



N.L. Gervasio

Nemesis

a Kick-Ass Girls Club novel

Book 1

JUST INK PRESS  
NOVEL

N.L. Gervasio

  
**Nemesis**

a Kick-Ass Girls Club novel

Just Ink Press, LLC



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### **Nemesis**

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## *Dedication*

To my mother Marilyn, for her undying support in everything I do, regardless of how insane it sounds, which includes zombies. I love you, Umi.

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## *Nemesis Playlist*

Each chapter title is the title of a song with the link to each corresponding song on [Grooveshark](#).

1. [The Creeps](#) - Social Distortion
2. [Little by Little](#) - Robert Plant
3. [Wake Me in the Morning](#) - The Bollox
4. [Nemesis](#) - Shriekback
5. [No Man's Woman](#) - Sinéad O'Connor
6. [Devil's Dance Floor](#) - Flogging Molly
7. [Next Contestant](#) - Nickelback
8. [Lick](#) - Joi
9. [I Will Possess Your Heart](#) - Death Cab for Cutie
10. [Another Hole in the Head](#) - Nickelback
11. [3 Libras](#) - A Perfect Circle
12. [How You Remind Me](#) - Nickelback
13. [Something I Can Never Have](#) - Nine Inch Nails
14. [Not in Rivers, But in Drops](#) - ISIS
15. [Baby Did a Bad Bad Thing](#) - Chris Isaak
16. [Let It Die](#) - Foo Fighters
17. [King of Fools](#) - Social Distortion
18. [Foxy, Foxy](#) - Rob Zombie
19. [Winter Solstice](#) - The Tea Party
20. [You Do Something to Me](#) - Sinéad O'Connor
21. [Head Like a Hole](#) - Nine Inch Nails
22. [We're in This Together](#) - Nine Inch Nails
23. [Feelin' Love](#) - Paula Cole
24. [You Know I'm No Good](#) - Amy Winehouse
25. [Tura' Lu](#) - The Bollox
26. [You Know What You Are?](#) - Nine Inch Nails
27. [Just a Girl](#) - No Doubt
28. [Weak and Powerless](#) - A Perfect Circle
29. [No, You Don't](#) - Nine Inch Nails
30. [Hour of Darkness](#) - Social Distortion
31. [Headstrong](#) - Trapt
32. [Feel Alive](#) - U.P.O.

# Nemesis





## *The Creeps*

Tall, dark, and damn scary walks into The Fox Den. I wish it were a joke. He steps right up to my bar and leans forward, resting his thick arms on the hard black laminate surface. I haven't wiped that down yet, so I hope it's sticky because he leers at me until I make my way down to him. There are plenty of nearly naked women around the central Phoenix gentleman's club, so just for the leer, I take my sweet time. This only makes him stare harder until I get there, his piercing eyes boring into me, which has my skin crawling. My natural stubbornness to demanding men takes a hit. Time to get him away from my bar as quickly as possible.

"What can I do for you?" I note the rugged lines of his face with a scar down the right side, the short dark crew cut riddled with grey, and the muscles that look like they're about to rip apart the seams of his short-sleeved shirt. Normally, these attributes wouldn't bother me – rougher-looking men have worked for my dear old dad. But there's something in his eyes that makes me want to take a step back, which of course, I don't.

"Is Clancy 'round?" His voice is damn near Barry White deep and scarier with the Irish brogue laced through it. Eyes check me out thoroughly, running up and down my arms as he takes in my tattoos, and of course, lingering on my chest for far too long.

"He left a bit ago," I reply as the hair on the back of my neck goes on alert. "Don't know when he'll be back, but I could get you a drink if you'd like to wait." With the way my body's reacting, I'm hoping he leaves because he's just plain creeping me out, and I don't scare easily. I guess that's one silver lining to having a mafia dad. Unfortunately, I have to play the customer service game and be nice, regardless of the alarms going off in my head. Damn it.

He shakes his head slowly and stands. "Nah, just tell 'im I came by." There's a date tattooed on the left side of his neck going back fifteen years and it sits just under the circle of a silhouetted Celtic cross, all in black ink. Not a professional tattoo, if you catch my drift. In other words, this boy has been to prison.

"And who should I say stopped by?"

"Ye don' need mah name, Bettie. Jus' tell 'im I'm lookin' for 'im."

I arch a brow. "That's not my name." Though I'm certain his calling me that has to do with my pageboy haircut and the fact that I look like something reminiscent of a Bettie Page poster.

He grins. "Like it matters, Lass." He taps the top of the bar twice, winks at me, and makes a gun gesture with his fingers. Then he turns around and leaves the club, running into a patron on the way without acknowledging what he'd done. Well, he's a real peach, isn't he?

A creepy feeling crawls across my flesh, and I shake it off and attend to my next customer at the other end of the bar while waiting for Clancy to return so I can inform him of his visitor. That takes about forever . . . or at least feels that way as I keep checking the clock.

About an hour ticks away before tall, dark, and downright lust-worthy walks into the club. That'd be my boss Clancy. He steps up to the bar, near the entrance to the club, and leans over, his long black hair falling forward in a rush of waves. As soon as I finish with a customer, I grab a bottle of water and place it directly in front of him.

"Thanks, Nemy-girl," he says with a wink as his long fingers wrap around the plastic. "Everything okay tonight?"

He's the only one who calls me Nemy-girl. I hate my real name – Anna. No one calls me that unless they feel like being punched. I nod, shift my weight from one foot to the other, and tap my fingernails on the bar.

"Something on your mind?" His vibrant emerald eyes flicker, and it's hell stopping my body from reacting to the way he always seems to look at me.

"Someone came in looking for you earlier," I say, narrowing my eyes on his. "Not a very nice-looking guy, and I'm not talking about how ugly he is."

He chuckles. "Did he leave a name?"

"No. Said I didn't need his name in a thick Irish accent and then called me Bettie."

Clancy's eyes widen for a split second before his brows knit together. "What else did he say?"

"Said to tell you he came by and he's looking for you, that's all." I shift my weight again. "Had a tattoo on the side of his neck." I fill him in on the finer details.

He nods slowly. "Okay, thanks." He looks down the bar. "You have a customer."

I look, and sure as shit, he's right. I hop a step and greet the newbie. I know I'm not imagining Clancy's unease at my telling him about scary, creepy guy, but it's not really my business, now is it? Yeah, tell that to the sick feeling settling in the pit of my stomach. I'll probably be on my guard for a few days because my gut is rarely wrong. Clancy doesn't normally tell me I have customers either, which means he ended our conversation deliberately without me realizing it. Sneaky bastard.

