breath in unison. The Boss didn't answer right away.
"Do you WANT me?" She insisted boldly.

"Yes." He breathed.

She felt a surge of satisfaction. "I am sick and tired of people telling me what's good for me, that everything is for my safety." She stalked towards him, stopping just short of reaching distance.

"None of this," She gestured towards herself, "is your fault." She pursed her lips and glanced at the ceiling in thought. "Actually that's entirely not true, you did try to jack me…. That was your choice."

She looked back at him, her eyes softening. She needed him to get it. To understand.

"But the rest... Was all me. I chose to stay in the car, I chose to drive you. I chose to run when they came for me the first time, I chose to come here afterwards. I chose to get smashed with Oleg and go out." She took a step closer to him and went on. "I chose to leave your bed that morning..." There was a flutter of murmuring around the penthouse at that, "...and I chose to go with Killbane when he came to the library."

She took another step towards him, a breath away from him now "You told me what would happen if I was taken. You warned me. I could have run from him the second time. I knew what the consequences would be. My decisions! They might not have been good decisions, but they were mine... and I claim them."

She gazed up into his hazel eyes. "Do you really want me to go? I will, if you can convince me that you absolutely do not love me."

There was a collective gasp from the gathered gang members. The Boss didn't hear them, he was transfixed by her. He opened his mouth a couple of times to answer her, but no sound came out "The safest place for me..." She whispered insistently, "is by your side."

He raised his hand and lightly caressed her cheek.

"You love me." She insisted softly.

"Yes." his whispered, finally finding his voice.

She raised one eyebrow at him and waited.

"I love you." He said with a little smile. She waited a little longer. "... and I don't want you to leave."

She smiled widely and pulled his stupid lips down to hers.
Chapter 17

Epilogue: Part 1

She now knew his name. He had introduced himself to her properly as he lay beside her caressing her tummy and running his fingers softly over her still tender ribs. He had been so careful with her, as if she were made of spun sugar. She couldn't wait until her ribs were fully healed and he could really show her how much he loved her.

Days and weeks passed and she got better, healed and strong. He had decided to move her into the penthouse with him and they had decided that she was not only his girlfriend, but also a Saint. She proclaimed that if anyone called her his 'moll', she would make damned sure they regretted it forever.

She had already proven she could take a beating, though hazing was a thing of the past for the Saints. She was easily the best driver out of everyone and she had a fierce and protective instinct when it came to her friends and the very bad man that she loved.

So, she was now a criminal. A gangster. She had to laugh, she had to be the least intimidating gangster in the whole world.

The Boss had been teaching her hand to hand combat, one such lesson got very intense and ended with them naked and sweaty on the gym floor much to Shaundi's horror when she walked in on them. Angel took over her lessons from then. The Boss had also tried to teach her to shoot a rifle. Same result, Rocco now couldn't look her in the eye. Anything that had them in close contact, pretty much always ended in frantic sex… or a screaming argument.

She had helped in an operation to remove the Deckers from power permanently. Their leader had fled the city and with his departure, Steelport now belonged solely to the Saints accept for a few pockets of resistance, though they were scattered and leaderless. The Boss had put up some resistance to letting her join the mission and they had squabbled about it in the middle of the kitchen of Saints HQ, surrounded by gang members who all knew by now that she would get her way. The defeated Boss had stomped off in the end. He had turned from her, walked out on to the terrace, out onto the Helipad and straight off the side of the building. She had gawped after him. Shaundi assured her he was fine and went back to her fresh buttery brioche courtesy of Pierce. Chris looked after him, skeptical, until she saw a tiny figure attached to a parachute floating towards the park in the distance. She had snorted in incredulity.

