

TANGLED

Chapter Six

Soph

I dreaded school. I suffered through every hour—every minute—of every day, which was a big change for me because I used to love it. I loved learning. I loved spending time with my friends, and I really loved the sense of accomplishment I got when I finished a day.

Now...

Now I hated every second of it—the teachers, the lessons, the sitting still. And you know what I hated the most? That I was tortured by seeing my best friend and boyfriend act sickly in love!

Art was the only class I had on my own. I wanted to go back in time and kick myself; the three of us teed it up last year. I made sure that I was in all of Kyles and Kayla's classes. And now, when I wasn't over hearing Kayla gush about how sweet Kyle is to her, or what he had just purchased her or how much she loved him, I was being forced to watch them as a couple.

Like I said, I hate school.

My grades were already dropping from my lack of interest, which scored me extra credit work to do. That is exactly how I wanted to spend my weekend—working on fractions and a report on endangered animals.

It was the middle of the day and I was at my locker, putting my books away. The first thing I did at the start of term was rip down every picture of me and Kyle and me and Kayla plastered inside my locker.

I was getting out my sunglasses and shutting my locker door when I jumped.

“Hey, Soph.” Adam grinned at me. I hadn’t seen him standing there. Adam’s locker had been next to my locker for years. But he had left to go overseas last year.

I ran a hand through my hair and nervously smiled. I was still slightly surprised to see him.

“Hey, Adam, how are you?” I had to be nice. He had been a good friend. But he had been more of a friend to Kyle than me. Like all my other “friends”, they were more Kyle’s than mine. So it wasn’t a huge surprise when they sided with him.

“Really good. I’ve missed you and it’s already showing in my math and it is my first day back.” e kept grinning at me like he really was that happy to see me. “How’s Kyle? I haven’t seen him yet.”

And there was the question I was hoping wouldn’t come up. For some stupid reason I thought I would escape before he asked that question.

Laughter filled the hall and I thought this moment couldn’t get

any worse. But that laugh... well, that laugh now was the cause of most of my nightmares.

“Oh, here’s Kyle and Kayla now. Should have guessed they wouldn’t be far from you.” Adam waved over my shoulder and then he frowned.

I took a stab in the dark and guessed that Kayla was probably clinging to Kyle’s side, or they were doing what they always did—and that was kissing. I swear that was all they never did around me. Their lips were always locked.

Disgust is what I felt when I saw it.

Adam looked back at me. “Am I missing something?” Well, that was a very good question. And yes, he was. He glanced back at the happy couple that were by the sound of it coming closer.

“Kyle and I broke up,” I said.

Adam’s eyes snapped back to me, wide and alarmed. “You’re joking, right?” He looked at me like I was lying.

I glanced over my shoulder and saw Kayla back Kyle against the hallway wall, looking like they were about to make out. I looked back at Adam.

“Does it look like I’m lying? Kayla would be his new girlfriend,” I clarified the details.

“Who broke up with who?” Adam did something I didn’t expect: he leaned against his locker and seemed more interested in that question than the show behind me. Actually, I was surprised he

wasn't bolting to go say hi to Kyle and blowing me off. Wasn't like he had to put up with me anymore...

"He broke up with me." I didn't give the details.

He gestured his head towards the happy couple. "How long until he started dating her?"

And that was a question I hated answering. Thankfully I didn't have to tell many people because they had been there when Kyle broke up with and had heard his blunt, rude, and direct explanation. He wasn't shy of keeping the details to himself. Nope. He shared them in front of my family and friends. Well, his friends, it would turn out.

"Um, they were already together. They had managed to keep it from me for three months."

Adam arched his eyebrows and shook his head. "What a jerk."

I was surprised he would say that about Kyle. Adam and Kyle were close. I would say Kayla was my best friend and Adam had been Kyle's. Kyle and I used to joke that Kayla and Adam should get together.

The four of us spent a lot of time together. Parties. Binge sessions. School. Weekends. The four of us were always together. Even when we hung out with Kyle's other friends, the four of us always were closest.

"Guessing everyone sided with the golden boy then?" Adam said, his eyes on the happy couple.

How did he know that? I nodded my head. “My friends circle has gotten smaller.”

“Yeah, well, they follow Kyle blindly—always have.” Adam looked back at me, and I saw anger in his eyes. “You didn’t deserve to be treated like that.”

Funny. He was only the second person to say that to me. Everyone else wouldn’t even speak to me. Like Adam said, they followed the golden boy. He was popular, he was extremely handsome, and girlfriends had always been jealous of me being with him. I think they all couldn’t believe their luck that Kyle was back on the market. Pity Kayla spoiled their hopes.