While I'm preoccupied, Clancy heads back to his office, and he's back there for a while, which isn't normal. I shrug it off and drop some ice into a glass. Clear liquid splashes over the ice as I pour the rum, then depress the cola button on my gun, and the two mix in a swirl. Of course, in this joint I don't mix much more than Jack or Bacardi with cola and flip the caps off bottles. Such a glamorous life.

Just an FYI, Clancy makes all men look bad on every level. Not quite perfect, but damn close. In my book, men like him shouldn't even exist. In fact, I frequently remind myself men like him don't exist outside of my imagination. I've had two serious relationships and a few short ones, and every man I've ever dated or befriended has turned into a jackass. I haven't dated Clancy – God help me if I do – but he's tipping my *all-men-are-jackasses* theory completely over the edge of the scale. To add insult to injury, he looks like the damn cover of a romance novel. I hate those covers.



"Nemy-girl," Clancy shouts from the end of the bar later in the night.

I turn to look at him, and he flashes a big toothy grin and shakes the ice around in his glass. I know he wants another drink, but the man owns the damn place, so why he can't get up and walk behind the bar to get his own damn cola is beyond me. It's not like he drinks alcohol at work.

I stroll down to him, pick up his glass while staring at him, hold the glass out, making a huge display of how easy this process is, and take *two* measly steps back to grab the gun. Fizzy goodness dispels into the glass, and when I'm done, I place it in front of him and start to head back to my *paying* customers. Okay, so he pays me too. I've worked for him for a year now. Yeah, a year of staring into those pretty green eyes is just fucking torture.

Clancy just chuckles and picks up the glass for a drink.

"You're right, Clancy, she does have a nice ass," says Scott, the club's manager, as he leans into Clancy to peer down behind the bar right as I turn to walk away.

I turn back and raise my right brow, my hands on my hips. "The two of you are just *now* noticing this?"

Clancy howls with laughter and slaps his hand on the bar as I turn to walk away again. Then, from the corner of my eye, I see him push Scott back to his seat as I help a customer.

"Mine," I see his lips form, and I almost don't catch it because I'm distracted. I might have heard it if the music wasn't so loud.

His? Are you kidding me? He's out of his damn mind. I'm half tempted to moon them both, but then that would defeat the purpose of working behind the bar where I

get to keep my clothes on. The look on Clancy's face tells me he must have seen my expression, knows my thoughts, and is disappointed I don't do it. My fingers slip into the ice bin as I walk by, and I quickly toss the piece over my shoulder. I hear a faint clink and a splash and Clancy laughs again, drowning out the crescendo of music that begins the next song.

"Damn," he says. "Was that just a one-time shot or what?"

I turn and lean against the bar, and then give him a nod upward, silently asking, "What of it?"

He smiles, and it weakens my knees. It's a good thing I'm leaning against the bar.

"Can you do it again? I bet you can't."

My lips curve into a devilish grin, and I push away from the bar with all the strength I can muster. "What's the bet?"

"If you miss, you strip for *me*," he says, that wicked grin of his stretching across his handsome face. This is always the first thing he offers in our bets. I never take it, but it's not like the man is serious. It's just a game we've played since the day I started working for him.

"I told you I only strip in the bedroom, Clancy," I say, just like I do every time he suggests me taking off my clothes. "Not gonna happen."

He shrugs. "Someday you're gonna say yes."

"Bet'cha I won't." His eyes have gone pure, delicious evil at this point, and damn it if that isn't a weakness for me because my legs are about to go Jell-O. "Well?" I say, trying to banish the visual of that man with his hands all over me.

He concedes and bows his head. "Okay, if you can hit my glass again, I'll give you a raise."

I let out a short laugh because by now I'm making twelve bucks an hour due to these lovely little bets of his. Most bartenders make much less. "How much?"

Those fine brows go up. "Another dollar?"

"And if I miss?"

He scans the bar, and then checks out the rest of the club. His eyes return to me and have taken on the evil glint once more. Oh, God help me. "Take charge of the girls."

"Fuck you, no bet," I say and toss another piece of ice at him, a small one, which hits him right in the center of his forehead.

He jumps from his seat. "Damn it, you could've hit me in the eye!"

I cross my arms over my chest and lean against the bar once more. "I hit right where I aimed."

Clancy stands at the opening that lets me back here, like he's gonna come after me, and the glare slides off his face in seconds, replaced by that sinister grin of his. I glance

at the top of the bar to gauge the damage I may cause if I hop up and slide over. It's Wednesday night and we're actually busy. I might damage a few customers in the process. My gaze flicks back to Clancy, and he gets this little sparkle in his eye . . . and sits down. I stare at him for a while, which I'm sure is the exact effect he wanted to have, and finally, I go back to my duties. This is far from over, I can tell.

Jesus, why does he have to be my boss? He'd at least be a nice little one-nighter, maybe all-nighter. Just the mere thought of an all-nighter with him makes me giggle, and then I tell myself to shut the hell up and get back to work.

Working in a gentleman's club is a trip and a half. Oh, laugh all you want; a girl doesn't have to take off her clothes to make bank. I'm pretty sure Clancy makes bank too, but that kind of stuff doesn't matter to me. Not when it comes to men. I'm not a gold digger like some women I've met, grew up with, would like to seriously beat into oblivion for making the rest of us look bad. I look for more important things in a man; things like how he's going to treat me. Of course, my track record isn't the best. The neurotic strippers I work with crack me up, though, thinking they can find Prince Charming working at a place like this. I await the day Prince Charming walks up to me because I'm going to punch that fucker dead in the face. I figure if he sticks around after that, he's a keeper. I can't stand the idea of such a fairy tale fantasy that little girls are raised to believe. If he seems too good to be true, he's getting punched.

Of course, I've had two supposed Prince Charmings already, neither of which I hit. And no, I haven't punched Clancy . . . yet.

Cherry (her real name is Christine) comes over and sits at the bar in front of me during a break. I smile at her and place a glass of good wine in front of her. She's actually a bit too refined for this gig, but I guess shit happens, and you do what you can to make ends meet. Christine is probably the only one I can deal with because she's intelligent. Well, much more intelligent than some of the other girls. It probably has to do with her background. They say beauty is only skin deep, and I say that stupid goes all the way to the bone. You can fix ugly with a ton of plastic surgery. Downright stupid can't be fixed with even the best education. Some people are just born that way. However, nothing will fix ugly on the inside without the removal of the blackened heart. I try my damndest not to be ugly in that arena.