Her first mission had been so exciting, she had been the driver for the Boss. She had driven a gorgeous Sky Blue Bootlegger, a gift from the Boss, (he may have stolen it, but that wasn't confirmed yet) and had returned it safely to HQ with only two bullet holes in it, which she was unutterably proud of. Pierce had congratulated her and told her that if the Boss had been driving, the car would have ended up upside down, in a ditch, on fire. The Boss had hugged her close and then checked her over for any injuries. Finding none, he had picked her up and carried her up to their bedroom to ravish her.

She was under no illusion that he had been popular with the ladies before her. He didn't fraternise with his female lieutenants. He had a strict, 'Don't screw the crew' policy. She had told him in no uncertain terms that she didn't share her toys and if he was planning on looking elsewhere for entertainment (paid or otherwise), she would have no problem with putting a bullet in him (from her own gun, that had been collected from the Library lost and found and which she now carried with her everywhere.) She needn't have been concerned, he was nothing if not totally loyal and was
evidently enamoured of her.

She regularly went with Viola to Safeword, which was quite an eye opener for Chris the first time. She had never seen so much rubber in a place that wasn't a tyre factory. She was learning how to manage a legitimate business to cover the real businesses that the Saints were involved in. It was in preparation for the Boss turning the Three Count Casino over to her. Which she was both excited and nervous about. Not because of the business, but because of what had happened in the basement of the place. She had asked Rocco if he would consider coming with her. Rocco had been over the moon, seeing as it was an amazing as a promotion.

The Boss had frowned at her choice, asking if maybe someone more experienced would be a better idea. Once again, she had to remind him that she wasn't stupid. She knew that he saw Rocco as a younger, handsome rival and that Rocco was like a little brother, nearly a decade her junior and he had a girlfriend. And to stop being such a pouty baby. The Boss had grinned and asked her if she wanted to fuck.

The Boss was out and about in the city a lot of the time, clearing out any last pockets for resistance from the syndicate, buying up real estate and whatever else he got up to, most of which she didn't want to know about.

He was out one day when the Saints got word to mobilise immediately. The remainders of the Syndicate; Morningstar, The Deckers and The Luchadores had banded together for one last push, they were leaderless and erratic, but still very dangerous.

Rocco ran up to Chris in her new office at the Three Count, eyes bright with excitement. He handed her an automatic rifle and began searching around for the Kevlar that Oleg had given her... just in case. He helped her strap it on and ushered her out. She shoved her 9mm into the back of her jeans as she walked calmly out to her Hammerhead and chambered a round. As she walked, more Saints from around the Casino fell in behind her.

"Are they here?" She asked Rocco as they moved.

"Nah," He replied cheerfully. "Looks like they are targeting HQ, sounds like an all out war" He was almost skipping next to her, giddy with anticipation of a proper fire fight.

She shook her head in disgust. "Stay calm Rocco, don't blow your load too early, aye." She looked over her shoulder at Terry who loomed behind her. "You OK to hold the fort." She asked him.

Terry nodded and indicated for a small contingent of the Saints following, to peel off with him. They couldn't leave the Saint assets unprotected and Terry was more than capable of holding the Casino if they were subject to an attack from any splinter groups though she had learned that he didn't really like the pitched battles due to all of the noise.

Chris slid behind the wheel of her Hammerhead, Rocco was beside her, squirming eagerly in his seat but trying not to. Two more Saints were in the back seat and she took off at speed when they were all settled in. She would be approaching HQ from the west, basically a straight road. She planted boot and tested the new modifications that Tank had made to her car. The car was a little heavier with all of the people in it, she was used to driving with just her and a passenger and she'd need to compensate. She flicked the nitrous switch and felt the car surge forward. She weaved through the heavy traffic, with little regard to traffic laws, Rocco whooping in the seat next to her. He loved to be in the car with her. She loved the fact that as a criminal, she didn't have to abide by the road rules. He father had and it hadn't done him any good in the end.

