

CHAPTER ONE – ONE TOKE OVER THE LINE

Lux Jones jammed her hands in the pockets of her Blazer’s vest and tried ignoring the jerks on the corner—the ones leaning against the wall, smoking their brains out and wise-cracking at anyone who passed by. When one of them, a bastard with three nose piercings and a tattoo of a dagger across his face, decided to comment on her “*pancake ass*”, she decided to plant *his* ass into the ground and give his skull a few kicks for good measure.

She warned the others to scam, and they did. They’d all incurred her wrath before and weren’t eager to incur it again. *Cowards*, she thought. Whenever push came to shove, they fled. They’d abandon their own mothers if it meant living their meaningless lives for just a few more measly minutes.

“Sam,” she mumbled, pulling a blunt out her vest pocket. “You know what I’m off to do, right?”

“Yes...ma’am...”

She lit the blunt and puffed smoke into his face, and before he could say another word, she pointed her finger to the sky, spinning it in a circle. The smoke mimicked her for a moment, swirling around his head like a cloud. “I should **feed you to the wolves** for interrupting me,” she said. “But I’ll give you a pass because we’ve got a bigger threat on our hands.”

“They’re...here?”

“Not yet, but they will be soon,” she said. “Jess ain’t here, though, so I’m actin’

leader. You don't want don't want her knowin' you raised a ruckus on **today** of all days, do you?"

"No ma'am..."

Lux patted his head and helped him out of the crater she'd rocked him into. "Now go and hide. If things get ugly, you know the paths outta here better than anybody, and so you'd better help everyone you can. Got it?"

"Clear as day, right as rain, ma'am."

"Quit callin' me ma'am. Makes me feel old. I'm only twenty, you know."

Sam nodded, and then took off—unlike his friends, he'd stand his ground if he needed to because his pride was three times the size of his brain. Despite being a total ass, there was something to like about how *unabashed* he was about being an ass. Other Blazers gawked at her from behind busted walls and broken windows, so she got a move on. They were depending on her, and she'd dawdled too much already.

It could be the darkest of days or the brightest of days. Nobody knew yet.

She toked her blunt and kept her head down as she hurried through the trash-covered alleyways, worming around dingy apartments hugged too close together that still reeked of oil from their war with the **Greasers**—a dudes only gang that worshiped cars, leather jackets, and anything greasy like *gods*. The war had been swift, but brutal, with neither side "winning" in any meaningful way.

Jess "Snakebite" Maverick, their leader, had gone to settle things with *their* leader, **Spike**, a self-proclaimed "rad dude." She'd wanted to go with Jess, but as second in

command had been ordered to stay here and keep things under control. Without her around, everyone was tense. Lux was strong, but Jess? Well, Jess was the only reason they'd held onto this smidgen of a territory for as long as they had.

People friggin' *love* pot, and plenty of gangs were chomping at the bit to get their grubby hands on those fields because they practically *bled* money. But the Blazers weren't your typical gang—they weren't there to steal or kill. No, they were a family. Anyone without a home could become a Blazer, and that meant most of their money got spent on food, clothes, and other essentials. Panty's Landing might be a shit-stain, but they were its one bright spot.

At Duncan's bar she took a left, at Marla's gun shop she took a right. A few more rights and lefts brought her to **Tegan's Fortress**. Tegan was their head of security, and about as reclusive as you could be. Lux wasn't sure she'd *ever* seen the outside world honestly, and while she could be a bit strange, she was a damn good ally to have, and did a damn good job keeping them safe.

After two heavy knocks on the metal door it swung open with an eerie *screech* and she made her way into a den where wires crowded every inch of the floor, and since most of them choked up sparks if you stepped on them, you had to be careful else you'd get *zapped*. Lux had walked through this maze a hundred times, though, and so it was easy.