"So, Clancy digs you, huh?" Cherry says in a soft tone, those full lips spreading into a wide grin. Did I say she was intelligent?

I *hmpf* at her and say, "Don't be ridiculous."

"Oh no, I saw the way he looked at you earlier, Nemy," she says and lifts the glass to her lips. She stops just short of reaching them and winks. "That man wants you bad."

"Right," I say and wipe the counter down in front of her. Although, I'll admit his playing has been turned up a notch or two this evening. It's gone a bit beyond the norm.

"Too bad you're such a bitch," she remarks, her light brown eyes sparkling.

"Well, if the men in my life didn't always offer lame-ass excuses for everything under the sun, I wouldn't have to be."

She giggles. "They pretend to still be involved while they try to find a way out, right?"

"Exactly," I say and slap my hand on the bar. She's heard this rant many times, and once I get going, it's hard to stop me. I think it amuses her, seeing me get all worked up. "They tell you that *you* need counseling. Ha! I know just how broken I am, thank you, and I'm fine with it."

"I'm sure you are," she says. "I don't think you're broken, honey."

I glance up and grin. "Then you're more broken than I am."

She laughs aloud and sips her merlot. "Well, I am a stripper, aren't I?"

I nod with a smile. "Hell, we're all broken. It doesn't matter what we do for a living. Seriously though, the last two men? One treated me like his own personal mental punching bag, and the other tossed me to the curb like a cigarette with a nice little flick of 'fuck you' thrown in before I hit. Four years with one, five with the other. That's just a hair less than a third of my lifetime, you know?"

Cherry lowers her glass to the counter in quiet contemplation before answering. "Yes, but you still have time left to find the right one, you damn dramatic Italian princess."

"Not much," I reply, ignoring the princess remark because it's true. With the last one – Jeremy, but I tend to call him *Asshole* – my instinct tried to warn me, but we women never listen to our gut when we're in love. Not fly-by-night love or new-relationship love. Four years of *unconditional* love with an engagement ring on my damn finger. So much for unconditional.

"Right, because you're such an old hag now," Cherry responds.

"Shut up and drink your wine," I say as I lift a bottle to wipe it down. It's sticky as hell too. I'm so kicking Chris's ass next time we work together. I clean as I work. He just doesn't clean.

Cherry giggles, finishes her wine, and then hops up to get back to work.



Clancy decides to close the club early because there are only a couple patrons in the bar now and a few girls left working tonight. Fine by me, I have homework to do tonight – it's a big project too.

Of course, my lack of hurrying gives Clancy the idea that I'm available to stay after my shift, as indicated by his fingers slipping around my arm when no one's looking. A wave of heat rushes over my body and if I were the fainting type, I'd be hitting the floor.

Instead, I jump.

"Sorry," he says and lets my arm go. "Can you help me with something?"

I raise my right brow. "Can it wait until tomorrow night? I really need to get this project done tonight."

"What project?" he asks and slides back onto his barstool, crossing his arms on top of the bar and smiling at me.

"I'm editing a short film."

"Oh, that's right, I forgot," he says. "So soon? I thought you didn't have to do that for another week or so."

I snort. "It's been a week or so, boss-man."

"Hmm, you're not keeping me on my toes, Nemy-girl." His eye twinkles.

I quickly find something to distract myself from the images going through my head, all involving him and me and the top of this bar –

I grab my coat from underneath the bar and pull it on. "Is that my job? I had no idea. I'm going to need a raise then."

He laughs and stands to walk me out. The club doesn't sit in the best of neighborhoods and it's his rule that one of the guys walks all the girls out, day or night.

"We'll have to work that out later," he replies as we head for the front door. He opens it and I step outside.

A chilled gust of wind smacks me in the face. "Why do I have the feeling this involves a bet?" I pull my coat closed against the cold.

"You do know me well."

The parking lot is dark as usual, save for the one floodlight on the corner of the building. I hit the button on my car remote to shed some more light with the automatic headlights. "Obviously not well enough if I have no idea who that guy was tonight."

His right eye twitches, and then a calm demeanor shadows his face. "No one in particular. I doubt you'll see him again."

That last sentence didn't sound like the end of the conversation, as though he wanted to add something to it, but I leave it alone. It's not my business, right? Clancy's not mine. Why should I care? He just signs my paycheck, and I can get a job anywhere, if needed.

Yeah, I'll keep telling myself that, but I know better. Who'd want to give up staring at his beautiful mug every night? Not. Me.

"I'll give you a call tomorrow afternoon," he says and pauses before heading for his vehicle. He leans forward like he's going to kiss me; I arch away, and he straightens. "Goodnight."

I say goodnight to him and climb into my car, watching him climb into his truck and thinking about that odd goodnight. I stare into the rearview mirror. "Were you actually trying to kiss me?"

It's hard to mistake a move like that. Perhaps we've stepped over the line with our flirting. I'll have to put a stop to it as soon as possible. I mean, I know I've fallen deeply in lust with the man, and maybe I'm bound to think some of my fantasies are real – like the way he looks at me with such longing it practically shouts happily ever after – but I can't have it actually *become* real. Reality and fairy tales don't co-exist. A guy like Clancy wouldn't want a girl like me for very long, and I'm so over men right now, regardless of what he does to me. He probably likes blondes anyway. Guys like him usually do.

I start my little sports car and leave the small parking lot with the strangest feeling that someone is watching us; it's not like I didn't grow up with that feeling, so I try to ignore it.

Sometimes, when your gut twists the right way, that feeling is damn hard to ignore. I'll be checking my nightstand drawer to make sure my Glock sits safely within its wooden confines before I fall asleep tonight.



## *Little by Little*

The distinct rumble of a Chevy engine brings my head up. From my table on the café patio, I can see the intersection and the familiar old beater of a truck coming around the corner. Crap, that's Clancy. He's supposed to call me before work later today for help with whatever that was. What in the hell is he doing in Tempe? I yank my hat brim down so he can't see my face as I continue getting my laptop ready to finish up last night's homework. Of course, my tattoos are quite noticeable from across the street, I'm sure, but I'm so not ready to speak with Clancy yet. I need caffeine first to get my faculties about me, although I don't know why I bother because the man scrambles my brain every time I look at him.

"Here ya go, Nemy," Adriana says, and I jump at the sound of her voice as she places the large cup of cappuccino on the table next to my laptop. It's nice and hot as the steam rises above the froth, regardless of the day's temperature – a balmy sixty-five degrees in the early November afternoon. It's just warm enough for a short-sleeve shirt while I sit in the sun.

"Thanks, sweetie." I dig out a few crinkled ones and hand them to her.