HQ loomed over them as they took the closest exit. Morningstar choppers circled the penthouse
like flies around a tasty piece of meat. They were close enough to hear the crack and boom of gunfire and explosions. Smoke filled the air. Chris slid around the last corner and seeing the mass of vehicles and people in the street ahead, kicked the car into gear and drove straight into the fray. The enemy was a mish-mash of the Syndicates three gangs all armed with everything from automatic rifles to grenade launchers. They sheltered behind their cars and fired of round after round at the Saints building. She had no intention of staying in their midst, the Saints were firing back with gusto and she recalled the stack of RPG's that were stored upstairs. She doubted that even Tank could fix her car if one of those accidentally hit it in a little bit of friendly fire or that the Doc could put her back together after that either. She passengers alighted and joined the group of Saints defending from the ground floor. The wheels spun as she took the Hammerhead out of the line of fire. She hid the car in an alleyway a few buildings down and returned to the fight on foot. Her rifle at the ready.

She came up behind a group of Deckers sheltering behind one of their neon blue and black cars and dispatched two of them before the others realised where the shots were coming from. She ducked in behind the newsstand and waited for the hail of returned fire to abate before legging it into a store doorway. She took a deep breath and darted her head around the wall to sight her next shot... and there He was. The other four Deckers dead at his feet. He held out his hand to her and she went to him. He ran with her into the front entrance of HQ careful to keep his body between her and the forces confronting them. They got into the elevator and he kissed her deeply before releasing her and stepping out just before the door closed, sending her a cheeky wink before he turned away.

She swore at the closed door… of course he wouldn't retreat to the penthouse with her. He would go out there, guns blazing and show everyone how it was done. He was so bloody cocky.

She was met at the penthouse by Shaundi, who took her rifle.

"Boss told me to keep you out of it." She explained with a semi apologetic shrug.

"I guessed." Chris replied, a little bit sick of being coddled by her boyfriend.

"He knew you'd come yourself, when we put out the call for reinforcements." Shaundi said with a smile. "He said I should knock you out if I had to… are you planning on trying to get away?"

Chris thought about it for a moment. "Nah, but he can't expect everyone else to put their lives on the line while I lounge around up here." She complained. "It's not fair."

"Actually, it's best if he knows you're safe." Shaundi said seriously, "He can't focus if you're in danger. You're all that's on his mind, you know that."

Chris nodded solemnly. It was true he would try to find her, get reckless and probably end up with a bullet in his back or worse. Chris and Shaundi walked over to Kinzie who was head-down over her laptop, chewing on her fingernail with a worried expression on her young face.

"What's wrong?" Chris asked, trying to make sense of the numbers on the glaring screen.

Kinzie didn't look up but started tapping at the keys.

"I'm not sure. There's something happening out there but I'm being scrambled somehow... I can't clean this up. What is it?" She mumbled to herself.

Chris and Shaundi leaned in close until Kinzie shot them both an evil glare. They stepped back hastily, giving her her space. Kinzie was not much bigger than Chris, but she was mean like a pitbull when riled.
Kinzie continued to tap at her laptop. Shaundi and Chris were watching the carnage rage below them. The helicopters that had swarmed the penthouse had been dispatched quickly by the Saint attack choppers. Chris watched Sunset Park fill with smoke, fire and debris as the battle raged.

She happened to glance up, for no reason, maybe she was just sad at the gang war going on below and needed a breath. Maybe she had a prickle that something wasn't right. But she glanced up and looked out towards the channel. It took her a moment to understand what she was looking at. She grabbed Shaundis arm in alarm. Shaundi swore loudly.

Kinzie shouted a warning from the table. She had cleared the static and now knew exactly what was happening. The ragtag stragglers below were the very least of their problems. A huge aircraft carrier had lumbered into the channel and it was dispatching squadron after squadron of VTOL's, all of them heading towards the Saints HQ.

The planes moved fast and they all, in turn, dispatched a volley of missiles towards the Skyscraper Hotel as they blazed overhead. Shaundi, Kinzie and Chris ran as fast as they could from the penthouse. They slipped and stumbled down the stairs to the floor below just as the missiles hit the penthouse. They were thrown to the floor on the storage level in a ball of fire and showered in concrete, steel and glass.