“He is happy. I guess that is all that matters.” I put my sunglasses on my head, ready to face another long lunch.

I wasn’t hungry. I never was. Some days I didn’t eat at all. Then the next day I’d only eat because I was light-headed and my stomach would growl for food.

“Are you?” Adam asked, his voice gentle and kind. Two things Adam rarely showed anyone. Sure, he was nice. But he had an edge to him. He wasn’t the golden boy. He didn’t do well in classes and he relied on my help.

Adam had been forced to go overseas with his parents because they couldn’t trust him to be left by himself. Last time they did, Adam ended up getting arrested through a rage party, trashed their house, got caught on drugs, and on top of all that, defaced a police car because he “felt like it”. Like I said, he isn’t the golden boy.

But he had just asked me a question. One I wasn't sure if I could answer truthfully.

Was I ok?

I smiled dimly. "Some days are better than others." And that was the truth. Some days I would get through painless. Other days I would drown in the heartbreak and feel an indescribable pain when I looked at Kyle.

"So did you lose all your friends?" Adam still wasn't in a rush to go see his best friend.

"They weren't my friends when it came down to it. They were all Kyle's," I replied. "It doesn't matter, I used to love being on my own." And I had. But even then, I still had Kayla. She had always been my one steady friend.

We were matched up in kindergarten and we grew up together: went through the awkward years together, the first boyfriends, the first kisses, the first times we had sex—we had always shared everything with each other.

Then when I started dated Kyle, we were still close. But one day it was like she woke up and was jealous of my relationship with him. She started saying things like I always put him first or that I would blow her off for him, which wasn't the case.

About six months ago Kayla started to get involved with the drug scene. I tried to talk her out of it, but at the end of the day I had to support her. I knew what she was doing was dangerous, but I couldn't change it, or make her do what I wanted.

So I supported her. And I was there at the hospital after her first overdose. It had been an accident. I was there, holding her hair back as she threw up because she had mixed the wrong drugs together. I was even there when her latest bad relationship went wrong.

I had always been there for her.

And how did she repay me? She helped the love of my life break my heart. It flooded me again: the feeling of betrayal.

“Soph, you alright?” Adam placed a hand on my shoulder. He must have seen the emotion in my eyes as I remembered what type of friendship I did have.

“Yeah.” I looked him in the eye. “Just need some fresh air before class.” It was an excuse and I saw by his expression he knew I had lied. Adam could always tell when someone was lying or not.

“Do you want me to come?”

I frowned. “I’m not your friend, Adam. You don’t have to put up with me anymore.” If anything, he had to put up with Kayla now. How unlucky was he...

“Just because you aren’t with Kyle, doesn’t mean I don’t value your friendship.” Adam smiled. “Come on, Soph, you really think I’d just blow you off?”

I frowned. “You are Kyle’s best friend. He should come first.” If there was a line being drawn, Adam shouldn’t be on my side of the line.

He shrugged. “Personally, I think he fucked up. He might be my friend, doesn’t mean I support what he did.”

Was it possible that I still had a friend left? I remained silent, unsure what to say to that. Should I thank him? Not one other person, apart from Josh, said that Kyle was a dick for what he did.

“Can I have your timetable?” Adam said, snapping me out of my thoughts.

“Um, why?”

His carefree grin was back on his face. “So I can get changed into your classes. It’s my first day back and I’m already behind cause I don’t have you to help me.”

I always helped him when it came to school. The teachers never explained it clearly enough for him. He would always have questions but would ask me instead of the teacher. But I wasn’t exactly excelling in school at the moment.

I pulled out my timetable from my pocket. “I don’t know if I’ll be much help. I’ve already fallen behind.”

“You’ve fallen behind?” He looked at me like that was impossible.

Yeah, the old me wouldn’t be behind. She’d be ahead.

“What can I say? I’m just not feeling this last year.” It was dragging out and I wanted it over. I would’ve liked nothing more than to never come back here.

Once school finished, once my parents were back, I’d be able to

cut Kyle completely out of my life.

“But all the work you’ve done has lead up to this year.” Adam frowned. “Don’t tell me you are letting Kyle ruin your future? What happened to getting an early acceptance into university?”

That had always been the goal. Now I didn’t give a fuck.

I shrugged my shoulders.

“Well, it looks like I’m going to be doing a role I never do and that’s enjoy school work.”