She shoves the money in her apron pocket and pulls something else out. "Tonka truck, I've got something for you," she says as she waves the biscuit back and forth in front of my wolf look-a-like. He's actually a pure white Alaskan malamute, but I suppose that's close enough to wolf.

I giggle at the name she calls him as Tonk jumps to his feet and sits pretty in front of her, holding out a paw for a shake.

"What do you say, Tonk?" I ask, and he howls a few vowels at her, which is akin to talking. They're quite a vocal bunch.

"That's just too cute," she says and hands him the treat. He takes it gently from her and commences with chomping it to smithereens. "I'll be back with your change." She then crouches down and places a small bowl of water next to Tonk before heading for the doors of the café.

"Keep it." I run my fingers across the mouse pad and connect to the free Wi-Fi the café offers. Before long, I'm surfing the web, but I'm kind of on autopilot because I'm looking for Clancy from under the brim of my hat, scanning the entire intersection and wondering just where he went while Adriana distracted me. I'm pretty sure I saw him

pull into the parking lot behind the bars that sit diagonally across the street from my favorite café.

It doesn't take long before I spot him walking up the sidewalk and heading into the piano bar on the corner. It's downstairs and a pretty cool place, but isn't it a bit early in the day for a drink? Well, it's morning for me because I'm a night owl. I shrug and go back to my email. Again, it's not like the man belongs to me or anything, so why should I care what he does?

I mindlessly scan the internet while daydreaming about Clancy and stumble upon a story that has me gasping because my dad's name is right there in big bold letters: **Michael Mussolini Up for Indictment**. That can't be right. Dad's been living a quiet life in California for some time now . . . last I knew. I skim the story to discover the Feds are pulling something from years ago out of their asses, and I roll my eyes. There's no way in hell they'll make that stick, even if it's within the statute of limitations. My attorney brother Joey is all over it, I'm sure. Maybe I should give dad a call. I ponder that prospect for about two seconds before deciding against it; dad and I haven't been on the best of terms since I divorced Garrett five or so years ago. Not to mention the fact that he thinks my not having children is some sort of protest. Whatever. I just can't get pregnant. It happened once and I miscarried early on in the pregnancy. To this day, Garrett thinks I lost the baby on purpose. Yeah, he's a real winner. Some Prince Charming he turned out to be. Putz.

Prince Charming number two—Jeremy—came along shortly thereafter. I don't even want to think about him. He wasn't much better than the putz.

An hour goes by as I sit and work on a few things—blog, poem, homework—and I look up to see Clancy emerging from the depths of the piano bar. There's someone with him I don't recognize—a gray-haired man nearly as tall as Clancy. Good Lord, where do they make these men? I'm a tall girl and tall men are hard to find. Not that men that size like tall women—some weird belief to do with the hook-up creating mutant children. Men are idiots.

However, Clancy isn't an idiot, not by a long shot. He has the brains that totally contradict his looks. Pretty boys, in my experience, aren't generally smart, and boy is he pretty. Our intellectual conversations are a major turn-on.

Crap, I think he saw me.

I duck my head down so the brim hides my face better. I think he saw me, but if he did, he'd come over and talk to me, since he's supposed to call me soon.

I sneak another peek. He's walking toward the back parking lot, a cell phone to his ear. I watch him until he disappears around the corner of the building, and then look at

my phone. Nothing. Yeah, he must not have seen me. Works for me; I'm not quite awake yet.

Before long, I get into a groove on my homework and don't even notice the time go by. Then I look up from my creation for a bit of people-watching. When Tonk and I hang out at the café, I write down anything I happen to observe while sitting there and surfing the web. Never know when something will spark an idea I can use.

Boy, do I observe a lot. Like the fanatical born-again Christians standing on the corner of Mill and Fifth Street passing out pamphlets about how we're all going to Hell. A great documentary in the making if I ever saw one.

A short stocky blonde of the male persuasion walks past my table, inclines his head slightly to view me, and heads inside the café. I'm used to it. Okay, his shortness may be about my height, but that's what I consider short. If I can't wear five-inch heels with a man without having to look down, I'm not interested. I get back to work. I know I'm too picky, but I figure if I only like guys who are six-five and up, there has to be a man out there who's interested in a woman half a foot shorter than him.

Besides, I kind of like being tossed around in bed. Short guys can't accomplish that with me.

I bet Clancy could.

Not that I'm interested in men right now. That last one was a doozy. It'll take me a while before I'm ready for the dating scene again. That doesn't stop men from flirting with me, although half the time I don't even realize they're hitting on me unless they're obvious, like "I wanna take you out on a date. What's your number?" Aside from that, I'm oblivious most of the time. It makes for quite an entertaining evening for my girlfriends. *Let's see how many men can hit on Nemy, and how long it takes her to notice it.* Thanks, bitches.

I scan the sidewalk and something catches my attention near the café door.

Oh goodie, there's Shorty again, and he's checking me out from his table two over from mine. I do my best to ignore him so he doesn't imagine any "signals" coming from me, but it's not working; he shifts in his seat and tries to get my attention by clearing his throat a few times.

And in go my ear buds.

My phone vibrates in my pocket and I nearly jump out of my seat. I pull an ear bud out to answer it so I don't slam the ear bud deeper into my ear by way of phone-ectomy. "What's up, chica?" I say, because my friend Teagan's picture popped up on the screen, red-haired vixen that she is.

"Girls' night out," she states in that demanding tone of hers that says *you'd better listen because I'm only saying this once.* "Mandatory. We'll pick you up at nine."

"Okay. I guess I can call Chris and see if he wants to make up for when I worked for him on Sunday."

"Yeah, do that."

"I'll call him now and hit you back with a text."

"Okay." She hangs up on me with no goodbye. Teags doesn't like long drawn-out anything, which makes her awesome because she's blunt as hell even when you don't want to hear it.

I scroll through my contacts and hit Chris up. It doesn't take long for him to agree, and I text Teags to let her know we're good. All she sends back is "coolio," which also means, "see ya then" and "bitch, you'd better be ready" in Teagan-speak.

Well, that settles it; I need to head home to feed Tonk and myself so I can get ready. It's getting a bit chilly anyway now that the sun has moved across the sky. Sorry Mr. Short, it's not gonna happen today . . . or ever.

As I load up my backpack, I notice a man across the street in the shadows, staring at me. I hop on my bike, *what-the-fuck-creepy* chills rippling down my spine. Then Tonk and I are off into the stony red yonder that is the street of Mill Avenue in old town Tempe, and *what-the-fuck-creepy* disappears into the fog of my mind.



