

GUNNER

MADISON HAMILTON

PROLOGUE

Maitland, Australia - April 2016

Tonight might be the night he finally kills me, a little voice inside her head said. Even though it was sometimes the voice of reason, she hated it.

His ring covered fist connected with Lyric Davis's face, the burning pain was instant. A loud click in her jaw made her question if she was going to have it wired shut again. The force of the blow threw her against one of the oak-panelled walls of her bedroom.

Once there was a time when she still had a spark inside her, a fight that no other woman could match. No other woman would ever dare to try. He had made sure to beat that out of her a long time ago.

She braced herself for another crack, the strength behind his punches was enough for her to see the entire galaxy. She desperately wanted to run, but where was she going to go? Maitland was still small-town Australia, and even if she did manage to get out of the state, Reaper would find her.

If he didn't, then her father – the president of the Dark Angels – would. He could have her back before anyone even noticed she was missing.

Hot breath against her cheek caused Lyric to shrink into a ball. She hated showing this asshole her fear, but he had trained her well.

‘I hope you learnt your lesson Little Fairy.’

She knew what would happen if she didn’t respond to him. So, she nodded her head, which set her off balance. The nickname he had given her years ago caused hatred to settle in her stomach, but she didn’t act on her feelings. She never did, not anymore at least.

Lyric peered up out of the corner of her eye and sucked in a painful and shaking breath.

Was he fucking smiling?

At only 160cm tall, with a pixie-like build, there wasn’t a lot she could do against the biker she had once considered her boyfriend. With one last kick to her ribs, the bastard left her room with a click of her door. Lyric allowed her mind to finally blur. She remained on the floor in case he came back for a second round.

It wasn’t unusual for him to need a second go around. It was either her or a random root rat. Better the whore than her.

Lyric waited for about ten or so minutes, listening to the footsteps of the brothers outside her door. She’d learnt to identify each and every brother that walked by. Relief settled in her aching muscles as she lifted her body off the floor. Her muscles screamed. Lyric tried not to make a sound, she didn’t want anyone to hear her or find her in this state. Slowly she stumbled towards her ensuite, each breath proving more difficult than the last.

She glanced into her full-length mirror and sucked in a painful breath. Red swollen welts marred her skin and blended with the bruises from the other night. Some of her wounds were starting to heal, but the scars would be a constant reminder of what he’d done.

Lyric was in for another summer, suffering in long sleeves and making excuses as to why she was choosing to boil in the summer heat and not enjoy the sun on her skin.

She couldn’t stand the idea of a stinging shower so instead she abandoned her clothes and slipped as slowly as she could into

bed without dressing. The Australian heat was seeping into her air-conditioned room and made her sweat in to her cuts. Hot tears drenched her pillow as she fell into a restless sleep.

A pounding on the door resembled gunshots in Lyric's sleep deprived mind.

'Lyric! Open the fucking door.' The sound of her brother's voice was a welcome relief, but she had no intention of opening the door. She wanted to hide away from the world, she knew the door wasn't going to hold up against her brother's fists. She dragged her body out of the bed and groaned at her protesting muscles. That fucking mongrel made sure she hurt today. She put on a light robe which covered most of her body. Light streamed into her dark room from the hot Australian sun, blinding for her a moment. A small sound of discomfort came from her mouth as she slowly opened the door wider.

As soon as the door was wide enough to see her brother's stern face, the tie on her robe slipped slightly, and cool air brushed against her abused skin.

'Motherfucker!' Pirate's angry gaze cut through her sleepy haze.

'Who are you calling a motherfucker, you fuck knuckle?'

'What the fuck is that?' Pirate pointed to the open robe at her chest. She tried to hide her body, hide any kind of evidence that she was still sporting, even though it was pointless, and glanced at her brother.

'What are you doing here?' she spat in defiance.

She could have sworn he was scheduled to be on a run with a few other brothers this week.

'Blade said he could hear screaming coming from your room.' He pushed past her and sat on her bed. 'And not the good kind of screaming either.'

'Mmm gross.' She mimicked her favourite comedian John

Mulaney as she closed the door and took tentative steps towards her cupboard. A soft pair of old track pants graced her fingers, along with a black, long-sleeved t-shirt.

‘Don’t look,’ she said to her brother and pulled the clothes over herself. Lyric knew she was going to absolutely boil in these clothes. Even with the air-con working as hard as it was, she was already sweating, but she didn’t want to give Reaper any reason to repeat her lesson.