My lips twitched up. Someone cared. He cared. And I thought everyone had stopped caring about me.

“Thanks, Adam.” I gave him a full smile. It was forced, but it was a smile. “You should get to the office before they glue you into your original classes.”

“Good point. I’ll see you later, right?” He stopped leaning the against the locker.

“Yeah, I’m not going anywhere.” And I wasn’t. Every week day I would be here. In hell.

“Ok. I’ll see you later, Soph.” Adam gave me a final friendly smile and left. I turned, watching him walk up the hall. And then I noticed how he ignored Kyle and Kayla, completely.

Kyle noticed too. His eyes were on Adam as he walked past them.

Then Kyle’s eyes bounced to mine, and I knew Kyle’s emotions

well. I knew when he was in pain. I knew when he was upset. I knew when he was happy. And right now his eyes were painted in regret with a tint of anger. I didn't know why he was angry, but I realized it wasn't my problem anymore. I closed my locker door and broke eye contact with him.

But as I walked in the opposite direction, I could feel his eyes still on me until the door swung shut behind me.

Chapter Seven

Soph

It was late after midnight and I was still up on a Friday night, studying. I used to find studying so easy and now it was like forcing a cat to have a bath—bloody impossible—and my body was fighting me one hundred percent.

I groaned when all the numbers ganged up on me and I couldn't solve a single problem.

Then, as if God knew I needed a reason to have a break, there was a knock on my door.

I frowned, wondering who would be up at this time, and more importantly why would they be wanting to see me.

I got up and opened the door. For some reason I was expecting to see Josh. Well, I was hoping it was Josh. So my friendly smile fell when my eyes landed on Kyle.

“What do you want?” My words weren't friendly. My words weren't welcoming. I was direct and rude and I didn't feel sorry

for either.

“I need to talk to you.” Kyle looked at me awkwardly. “I was hoping you would still be up.”

“Why are you even here?” I couldn’t stop myself from asking. It was a Friday night, which usually meant a party—which meant by now Kyle should be on his way to a hangover.

“Um, I wanted to see you.” He looked me in the eye and I saw the honesty in them.

I crossed my arms and leaned against the doorframe. “What about?” I couldn’t think of one reason why. The way he treated me in front of Kayla said it all. He didn’t have time for me. He sure as fuck didn’t care about me. And when it came down it, we weren’t boyfriend and girlfriend anymore—and we weren’t friends. Hell, we weren’t even associates.

“I wanted to ask something of you.” He took a step towards me and immediately I took one back. My brain was screaming run. My body’s defences were up. No one had hurt me as much as he had hurt me, and right now that fact had not been forgotten.

I couldn’t believe what I was seeing when he pushed my bedroom door wide open and took another step into my room. Like he was more determined than ever to make sure he could get close to me.

I put my hand out. “Don’t come any closer.” My voice shook with nerves. I swallowed sharp. It was bad enough seeing him, but having him close... Well, it sent my body into immediate pain, knowing I couldn’t touch. Knowing what we had was dead.

“Soph, I need you to trust me.” His words came out softly and his voice dipped into honesty. It was seductive and swirled in my ears, pulling me in, wanting me to believe him. “I need you to trust me.” He took a step closer and now there was no room between us.

He did something I wasn't expecting. His hand cupped my face and I saw the pain in his eyes, like he wanted more but couldn't have it.

He dipped his head. “Please, will you trust me?”

I frowned. What did he mean trust him? Why the hell would I trust him when it came to anything! Why would he be asking this of me!

“I don't understand,” I mumbled.

His eyes locked with mine. “I need you to trust me; to not wipe me off. Can you do that?”

What he was asking suddenly registered and immediately I wanted to kill him.

“You want me to trust you! Like fuck, Kyle!” I managed to get out before I was interrupted.

“Kyle, what the hell are you doing?” Kayla was standing in the hallway, looking directly at Kyle's back.

Kyle pinched his eyes shut and I heard him curse. He took his hand off me and I missed his touch immediately. I hated myself

for wanting it, for missing it and needing it. Yep, I hated myself a bit more for that. But most of all I was starting to hate Kyle for making me want his touch.

“I thought you were going to the party.” Kyle turned around, sounding pissed off.

“Well, isn’t it a good thing I came to check if you had changed your mind?” Kayla crossed her arms and looked at me. “So the one night we’re apart you make a move. Always knew you were a slut when it came to him, Sophia, but even I wasn’t expecting you to act on it.”