"Go, Tonk, go," I shout at my not-so-mute malamute, who's in the lead and pulling my beach cruiser along at a nice clip. I've trained him well, but still need to work on it a bit. What I don't need is that guy that's just about to walk in front of – I swerve around him in a blur of black iron with pink and white flames, and get back on track. Whoa, that was close. I wave my hand over my head. "Sorry!" because Tonk knocked him clean off his feet--hence the extra training needed. I can't slam on the brakes because I'd probably break Tonk's neck.

I send a quick glance back at him; he's pulling himself up from the brick sidewalk. If he'd been paying attention like everyone else on the damn sidewalk, it wouldn't have happened. Okay, I probably shouldn't be riding on the sidewalk. Whatever.

It takes me about fifteen minutes to get home, and once I'm inside, my damn phone vibrates again. Great, *now* Clancy decides to call me.

"Yes, boss-man?" I try to un-wrap Tonk's leash from my legs before he knocks me over. He twists around me and I fall toward the wall, just barely catching myself before impact.

"Can you come in early so you can help me with that thing?"

I quirk a brow, you know, like he can see that through the phone. "I'm not working tonight. Got a mandatory meeting with my girls. I already set it up with Chris."

He growls. "Okay, fine, tomorrow night then. You *are* working tomorrow night, aren't you?"

"Are you getting snippy?" I finally get Tonk's leash off him and hang the damn thing up.

"Women get snippy. I don't." There's an edge to his tone I rarely ever hear. Oh my, he's upset.

"Okay, boss-man. Whatever you say." Poking the bear is something I'm well-known for and I'll never learn my lesson.

"Well, someone's had a good day."

"And it sounds like someone else hasn't. What's the matter, did the bar run out of Jameson?"

His hearty laugh resonates in my ears, and damn, do I love that laugh. It sends a warm tingly feeling through me, commonly called lust. "I'm a Maker's Mark man, Nemy-girl, and something didn't go the way I planned today, if you must know."

"Ew, Maker's Mark. Isn't drinking that like sacrilege for you? I mean, you *are* Irish and all."

"It's not about heritage, it's about taste, and I prefer that particular bourbon," he replies.

"Whiskey," I correct.

"Same thing," he says and I can just hear that smirk on those lips that I want to lick . . . okay, I need to stop or my shower will involve cold water.

"Well, I'm sorry you've had a bad day. Look on the bright side, you're" – oh, I almost went there with the tall and gorgeous comment – "a very successful man with a host of great employees." Whoa – cheesy!

A chuckle this time. "Quite true, and you're the best bartender I've ever had, so your cute little ass better be in my club tomorrow night."

"Aye, aye, Captain." I give a salute even though he can't see it.

"Have fun tonight." He knows exactly what I'm doing tonight. It's a common occurrence.

"Will do," I reply and hang up when he says goodbye. I linger and stare at the picture of him on my phone for a second before pocketing it. Yep, cold shower it is.

I feed Tonk and head to my bedroom. Halfway down the hall, it hits me.

*Wait, did he just tell me I have a cute ass?*

Holy. Crap.



### *Wake Me in the Morning*

"Nemy!" shouts Echo, bounding from her seat near the front of the limousine and wrapping her skinny-ass arms around my neck before I can even sit down.

On my knees and struggling for breath, I choke out, "You do realize breathing is necessary for living, right?" She giggles and lets me have some air. Once Echo's done molesting me as only Echo can do, I sit down next to the door. Teagan hands me a drink in a short glass.

"Here, you're gonna need this," she says, flipping her burgundy hair over one shoulder with a slender, scarred hand. Teagan enjoyed playing with fire when she was younger. The accidental disfigurement of her hand really hasn't deterred her from doing it since. She's just more careful now. She's not allowed to have matches or a lighter when she visits my house.

I sniff the contents and raise a brow to her. "What the hell for?" It's Johnnie Walker Black, no ice. Works for me; I could use a stiff drink. We won't discuss other things that may be stiff that I could use. But Jesus, I'm about to hear bad news.

The girls have rented the limo because it means we're getting annihilated. Another clue bad news is coming my way.

Teagan jerks her head to the right. "Jada caught James cheating."

My eyes flick from Teagan to Jada, and I say, "Get the fuck out!" I know there's more to the story here because it's not the first time the idiot man has ever done that, but I don't ask. Most likely, James hit her when she confronted him, but Jada will never admit it and the bruises aren't in plain sight.

Jada nods sheepishly, her long black curls barely springing with the motion. It kills me to see her like that. Her light blue eyes abruptly shift away from mine; yep, he hit her. These actions are a total opposite of the girl she used to be. She'd always been strong, could handle anything thrown at her. I want to beat James into oblivion for making her so damn weak. Physically, she reminds me of a porcelain doll, delicate and sweet because she's so tiny. I always feel like I'm going to break her when I give her a big hug.

"Fucking asshole," I mumble and throw the J. W. back. I ignore the burn when it hits my throat and look at Jada. "I'm sorry, sweetie." She nods again without making eye contact and takes her drink in one gulp. "Give her another." I'd ask her if she wants my

dad to take care of him, but my girlfriends don't know about my dad. I keep that part of my life as private as possible. Hell, I'm trying to be an honest woman here by not getting into the family business, even though I've shown one hell of an aptitude for it. I'm daddy's little girl, after all.

"Shit, chica, we've been drinking the whole way here," Alanna claims, a twinkle in her deep brown eyes. A black curl over her left eye flutters when she blows it away and bounces back onto the red bandana she's wearing Rosie the Riveter style. Her many tattoos are on display since we're going out tonight.

"Well, shit, if you all didn't live in East Mesa, I'd have a good damn buzz right now," I say and toss back the next one Teagan pours for me. They all laugh. "Where are we going anyway?"

"Dos Gringos in Snottsdale," Lillian answers. I meet her smoky hazel eyes that men just melt over and I sneer because I hate going to that particular bar. It's nothing but a meat market. Well, *any* bar in Scottsdale is a meat market. She sticks her tongue out at me, which makes me laugh, and her light brown hair falls around her shoulders and frames her face. Lillian has a timeless look about her, one seen in classic films starring the likes of Greta Garbo or Bette Davis, but it's mostly in her eyes.

"Sweet," I say. "We can get you all laid tonight . . . except you, Echo." She's the only one aside from Jada who's not single. Echo is also the only blonde in the group, and simply because she's blonde, and her name is Echo, she gets all the blonde jokes thrown at her. She even joins in and makes fun of herself. With that name, we're thinking her parents are hippies.