It seemed that the might of the U.S. Military had finally decided to end the gang wars.

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Epilogue Part 2

Chris was dazed. Her ears were ringing in the aftermath of the giant explosion that had rocked the penthouse above. She was sprawled on the floor at the foot of the stairs being slowly covered with settling dust. She struggled to her knees drawing in lungsful of silty air. She coughed loudly and shook her head to clear the dull ringing. She looked around her desperately and saw Kinzie slumped against the wall opposite wall and Shaundi was lying nearby. Chris scrambled unsteadily over to Shaundi and felt for a pulse. She was alive and breathing strongly. She was just unconscious and Kinzie had already started to stir. Chris went to her and helped to her feet.

They looked around them. The penthouse above had taken a direct hit with multiple missiles. While the three ladies had taken to the storage floor below for sanctuary, Chris thought how lucky they were that the floor hadn't been hit or even affected more. The storage floor had all sorts of explosive ordinance and would have probably taken out the city block if it had gone up. It was reinforced and armoured, but still…

The stairway down from the Penthouse was blocked of by a wall of twisted metal and concrete. Chris and Kinzie set off into the storage bays looking for another way out. Kinzie was sure that there was more than one way onto this floor, but wasn't sure where it was. Chris drew her 9mm and carried it low, just in case she ran into someone who was unfriendly. There were still rival gangs and now the military out there, they may have taken the opportunity to storm the building. Kinzie picked up a pistol from one of the crates that littered the bays and they set off to find a way out leaving Shaundi to wake in her own time.

Kinzie gave a call a few minutes later. She had found the fire stairs, behind crates of grenades. Fire safety was not high on the Saints priorities list. Chris rushed over and helped move the crates out of the way of the solid fire door and the wrenched the door open. They raised their guns instinctively when they realised that there was someone on the other side of the door. The Boss stopped dead with two guns trained on him. He was out of breath from running up twenty eight flights of stairs. His eyes, which had taken on that cold look he assumed when Chris was in danger, brightened when he saw that Chris was OK. She lowered her gun and flew into his arms, he
squeezed her tight and kissed her on the top of the head, before releasing her and hugging Kinzie briefly as well. They took him to Shaundi and he lifted her easily to carry her down.

He asked them what happened as they started down.

"Kinzie was being blocked, by the time she broke through they were already here." Chris explained as they hurried down the stairs.

"They're not the Military," He told her. "It looks like the STAG Initiative has gone live."

She looked at him questioningly as they moved.

"When Alderman Hughes was killed, his senator wife started pushing for an offensive against gangs." He explained, looking down at Shaundi as she stirred. "Special Tactical Anti-Gang Unit was the result. Last I heard, it had stalled."

They stopped in the stairwell and checked on Shaundi who was coming around.

"Not anymore." Chris said with a grimace. "Looks like the city is about go under martial law"

"But they aren't regular army," He continued, "They're private. The US Army can't afford the tech these guys have. "

Shaundi sat up slowly. "Looks like you really pissed them off, huh." She said weakly, she had hit her head as she had fallen and was trying hard to focus her eyes.

"I have that effect on people." He said modestly.

"So, what do we do?" Chris wondered if they were prepared to battle an elite paramilitary force with seemingly unlimited financial and technological resources.

"We regroup." The Boss shrugged, "and then we take the fight to them."

Kinzie snorted and shared a cynical look with Chris "Ten foot tall and bulletproof." She muttered.

"Nope." He grinned, "Six foot four and awesome."

Chris shook her head and sighed. He was such a big kid but he never backed down, she'd give him that.

They got Shaundi to her feet and started down again.

"Where do we go?" Kinzie asked. She was fretting that she had left her laptop upstairs when they had fled. She didn't feel right if she wasn't plugged in to something.