Her words whipped across my body. It wasn’t just what she said that hurt; it was that she said it to begin with. For some stupid reason I thought she would still like me, or think higher of me than that.

“Well, he is all yours, Kayla.” I wasn’t going to fight over Kyle. He was hers. Simple. And I was starting to see very clearly how much of a liar she was.

“Stay away from him, Sophia. He is mine.” She moved across the hall towards my door. “Don’t touch him. Don’t talk to him. And for fuck sake, stop looking at him with those pitiful eyes.”

Her words were sharp, mean, and sliced open my heart a bit wider.

Instead of shutting down, instead of backing down and just taking it like I had since they became a couple, I found an ounce of courage still in my blood.

I moved around Kyle so I could get a good look at the cheap slut she was. “You know what, Kayla, how about you stop monitoring me. Clearly you’re insecure if you think I can get Kyle back. I don’t give a fuck if you are with him or not because, at the end of the day, he still looks at me like he loves me.” I stepped out into the hall. “And I think that’s what really makes you angry. Because you are just one of the many he will fuck his way through, while I was one of the rare ones he stayed around for.”

I saw the disbelief and terror on her face as I pushed past her, heading for the stairs. And in that moment, I wasn’t the broken-hearted ex-girlfriend anymore. I was finally piecing myself back together, and I realized it the moment I stood up to her. My break up with Kyle had given me something that it took months to find: courage. I was a warrior now, and I would never let him, or any man, destroy my heart again.

Once I had my heart back together, I was locking it up and away. And I would never—ever—give someone the power to hurt me again.

Chapter Eight

Soph

I didn’t know where I was heading. I just had to get away. I just had to put as much distance between me and Kyle as possible. I headed for the other side of town.

I knew my normal spots and bars were no-go zones because Kyle’s friends might be there. So I had driven to the darker side of town. Maybe I was asking for trouble. I walked into the dimly lit bar and headed to get a drink. It was a shady bar with mainly men

inside. But that didn't deter me. I needed a strong drink. Maybe a few.

I most likely would get behind the wheel after this. The old Soph wouldn't have dared. Now, well, I just didn't see any reason stopping me.

I ordered a drink and ran a hand through my hair. How had I let myself fall for Kyle's charm? I wanted to turn back time. Refuse to let him in.

I threw back the shot glass and got a refill, throwing that back as well. I wasn't much of a drinker. I never was. So I knew I would start feeling the effects quickly. Maybe it was best if I didn't drive. I didn't want to kill someone just because I couldn't see the point in life. I put my glass down for another.

“The way you're going you're going to drink the bar dry.”

I turned slightly. I hadn't even realized I sat down next to someone. Or had he sat next to me? I had been so focused on drinking, I didn't know the answer.

I took in his rough looks. He was deadly handsome, tattoos over his fingers, hands, arms, and neck, and a voice that would lure you in. It wasn't just his looks, it was how he was looking at me.

He blew out a mouthful of smoke and turned his body towards me on the stool. “You don't look old enough to be drinking.”

I didn't have a threatening or a bad girl image. I never had. I didn't have a confident front like Kayla that made you think she

was the girl your parents warned you about.

I didn't know why—fuck, I couldn't explain it, but for once in my life I felt confident. Like I wasn't squirming under his tense eyes.

“You don't look like a guy that follows the rules to begin with,” I said, not scared of him.

His lips twitched up. “You read me well.”

Yeah. Two words summed him up: bad boy.

“So if you read me so well, why aren't you running?” He looked at me impressed. “I'm here every night, so I know you don't normally come here.”

He must be regular. Well, if he knew I wasn't normally around here, he would assume this was out of my character—which it was. Still, I didn't find myself scared or lacking confidence. For some reason I felt like I could put a front on, like I could show him a side of me I never showed anyone.

A daring side. Because that was what I was doing, wasn't it? Taking a dare. Risking everything by being here. My safety. My reputation—not that there was much of that one left. But my limited reputation would go down if I was seen in a place like this with a girl on a pole in the corner, dancing freely to men who weren't even paying her. She must be an employee here because she seemed too good at it for it to be her first time or for it to be a drunken dare.

Most of the men had eyes on her moving to the seductive beat.

I looked back at the guy, and his attention was solely on me. I saw his eyes run up and down me, maybe deciding what the chances were of him scoring me for the night.

Pity for him I was planning on getting drunk. But I wasn't getting so drunk that I would have a one-night stand.