"Oh, and not you, Nems?" Echo asks with a sly little grin.

"Fuck no, I'm done with men," I say while turning the glass in my hand and looking at Teagan with a raised brow. She pours me another. "Thanks, barkeep." She nods and pours the rest of the bottle into Jada's glass. It was probably Teagan's idea to bring the bottle. I catch the look Echo's giving me and it's one I usually only see on men. "Not done with men like *that*, girl."

She laughs and tosses back a shot.

I take stock of who's in the limo and frown. "Where's Kennadi?"

"She couldn't make it tonight," Teagan answers. "Work wouldn't let her have off." Kennadi works at one of the other strip clubs in town. Not as a stripper, but a bartender like me. Teags is also a bartender at a local Tempe bar. No strip clubs for her. Teags would probably kill the girls, which is my concern when it comes to Kennadi because the girl loves a good fight and enjoys playing with knives. In fact, I'm quite amazed we haven't had to bail Kennadi out of jail for assault yet.

"Too bad, I feel a fight coming on tonight."

Lillian glares at me for about half a second before her face returns to normal. She hates the fighting bullshit, but I just can't help it if people like to pick fights with me.

Alanna gets a mischievous grin across her almost-too-handsome-to-be-pretty face. "How's your boss – what's his name – Clancy?"

I look her dead in the eye and smirk. "I wouldn't know. I haven't had him yet."

"Yet?" Teagan asks, her mouth twisting into a smile as the lilt in that one little word goes up.

"You know what I mean."

Teagan shakes her head. "Uh uh, you said *yet*."

I glare at her. "You know I can't be responsible for the things I say."

I know my plans for the night didn't please Clancy when he finally called me, but hey, he said he'd call in the afternoon and didn't until like six. Sorry buddy, a girl's friends come first because they stick around through all the bad shit. Men tend to run and hide, in my experience. Maybe not *all* men, but I keep finding the bad apples. If you ask me, I think Adam bit into that apple first, and then blamed it on Eve.

Echo laughs. "Yeah, and you guys make fun of the blonde," she says, pointing at herself like we don't know the color of her hair. "Nemy should be the blonde."

All I can do is raise a brow and roll my eyes. Teagan, Lillian, and Alanna bust up laughing, but Jada just lets out a little chuckle while hiding herself in her hair. I'm going to kill that bastard. I don't like seeing my porcelain doll broken. She used to have this perfect nose, but I'm damn certain James broke it early on in their relationship. Jada told us that she tripped and fell. *Riiiiight*, because *that* excuse has never been used before.

We reach downtown Scottsdale – aka Snottsdale or Snobsdale – and we pile out of the limo when the driver opens the door. Heads turn – and not just men's and not just in admiration. We may look like pin-up girls a la Page (with flaws, of course, although I think Teagan's scars have a beauty all their own and Alanna's Mexican-Irish ghetto booty is pretty sexy), but it's rare to see a bunch of girls covered in tattoos.

We grab the first table we see, and I take orders and catch a server's attention. Not an easy task in a busy place like this. Three guys walk up not long after we get there and begin conversation with the worst line I've ever heard. I can't believe they still use it.

"So, you gals come here often?" one asks.

Really? I glance at my girls, smirk, and turn back to the three morons.

"Nah," I say. "We're just popping in on the way to our film shoot." I just can't help myself.

"What are ya filming?" guy in the middle asks, a little gleam in his eye that tells me exactly what he's hoping to hear.

"Hot lesbian porn," I say with a straight face. Honestly, what is it with guys and lesbians? Actually, little miss blonde Echo is a lesbian. Her partner, Katy, also couldn't make it tonight due to work, which sucks because she's a riot. Katy is totally my wing-girl, which tends to shock the shit out of the guy she's winging for me at the end of the night. Hey, a girl has needs. I just don't want to deal with the bullshit of a relationship, although it's been a long damn while now.

"Really?" another asks.

Oh, for fuck's sake, these guys are too stupid to talk to me. "No, I'm just kidding." Their faces go blank. Give it a minute.

The first one who spoke laughs and hits his thigh, and he points a finger at me. "That was pretty good. You had me going there."

"That was the intent." For him to be going, that is.

His eyes scan my arms and shoulders. "Nice tats. That shit hurt?"

"Oh no, they're all drawn on."

He looks at me a minute, and then laughs again. "You almost got me."

"So I did."

Teagan leans over to whisper in my ear. "Would you stop fucking with them? They're cute."

I turn my head to the side and lean over to her. "He's too stupid to be cute." I pause a moment, and then lean back to her. "He's probably too stupid to be good in the sack too."

"Thanks for ruining it for me," she states with a little sneer.

I grin. "Well, let's ask him."

Her eyes go wide. "Don't you dare!"

I reach out and smack his arm because he's talking to his friend. "Hey buddy, you any good in bed?"

Teagan turns in a huff. "Oh my gawd!"

He smiles big and kicks his chin up once at me. "Why, you want some of this?"

It's hell keeping myself from snorting. "Oh no, not me, I'm in a man-hating phase right now," I say and he laughs. "Just curious if you know how to please a woman." My right brow goes up and I smile.

He steps forward and his eyebrows jump. "I could get you out of your man-hating phase."

"Oh, really?" His buddies are staring at me now, checking me out. "That's funny, because you don't know why I hate men." I lean forward, closing the gap between us. "It has nothing to do with sex."

He gets real close, and I can smell the beer he's drinking on his breath. "Bullshit. If your man took care of you, you wouldn't hate men."

Why do all men think this? "There's more to life than sex."

"True, but great fucking sex can cure a lot of shit," he replies with a smile.

"Not really."

He eyes me a moment, and says, "If I had a chick like you, you'd be a very happy girl."

*Doubtful.* I smirk. "Maybe I'm psychotic."

He shrugs. "We all got issues."

Fuck me, he might not be so stupid after all. He's playing my game. I lean back to Teagan and mouth, "Go for it." She rolls her eyes and gives me a quick shake of the head. Yep, the dumbass is now interested in me. My mouth gets me in so much trouble.

He takes a step back and raises his right hand for a shake. "I'm Killian."

"Nemy."

His brow arches. "That's a different name. What's it mean?"

"It's short for Nemesis. I got the name because I was born on Friday the thirteenth and because I'm a fighter." What I don't tell him is that I'm certain there was a full moon that night too, which would explain the need to shed my human skin and go full megabitch on people at times.

"Whoa, does that mean bad luck follows you everywhere?" he asks with a smirk.

"Only with men," I reply, and he laughs again.