Tegan sat behind a wall crammed with computer monitors which were hooked up to cameras spread not just around Blazer's territory, but also Panty's Landing—everyone called her the "Eagle", for she was their watchful eye in the sky. If there was trouble, she'd

know about it before anyone else and they'd surprise their enemy by being prepared.

Combine her prowess for **seeing the future** with Jess' ability to **kick everyone's ass** and they were set.

Lux fell somewhere in between, smart enough to outwit a threat but also strong enough to pummel it into the ground. Both Tegan and Jess liked her, and since they despised each other, there were plenty of times where it felt like she was the only person keeping this gang from tearing apart at the seams.

"Where are they coming from?" Lux asked, putting her hand on the back of Tegan's chair and crouching toward the monitors.

"The south gate," she said. "By the pot fields."

"*Shit*. How many?"

"Three, maybe? I only caught a glimpse of them, but they're definitely headed here—there's nothing else out this way, nothing else they'd be interested in at least." Tegan spun her chair around to face Lux. As always, her eyes were sunken, her back was hunched, and her red hair was left in a messy mop. Whether she ever slept or not, nobody knew.

"How's Cy?"

"Can we *not* talk about Cy? There are bigger things going on."

"Bigger things than you hanging around a *Greaser*? War's not over with them yet, yet." Tegan absentmindedly sipped her coffee. "You two still just bumpin' uglies or you official yet?"

"We can't be official, and you know that." Lux took a hit off her blunt and blew the

smoke in her face. “Do you want me to **feed you to the wolves?**”

“You’d never do that,” she said. “You love me too much. Plus, I’ve got dirt on you. Ever make a move against me, and I’ll reveal your little *secret*.”

Lux knew she was joking.

Lux *hoped* she was joking.

But she wasn’t going to argue with her about *Cy* again because they’d already argued about *Cy* too many goddamn times. Tegan hated him, but if you can’t tell, Tegan sorta hated *everyone* except Lux. Being cooped up like this makes you a bit paranoid, she guessed, because she was real quick to judge.

One day she’ll meet him, though, and she’ll get it. Because Greaser or not, he’s friggin’ awesome, and he’s *barely* even a Greaser. His brother’s one, so he’s one. All he does is work one of their bars and keep his nose out of trouble. If there’s one thing he hates, it’s fighting, which makes him stick out like a sore thumb in this town. Ever sat on a roof and chatted with somebody for hours about nothing? Well, Lux hadn’t, but she imagined she *could* with him.

“All right, put out the word that everyone’s to remain *indoors*,” Lux said. She hated issuing commands, but she was the one in charge. She took another long puff off her blunt to ease her nerves—it sucked being the one who everyone depended on. “I’ll report to the south gate and see what the hell they want, meanwhile you get in touch with Maverick. If there was ever a time we needed her here, it’s now.”

With that, Lux made to leave, but Tegan stopped her.

“Holy shit,” she said. “Lux...”

She turned around. “What?”

“Look.”

Every monitor blurred into one as they all swapped to show the south gate, where a crowd of **stuffed animals** lurked, all clad in panties, all menacing. There was a sloth with a scar across his face, and a rat with a tail longer than its entire body. Behind them, sitting in a floating throne, was a bulbous whale with two dolphin “babes” on his lap. He wore a suit two sizes too small for him, and kept his hair slicked back with far too much gel.

The Panty Mafia had arrived, but that wasn’t why Tegan had called her over. No, that was because of the disturbing sight of two heads sitting atop the back of the whale’s throne, both recently severed in brutal fashion and still oozing blood. Both of them heads of people they knew all too well.

The head of **Spike**, leader of the Greasers.

And the head of **Jess “Snakebite” Maverick**, leader of the Blazers.

“Blazers!” the whale shouted. *“I am **Blowhole**, and I’d like to offer your newly appointed leader a deal they simply cannot refuse!”*

“A deal you cannot refuse!” the dolphins echoed.

CONTINUED IN CHAPTER 2