I knew what I was trying to do was numb the pain in my heart and I realized that maybe this guy could help with that. Sex was just that, wasn't it? Sex. Not really a big deal. I used to think it was a big deal. I used to think you had to know and trust your partner before you did it, before you took the step.

Now I was seeing sex for what it really was, how guys sees it: just a need, and one that can be filled by anyone. Didn't have to be the love of my life or a guy I trusted with my heart. It could be any man.

It could be this guy that was staring into my eyes.

"Bax." He took the cigarette out of his mouth. "My name."

Oh. He was introducing himself. I guess I had made the cut on whether or not to make the effort .

"Sophia. But everyone calls me Soph." I gave him a smile. Again it was a forced smile, but hell, at least I was putting in effort.

"Well, Soph, why are you here?" He turned the empty glass in his hand and then put his hand up for a refill.

I frowned for a second. Why was I here? "Why are you?" I asked

“Same reason as everyone else.”

“That being?”

“Well, some are here for the cheap sprits. Some are here for the free show that chick puts on every night. Others, like me, well, we are here because this is where business is done.” He gave me a small smile. “And I’m guessing not one of those reasons is why you are here.”

I nodded. He had a point. Was I really that easy to read? “I’m here to forget about my life for a night.”

He nodded his head, accepting that as an answer. “You shouldn’t have come here alone. Surely your boyfriend could keep you company? In a place like this you are lucky every guy in here hasn’t made a move already.”

Boyfriend. Just that one word made me clench my glass tighter. “I don’t have a boyfriend.” I wanted to make that point clear. I turned, looking at him a bit harder. “I don’t believe men are trust worthy. And as for guys making a move on me in here, clearly you read that wrong because not even one has glanced in my direction.”

He smirked. “Maybe that’s because you are sitting next to me, sweetheart. Or did you not realize you sat down next to me?”

“I didn’t realize I sat down next to you. I can move?” I glanced down at all the empty bar stools. Moving wouldn’t be that bad of an idea.

“Nah, sweetheart.” He shook his head as if to say he wasn’t

letting that happen. “So are you drinking hard because of a man?”

Well, I knew the answer to that, but I wasn’t going to tell him. So I shrugged my shoulders.

“Come on, a girl like you doesn’t have anything serious to worry about. Guessing your life is as hard as high school.” He cracked a big grin and arched his eyebrows. “I’m right, aren’t I?”

I scoffed. My life had more twists and turns than the average higher schooler. I put my hand up for a refill. I wasn’t surprised that this bartender hadn’t asked to see my ID. I think he literally didn’t give a fuck whether I was of age or not.

He filled up my glass and I threw it back. It burnt my throat and I enjoyed every second of it.

The temporary burn took my mind off my heart which was beating but was broken.

“You want to forget about your life for a night?”

I turned to face him so he had heart me say that. “Yeah, I do.”

“Could I tempt you over to the dark side for a night?” He looked up for the challenge, like getting me to follow him would fulfil some of his fantasies.

“How dark is the dark side?” I asked, tempted just to leave with him. One night. One night to escape from my life. I deserved that, right?

He leaned in closer. “As dark as you want it to be, sweetheart.”

I had a feeling he could take me to places I had never been and show me a side of life I knew nothing about. The side of life that is dark, cruel, and twisted. Just one look at him and you knew he had a criminal record.

Of course, that didn't automatically make him a bad guy, or someone that would hurt me. Josh had a criminal record. I didn't know what for, but he had showed me that it doesn't mean someone is rotten to the core.

I got off my stool and stepped to his side. "I want it a sinister dark." I had nothing to lose, and there was nothing holding me back. "Can you offer me that?"

The smirk on his face got larger. "Sweetheart, if you want dark, I'll give you dark."

I let him take my hand and he threw money down on the bar, more than enough to cover our drinks.

I never thought I'd be the type of girl to have a one-night stand. I never thought I'd be the type of girl to go over to the dark side. I knew Bax was dangerous. His tattoos showed a loyalty to something that I didn't fully understand. But as we left the bar I knew, I just knew, that if I wasn't careful tonight he wouldn't just show me the dark side, he'd pull me into it altogether.

Chapter Ten

JOSH

Sometimes I hated being a vice president. Like right now when I

couldn't get Bax to concreate on what I was telling him. The man had been glued to his phone all week. I didn't know who she was, but she had him more interested in writing back to her than listening to a word I had to say.

Bax had only got out of prison a few months before me. But on his parole condition he couldn't be seen or near a criminal organisation. He was running our associates, taking a silent role in the club. He couldn't wear club colours, couldn't even ride his Harley without being pulled over.