Upon the server's return, I pass out shots – Red-headed Sluts – to the girls, and we toast and down them. Then I grab my beer.

"So, what do you do, Nemy?" Killian asks and raises his beer to his mouth.

"I'm a bartender at The Fox Den."

His brow goes up and he almost spits out his beer. I get that reaction a lot if the guy knows the strip clubs around town.

"Really? Wow. So you're . . ." He takes a swig of his beer quickly, stopping for whatever reason, and then continues. "That's cool. When do you work? Maybe we'll stop by sometime."

I flash a smile at him. "I'm working tomorrow and Saturday night."

He nods. "Sweet."

Then it dawns on me that he's Shorty from the café. Crap. Did the guy follow me home and here? That'd be creepy as hell. I calm down by telling myself it's just a coincidence, but now I've just invited the man to visit me at my place of employment. Brilliant.

Whenever I'm out on the town, it's about getting more customers. Clancy loves that I bring in so many men. Well, his wallet loves it. I'm not so sure about *him* loving it. He always gets this funny look when guys I've met walk in and crowd around the bar. It doesn't take me long to get the girls to distract them, though, and they have a good time. The most important factor is that they come back, and they always do. I'm not certain I want Killian coming at all, though. I need to be more careful with my invites.

As the night moves on, I notice Killian is entirely too interested in me when he's not texting someone. Inside my mind, I have a full visual going of him fucking me, and it just isn't up to par. Sadly disappointing, but I've learned from experience my visuals are spot on. When I ignore them, I do not enjoy myself in the least. I'm not even going to mention the visual I get of Clancy. Damn thing nearly throws me into an automatic orgasm every time.

Killian puts his phone away and his hand pulls my right shoulder forward to turn me around. "Let's see that back piece."

I'm wearing a backless shirt tonight. It's a rare occasion. "Sure," I say, turn and bend over a bit. My head cranes back and I smile. "It's called Fuck-me Art."

His brow lifts as he carefully asks, "Why is it called that?" He's not certain he heard me correctly.

I bend over more. "Because it looks best when you're fucking me." I hop up and turn around, and Killian has the biggest grin on his face I've seen so far. "Don't get any ideas; you're not fucking me tonight." Gotta stop that mule in his tracks before he gets too excited. Of course, my bending over and talking about fucking me doesn't help any situation, I know. Those shots of Walker are getting to me, and so are the several other miscellaneous shots we've had. I can't be taken anywhere, it seems.

"We'll see about that," he returns with a sly grin.

I roll my eyes for the umpteenth time this evening as he removes his phone from his jeans pocket once more. Seriously? I've never seen a man text so much.

"No, really, I'm not looking for *anything*," I say.

He shrugs and glances up from his phone. "Just makes you more of a challenge."

"Ah yes, and men love challenges, don't they?"

Killian nods. "Don't we ever!"

I eye him a moment, and finally say, "You're still not fucking me."

He laughs. "Let me buy you another drink."

"No thanks," I say. "I don't let strange men buy me drinks."

"Yeah, I understand," he says. "My sister was roofied once. I should know better than to suggest that. Sorry."

"It's cool, but thanks for the offer." Killian isn't hard on the eyes by any means. He stands about the same height as me, which is still too short in my book, and has striking blue eyes that are so vibrant one could see them across a room.

Sex? Home? Sex? Home? Sex at home? Hmm, I need to get myself out of this situation . . . fast. I think the hard-alcohol goggles are kicking in. I don't recall him being so attractive when he and his friends first walked up, and my brain is making a desperate attempt to remind me of this afternoon.

I lean over to my most sober friend – not Jada because she's damn close to annihilation – and ask Lillian, "Is he even cute?"

She moves her head back and forth in two rapid motions, which means it's imperative I understand this.

"Fugly?" I ask. She gives a shake of the head again and I look around the bar while trying to find a distraction that won't have me going home with this Irish boy. He just had to be Irish. That's my one weakness. As my eyes scan the crowd, they stop and track right back to a tall guy with short dark hair and a tattoo on the side of his neck. The real fucking thing with accent and all. Jesus. I gasp and turn around to face Lillian with wide eyes.

"What's wrong?"

"Four o'clock," I say, and she looks the opposite direction. "*My* four o'clock, you nitwit. Tall, dark and scary."

She looks again and shakes her head. "I don't see anyone fitting that description."

I turn my head slowly, only to discover he's gone, and I spin around looking for him. He's nowhere in sight. Crap.

Teagan walks up and her forehead creases. "What's got you spooked?"

"Remember that scary, creepy guy I told you about that came into the club last night?" I say, and Teags nods. "I think I just saw him."

"Ooh, creepy," she says, and then shrugs. "Maybe he's just out for a drink."

"At the same club as me?"

"Could be."

I blow out a breath. "I don't believe in coincidences."

"Do you know him outside of last night?" Teagan asks, and I shake my head. "Then what reason does he have to follow you around? Chill, Nems. You're gonna give yourself a heart attack."

"I don't know, Teags." I grab the shot the server just left on the table and throw it back, then exhale slowly to calm my nerves. "Maybe you're right. It might just be my imagination." My alcohol-fogged brain attempts to piece together some sort of

explanation, adding Killian's appearance to the mix, but all I end up with is a jumbled confusing mess.

Once again, the feeling that someone is watching me washes over me, and I know it's not coming from the Irish boy I've been talking to all night. I scan the thick crowd carefully, but can't find him again. If that fucking creepy leprechaun is here for me, it'll ruin my whole night.

And I get a little pissy when my nights are ruined.



## *Nemesis*

"What's going on?" Killian asks as he steps up to us. "You okay?"

I shake my head.

He touches my arm, and I flinch, so he pulls away. "Come on, let's go up to the bar. I'll buy you a shot, no roofies. Looks like you need it."

This makes me smile; I'm not about to turn down a free shot this time. "That's about the fucking truth of it." I look into his vibrant blue ocean eyes. They remind me of Echo's and even offer the same expression of compassion. I turn to the girls. "Meet you on the dance floor."

Killian nods toward the bar, and I follow him. As we're walking along, he leans toward me. "Does this have anything to do with your man-hating phase?"

"Yeah, you all suck." Which makes him laugh.

"Some more than others. I can't apologize on behalf of all men, though. They'd skin me alive or castrate me."

I chuckle and turn to the bartender. "Two shots of Jäger." The bartender nods and obliges us with said shots. Killian tells him to put it on his tab, we pick them up, and he stops me for a toast.

"To men who only suck when you tell them to," he says with a big grin.