Sure, she was going to get weird looks, but she’d never cared what everyone else thought about her before. She couldn’t bring herself to do so now. Lyric had absolutely no fucks to give.

‘What the fuck happened?’ Pirate growled.

She loved her brother. There was no one else in the world she trusted more, but she couldn’t put him in jeopardy. Reaper was dangerous, there was no way she was bringing Pirate into any of the shit she was dealing with. Until this point, he was blind to it all. Of course, that was Lyric’s fault. She’d chosen not to bring her brother into her mess. He had enough to deal with trying to live up to their father’s expectations of a good vice president.

She watched as her brother crossed his arms, his patience wearing thin. What was she supposed to do? If she spilled a word, she got a beating.

They used to be so close, and not just in age. They could always talk to each other. That’s what happens when both parents were more concerned with themselves than with their own children. She was ashamed of what she’d been putting up with and she was too embarrassed to tell him anything.

Lyric was a tough biker chick, through and through, but right now she felt nothing like a larger-than-life stripper with a mouth that would get a normal shield in trouble.

Pirate slapped his hands on his thighs and stood in front of her.

He planted his large palms on each of her shoulders. The man was just under a foot taller than her, his brown eyes similar to her own, a courtesy of their mother. That and the colour of their hair were the only similarities they shared from their parents. Lyric had inherited her mother's pale skin, and even if she tried to get some sun, it was too easy for her to burn. Her brother, on the other hand, was tanned with sleeves of bright ink.

'Pack your shit. You're coming with me to the States.'

'Get fucked.'

Bryson City, North Carolina - July 2016

Lyric's heart jumped in her chest as the lights dimmed around the dancer on the stage. She was reminded of the promise she made to herself and her brother when she started her new life here in the U.S. When she was put under the protection of the brothers from Black Alchemy, the biggest club in North Carolina, she'd sworn she wouldn't find her way back here. Yet here she stood backstage at the Honey Pot Gentlemen's Club, back to her old ways.

Cheers from the men around her brought her back to the dancer now at the front of the stage. Her bedazzled top landed on the ground as she squatted around the pole so her customers could stuff money into her G-string and thigh-high boots.

'Thank you lovely Simba,' the voice from the speakers boomed. Lyric's heart started to rave and her palms were sweating. This never got easier, she went to rub them on her bare thighs but remembered her body was covered in baby oil, an old trick she used back home to help with the pole. She took the towel from the club manager, Sleaze, and thanked him. He was there to check out her first performance. Rumour had it that he used to be a dancer himself, which might explain where he got his name from. But from what Lyric could tell,

he was never inappropriate with any of the staff at the Honey Pot.

‘Please welcome to the stage, the salacious Sheila.’ Lyric smirked at her stage name. The old Australian name was something that her father used a lot with his root rats. When she was asked to pick something, it was the first thing she thought of.

She strutted towards the pole at the centre of the stage, her heels hitting the floor with every beat of the old rock song. She’d done this routine hundreds of times back home, her muscles remembered every step, every spin and dip. Her hands and legs wrapped around the metal beam, fingers almost touched the floor as she spun upside down. The lights practically blinded her as she tried to look out at the crowd.

All eyes were on her, and a sick part of her loved it.

It was easy money, and she got the attention she craved, but sometimes that attention didn’t feel right. If only she could have the eyes of a certain biker here in America, but the thought of another biker boyfriend scared the crap out of her.

CHAPTER 1

Gunner needed to get out of the fucking desk chair. He'd been stuck there for hours. Hell, he needed to get out of his goddamn office. Rooster was still gone for another few days on his honeymoon, so he was in charge.

Gunner had no idea how his president took to his new leadership so well with the little to no training that Patriot had given him.

Dice, Gunner's father and a son of one of the originals of Black Alchemy, made sure that when the time was right, his son could jump into any officer position. Now as VP, Gunner was proud to be Rooster's second-in-command, but then the bastard had to go and get married.

Gunner was happy for his friend and Minx. She was an amazing woman and even though she'd been through hell, she'd stuck by her man. A lesser woman would have given up at the first sign of trouble. Not the pretty blonde matriarch though. The woman still fought her demons, but he knew she would never give up on Rooster. Those two had a connection like Gunner had never seen.

The thought of his president and the new head of the ol' ladies brought about the image of that tiny fire cracker of a woman. Lyric Davis made every nerve ending in his body zing.