So he was doing things he loved: drinking, handling dodgy deals, and partying. And it would seem he had a girl at the moment cause he was more interested in whatever she was saying than his monthly update with me.

“Bax, are you fucking listening to me!” I snapped at him.

His eyes slowly came off his phone and he looked at me with his normal pissed off glare. He didn't like being told what to do, and he hated answering to me cause he had been a member longer. We were the same age though, so at least he wasn't older. That would give him another weak excuse to disrespect me.

“You want me to collect rent from the other side of town.” He rolled his eyes. “Anything else, Vice?”

“Yeah, who is she?” I snapped asked, sick of his higher-than-me attitude. When it came down to it, I was the Vice President; he sure as fuck wasn't, so he had to answer to me.

“No one.” He put his phone away, and here I was thinking it was glued to his hand.

“Thought you didn’t do girlfriends?” I crossed my arms, watching him squirm under my question.

“Mind your own business, Vice.”

“If you are bringing her into your life, you are bringing her into the club’s life.”

“Considering I’m currently doing the dirty work for the club and won’t be bringing her back to the club, I don’t see how it is any of your business.” He went to get up. “Tell Wolf I’ll do it. And when it comes to the women I fuck, mind your own fucking business.”

With that saidm he stormed off, like his normal pissed off self. I threw money down for our coffees and got up to leave. The reason I had to deal with Bax to begin with was because I wasn’t in the police’s eye line as a member. Sure, I was linked to them. But nobody knew I was the Vice President. Well, not yet, but it wasn’t going to stay a secret for much longer.

Now I had a family dinner to go to. I was being forced to attend because Mom had been complaining to Dad that she never sees me, which resulted in Dad doing something he hated doing, and that was calling me. He hated to ask anything of me. But he did it for Mom, and the only reason I agreed to it was because it would get her off my back for another few weeks.

I hadn’t been home much. The club has kept me busy. I had been coming home late and left early. It was for the best. That way I avoided Dad and Mom and my dickhead of a brother, Kyle.

I shot a glare at my brother who again tried to make conversation

with Soph. My eyes went off Kyle and onto Soph. She had been giving him one word answers all night.

Seriously, could Kyle not get the hint she wasn't interested?

My eyes hovered on Soph. She had always been the centre of conversation and she loved to talk. I swear she used to never shut up. When she wasn't talking, she was laughing. And now... Now she couldn't give my brother more than a one word answer. Even when Mom and Dad asked her how she was, she just said "fine." Didn't even do the polite thing, like the old Soph would have, and ask how they were.

I had the feeling she was sinking into depression. She looked withdrawn. Actually, when I thought about it more, Soph wasn't her old self. It was like Kyle had broken her. I shot a glare at my brother. Only he could take a fucking perfect human being and ruin them.

Which was exactly what he had done.

I found myself wanting her to treat me differently. So I wondered if I spoke to her right now, would she block me out too.

I cleared my throat and sat up, my eyes on her. "So, Soph, how's school?"

Her head snapped up, her eyes were wide as she looked at me, as if she'd misheard me.

"Um. It's good, Josh." She kept looking at me. "How are you?"

I smiled. She asked a question. I had got her to ask a question

and it was directed at me.

“Good, Soph. Haven’t seen you about lately.”

Her phone buzzed on the table next to her plate. I did a double take when I saw that number and name on her screen. Bax. And I knew that number. I knew it so well cause I would glare at it for a few minutes every time I was forced to call him.

How the hell had she met him? Suddenly, her lack of conversation wasn’t such a serious issue. The more serious issue was who she was spending her time with. Bax was bad fucking news. Surely she wasn’t that stupid or blind she ignored that?

I was faced with a decision: let Soph into my world, tell her the truth about me, and tell her what Bax was like—and then protect her from him, or let her go into situation blind with a man who was deadly dangerous and never respected women.

I reached for my beer and kept my eyes on her as my mind jumbled around the facts. Admitting to her that I was the Vice President of the Devil’s Cut, a dangerous outlaw motorcycle group—well, I think whatever she thought of me would disappear immediately.

Seeing her disappointed in the way I lived my life bothered me. It got under my skin. Why did I care so much what she thought? I never cared what people thought. I didn’t even care what Dad’s opinion was of me. And he was my father.

I wondered why I was suddenly nervous about telling her who I really was and what I stood for. It sent wave after wave of nerves through me. Still, what could I do? Keep my secret just that, or

risk it and let the only girl whose opinion I cared about know the type of guy I really was...