I laugh. "And the rest can fall off a cliff," I reply and throw the shot back. I slam the shot glass on the bar and eye him. "You're still not fucking me, Killian."

He shrugs and sets his glass down. "It's cool. I don't think I could handle you anyway."

My brow goes up. "Wow, not a lot of men would admit that." I turn, placing my back against the bar so I can see the crowd. "I'm too old for you anyway."

"Bullshit. You're what, twenty-six, maybe twenty-seven?"

I wave a hand. "Now, now, flattery will get you nowhere, dear."

"Shut up. Seriously, how old are you?"

I jerk my thumb up twice.

"Twenty-nine?"

I repeat the thumb-jerk.

"Thirty?"

Again, repetition of said thumb-jerk.

His eyes keep growing wider. "Thirty-one?"

"Oh, for fuck's sake. Thirty-four."

"Shut the fuck up! You are not."

I slide my ID out of my back pocket, place my fingers over the address and my full name, and show him my birth date. "See?"

"Holy shit, you really are thirty-four. Wow!"

"Let's not create a whole fanfare about it or anything."

He stares at me a moment. "Well, you don't look it."

"Thanks," I reply and slip the ID back in my pocket. "Okay, I have to check on my girls." I pat him on the shoulder. "Thanks for the shot" and I leave him at the bar.

I find the girls dancing and having a grand old time. Well, I'm not sure one would call what they're doing dancing. They're stumbling at this point. Jada's the worst of them. She keeps running into Alanna, who doesn't like being bumped while she's dancing. My only guess as to why Alanna hasn't thumped her on the head is because of the whole James situation, otherwise, Jada would probably be on the floor crying because Alanna is a fighter. Actually, as drunk as Jada is, I'm quite surprised she's not a heaping sobbing mess by now.

Echo grabs my arm and pulls me into the little group, and I dance until I feel the warmth of my buzz return. The girls want to do more shots, so I find our server and order some Jäger, but only five shots because Jada just doesn't need any more to drink tonight. We drop the shots back, Alanna howls like the crazy woman she is, and four of them head back out to the dance floor. Echo stays behind and slides up next to me.

"So, what's got you all weird?" My apprehension must still be showing.

I bite my inner cheek. "I thought I saw someone I really didn't care to see. Creeped me out a bit and I can't shake it, no matter how many shots I do, unless I feel like blacking out tonight."

"Was it Jeremy? Let me guess, a fucking booty call, right?" she says, sarcasm laced through her tone.

"No, not him," I reply. "Some guy who came into the club last night. Something about him just sets me on edge."

"What's he look like?" She looks around.

"Never mind," I say and run a hand through my hair. "Let's just forget about it."

"You're frustrated, girl." I know exactly where she's going next. "Hey, you could always take home that guy you were fucking with to get the frustrations out."

Yep, that was the place. I turn to find Killian looking at me. He nods and I turn back to Echo. "Um, no."

Her grin spreads. "Katy will be up when I get home," she says and her eyebrows jump. She's damn cute when she does that.

"You're so not funny," I reply and blow out a breath because the Jäger is hitting me hard and I'm still hot from dancing.

"Yeah, you still like the sausage," she quips and throws a wink at me.

I lock my eyes on her. "Shut up, lesbo."

She laughs. "Oh, come on, Nemy, I know you fantasize about me." Yes, Echo loves to tease every one of us, but she's never serious.

I grin at her, but my response is cut short by the display of aggression before me. Alanna is in the midst of a heated discussion with a couple of girlie-girls. Alanna hates girlie-girls. Time for me to step in before disaster strikes.

"Told you I felt a fight coming on tonight." I move quickly and step up next to Alanna. "What's going on, chica?"

She sneers and points at the two girls. "These stupid blondies keep running into me."

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know you owned the dance floor," blonde number one says and takes a step forward, puffing out her fake chest.

I stifle a laugh because she's obviously true to her hair color if she thinks she can take on Alanna, who doesn't look one bit girlie-girl feminine. "I suggest you walk away now, before you get your ass – and those implants – handed to you."

"Fuck you," a very brave blonde number two says and pushes me. It must be the alcohol. That shit forms a set of brass balls on any man or woman.

Without a second thought, my fist flies through the air and clocks her in the jaw. She stumbles back and hits the floor as her friend screams. That was so not supposed to happen. I need to have a talk with my appendages.

"Oh shit." Alanna laughs and grabs my arm, pulling me quickly through the crowd. She knocks over blonde number one in the process.

I glance back as she drags me along, and catch a glimpse of creepy leprechaun guy, who nods at me, a smile stretching the boundaries of his face. "Fuck."

We catch up with the other girls near the front of the bar, as per our usual instructions if one of us ever gets in a bar fight. Teagan's waving her hands in front of her face to cool down. Jada nearly falls over trying to stand straight. We all laugh as we help her.

"Well, I think the party's over," I say. "Jada is officially drunk as a fucking skunk."

"You're not too far off," Teagan suggests. "We need to leave anyway after that shit."

I look up at her, throwing Jada's arm over my shoulder. "Yeah, but I can still talk straight. She's just mumbling." I look down at my little porcelain doll. "What the fuck is she saying anyway?"

"Who knows? Let's go." Teagan pulls her phone out to call the limo. That makes me happy because it means she will be the last one dropped off and will be able to help Jada into her apartment.

"Did someone pay the tab?"

"I took care of it," Echo states when she steps up next to Jada. "After that last shot when you went over to Alanna."

"Lemme know how much I owe ya." Killian calls my name and I turn, which Jada doesn't like one bit and slurs a protest. I hand her off to Echo as the limo pulls up; I don't want her puking on me.

"So, you're working Saturday night, right?" Killian asks as he walks up.

"Yep," I reply with a smile. "Come by and I'll buy you a drink."

He studies me a moment before saying, "Are you fucking with me again?"

I laugh at him. "No, I promise, I'm not. But you're still not fucking me."

He laughs and nods. "Have a good night, Nemy."

"Night, Killian," I say and climb into the limo, giving him a nice view of my Fuck-me Art one last time. As the limo drives away, I see him pull his phone from his pocket once more, only this time, he makes a call.

I lean back into the seat and rest my head against the window. My hand hurts from punching that stupid girl, but whatever. It'll heal in time and it's not my main concern right now. I'm more concerned about that guy. Clancy was wrong about assuming I'd never see him again, and that doesn't bode well with me.

My defenses just kicked up several notches, and tonight my gun is going under the pillow where I can reach it faster, although since I've been drinking, that's probably not a good idea.

Yep, going to leave that alone until tomorrow.