Jesus Christ, the woman was a temptation. Literally. She was hot as fuck and so goddamn sexy. Her long, black hair with hot pink tips was just begging for his hands. Her body turned him on to no end. He liked every shape of women, not just the big tit and ass type, which seemed to be a favourite of most of his brothers. But it wasn't just Lyric's body that had him wired. She gave off a feeling that filled a room. The feisty Australian had a generous ass and smaller breasts and she had him feeling hornier than ever before.

With a grunt, he was up and out of the chair. He paused in front of the mirror on the back of his office door. With a wink and a nod of approval at his own reflection, he made his way through the clubhouse. Rock music smacked him straight in the face, and a familiar happiness spread through his chest. The clubhouse was his home, it always had been and it always would be.

He passed by Creep and Hammer leaning against the pool table with Crash as Diablo lined up his shot. Hammer tried to distract Diablo with trash talk, but the man with the cue just watched as the number twelve ball slammed into the pocket. Hammer let out a loud whoop and swiped the money off the table.

Gunner continued past the tables towards the bar. Grizzly, Rubble and Override were already seated around the worn-down wood. Old man Grizz downed drinks faster than the prospect could pour them. The temporarily suspended road captain, Rubble, was hunched over his stool, and was obviously going to need help to his room again. Override sat around with a beer in one hand as the other flew across the keyboard of his laptop. The guy and the portable computer were practically one. Gunner had to wonder why some of the club girls loved the hacker so much, he was the biggest nerd of the club and rarely engaged with the girls.

The rest of his brothers were either at work or waking up. Hawk was one of the men struggling to stay awake so late in the morning.

His brother managed the Blind Hog Roadhouse, another of the club-owned businesses. The man's days were practically reversed at this point.

With a two-finger salute to his brothers, he mounted his custom. Gunner slipped his sunglasses over his eyes, tied his bandana to contain his shaggy blonde mane and headed out of the parking lot. The purr of his Harley beneath him always excited him, even when he was just a kid. He watched as his hometown blurred around him.

When he was sixteen, he had shown an interest in Harleys and his pops couldn't be fucking prouder. Nothing made his old man happier than his only son in the garage with him. It was where Gunner was taught everything, from how to fix up cars and bikes, to how to shoot. The shooting range was the best part of his teenage years. It was the only time he and his old man Dice got to spend together without the women.

He'd spent his formative years with his father after his biological mother left as soon as she pushed him out. All he knew about her was that she was some hood rat, who thought she wanted his father and his MC life, until the reality of the club life and motherhood kicked in. Not once in his twenty-seven years had he bothered to find his mother. Living with his pops wasn't bad; he liked it.

For many years it was just the two of them, but he had to admit life got a lot easier between them when Dice met his step mother Faith - also known as Flash. From that came his twin sisters when he was about seven. Sophi and Abigail were products of another one-night stand, but this woman had stayed. Gunner really liked Flash, she was a great woman and a really good mom. He knew that she was good for his dad.

But since Patriot's death, his pops had a more 'live or die' view on life and hit the road. He was riding around the country with his ol' lady warming his back.

His sisters were both nineteen and had taken drastically different turns in life. Sophi earned great grades when she was in high school but never got the chance to do anything with them or the multiple scholarships she had received. Instead, she got caught up with the wrong guy and popped out a set of twins herself. She worked at one of the BAMC owned businesses. Her young boys Charles and Alexander were in Pre-K, and Sophi was the most amazing mother to them. She took after Flash and owned her motherhood.

Abi, however, used her brains to go to college in Washington. Gunner was just as proud of his youngest sister, but he missed her like fucking crazy. She came back for the holidays, but it wasn't the same as when she lived at home.

His reminiscent thoughts faded into the background as the old warehouse the club had converted into a gentlemen's club came into view. He pulled into the newly laid parking lot and killed his engine. Back when his grandad was still alive this had been a clothing factory. It had gone out of business when his own father was still just a teen. He and Patriot watched the area and waited until it was seedy enough and low enough in price to buy the building and refurbish it.

It was now the Honey Pot and was far enough away from Bryson City's main street that it didn't cause any trouble with the normal civilian families, but it was still visible from the road.

The parking lot was already filled with cars and some bikes belonging to his brothers who worked at the gentlemen's club, but Gunner took no notice. He needed to get inside, and quickly.

Inside, the club was hard on the ears at first, and Gunner blinked a few times to get used to the low lighting. It had been a while since he stepped across the threshold of this place. He knew why he was there, not that he was going to admit it to himself.

The after-work crowd pity-clapped the girl on stage. She was too timid, which he knew wasn't good for a stripper. He made a mental

note to have a look into the girl's profile. It would be a good excuse to go backstage.