"You can get to them now, right?" The Boss asked in return.

"Yeah, I got through just before they launched." Kinzie replied confidently.

"Then we go to your warehouse. I want you back online and in their shit as soon as possible."

They reached the ground floor in short order, with a destination in mind they just needed to get there. They all emerged from the fire exit on the ground floor at the rear of the building. The explosion had pretty much ended the battle on the ground. The remnants of the gangs had scattered and the Saints had run for cover.
"We need a car." He said, looking out into the street at the few mangled wrecks that littered the roadway in the aftermath of the gang offensive.

"I left the Hammerhead in an alley a block over." Chris supplied.

They moved quickly finding the Hammerhead where she'd left it. Kinzies warehouse was way over in Salander on Stanfield. The roads were now packed with white armoured vehicles baring the STAG Logo. Chris drove sensibly to avoid notice, with Kinzie sitting primly beside her and the other two skooched down in the tiny back seat. She wanted to slam the car into overdrive and get it over with.

There were pockets of gang resistance all over the city. Small pitched battles with groups of the syndicate and STAG, the Boss had the opportunity to watch the STAG operatives in action. They worked as a finely tuned machine, all in sync. They were highly trained and highly skilled and fully armed and armoured. Each man and woman seemed to have specialised training like the Navy Seals or Army Rangers. This private army must have cost a fortune to assemble. The Syndicate was truly demolished that day. The Saints were nowhere to be seen, not a scrape of royal purple was spotted. As per the Boss’ instructions, they had gone into hiding to assess this new threat. But Chris knew when they'd had time to size up the new opposition, STAG would be driven from the Steelport.

They pulled into Kinzies warehouse via the front roller door and were greeted by Oleg and Pierce. The Boss and Kinzie strode into her 'inner sanctum' which housed her servers while Chris was taken up in a big bear hug by Oleg. Shaundi was examining the bruise on her forehead in the rear view mirror and describing the explosion to Pierce. Viola arrived minutes later, followed by Angel and Zimos.

Everyone crowded into the server room and watched Kinzie wrangle with the foreign computer system. She turned slowly to glare at them all. Kinzie might have been a small, young ginger, but she was still mildly scary, so everyone reversed out of the room to leave her to it. They assembled instead in the Kinzies 'lounge' which consisted of a ratty couch, a table and a couple of dining chairs and couple of upended crates littered with computer components and magazines. In the corner was a kitchenette counter that housed a kettle, a microwave and a hotplate. The Boss sat down on one of the chairs and pulled Chris into his lap, burying his nose in her hair and holding her close.

The rest of them found seats either on the furniture or on the floor and they began to discuss the latest turn of events. STAG were going to be the most challenging force yet. They weren't gangs, they were highly trained soldiers with armour, high tech weapons and specialised vehicles. They might even be too much for them. That is, if they weren't the Saints. The Saints weren't just a gang either, they were a force of nature and with the Boss at the helm, they were near unstoppable. Maybe they should just put a heap of guns on Him and just send him out into the streets and have a quick nap while He sorted out the city. Chris gave Pierce a hard look when he suggested that. She wasn't entirely sure if he was serious or not, but if given the choice, that is exactly what the Boss would do. Go in guns blazing. No thought. No plan. No Problem!

Kinzie came out of her inner sanctum and addressed them all.

"Here's what we know." She began, "The group out there are STAG. Senator Monica Hughes got a unanimous vote to put the city under Martial Law to wipe out the Syndicate and the Saints after the death of her husband. The carrier out in the channel is called the Thermopylae. The guy in charge is Cyrus Temple and he's bad news… this whole situation is just bad."

"You're forgetting one thing, Kinzie," The Boss stated confidently. "We're the Fucking Third Street
Saints."

THE END

End Notes

This is pretty much as basic as it gets... if you intend on reading past the first chapter, then you're more into it than I am... lol.
I was gonna delete it but I thought someone might be OK with it.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!