With his mind made up, he took a step toward Sleaze's office when the DJ boomed over the speakers.

'Thank you Karma, now please welcome Sheila.' Immediately, the crowd perked up.

He stopped in his tracks. Gunner watched the woman strut onto the stage. Her small tits and amazing ass had his cock standing to attention. A song he recognised but couldn't place played over the speakers, and then she started to move...

Fucking hell.

He indulged in watching the way Lyric moved. Her hips pumped and arms moved seductively over her breasts. When she reached the pole, Gunner never thought his boner could be this painfully hard. She moved as though the metal was another part of her body with a shimmy. She lazily tossed her bra to reveal little tassels covering her nipples. Fuck, now he needed to adjust his pants. He felt a fire inside him, then a man stuck a bill in her thong. The feeling of murderous intent was both unexpected and unwelcome.

What the fuck! This was her job. So why the fuck did he feel like this?

With a shake of his head, he moved towards the backstage area. He nodded at one of his brothers assigned to guard the girls. Somehow, he found himself out the front of the broom closet they had turned into a private room for Lyric Davis. Dancers moved all around him, all of them eye-fucking the shit out of him. One dancer in particular, Simba, smiled and winked at him. He'd fucked her before, it wasn't anything special, just another body to keep him company.

'G'day. What the hell are you doing 'ere?' The tiny woman's jarring accent broke through his thoughts. She was half dressed and her cheeks pink from being under the bright lights.

Fuck she was so sexy.

‘Just came by to see some faces,’ he said, crossing his arms and watching as she snorted in an unladylike manner. ‘Need to check out some new bodies.’

‘Well, here’s my face... now fuck off.’ With a roll of her large brown eyes, she put her hand on his chest and pushed past him knocking him off balance. She opened the door with a key which hung on a chain around her neck. He wasn’t going to give her the chance to close the door on him. Gunner kept it open with his hand and slipped in behind her.

‘What? Are you just going to sit around and see if the girls are up to scratch are ya? Didn’t know that was your job? That’s fucking boring.’

As much as her words had a fire to them, the girl in front of him wasn’t the same woman he saw on stage or even the same woman who walked into the clubhouse months ago, with a smile and a stride that nearly had him begging her to get on her knees and suck him off. She was a mouth... and an energy she craved. At this moment though, she seemed jumpy, scared. She wrung her hands almost as if she wasn’t aware she was doing it. Gunner had to wonder what was going on inside that head of hers.

‘You okay Doll?’

Lyric’s head snapped up at the name.

Fuck.

He never gave a woman a road name, but there was something about this one. He couldn’t help it, she was so small and her porcelain skin was just pleading for his lips and his marks. Her hair was so long Gunner wanted his hands in it, the pink tips skimmed her unblemished ass. He wanted to watch every move it made.

‘Okay, whatcha doin’ here Gunner?’ she asked, completely ignoring his question.

‘I told you,’ he said, coming in closer to her and breathing in her cupcake scent. ‘I came to see some bodies.’

Her breath hitched and her hand landed on his belt. She seemed unsure if she should pull him closer or push him away. He knew she was feeling the same thing he was. Her eyes hid nothing, she wanted him just as much as he wanted her. Gunner needed to see if her lips felt as good as they looked. His hands went to her hips and he pulled her closer. She felt so good against him. Thoughts of picking her up and claiming her almost made him groan. Their lips were so close, he could feel her breath, minty mixed with a hint of alcohol.

‘Lyric!’ a woman whined and waltzed in the door. ‘Can you help? Della’s ripped her shorts, and she needs them for her next set.’

Gunner watched as the woman in front of him woke up from behind the fog in her eyes. She shoved him out of her way and shouted back to the stripper.

‘I’ll be there in a second.’ Lyric slapped his hands off her hips and moved around the small room, rummaged through her drawers, and pulled out a Danish tin. Gunner had to admit her mumblings to herself were quite entertaining.

‘Fucking galah. I swear I’ve sewn up these shorts three times this week. She should just throw them away, even if she thinks they bring her more tips,’ Lyric continued to grumble and move around. She headed towards her door when she stopped in front of him. She stopped, hands planted on hips. She threw him a look and ’tude.

‘Why the fuck are you still here? Piss off,’ she snapped and pointed to the door.

‘You better watch that mouth of yours Doll, you seem to forget who you’re talking to.’ He honestly had no idea what language she was speaking... what the fuck was a galah?

Normally if a woman spoke to him like that, she would be dealt

with appropriately, but for some reason he knew to leave well enough alone.

This time.

He had other shit to get done anyway.