Heartbreaker

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Heartbreaker

by Persephoneinthereeds

Summary

Jax does the deal breaker and Tara has decisions to make.

This was my very first SoA fanfic. It’s still in progress. It took a minute to upload because of the length.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1: The Ties That Don’t Bind

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own any of these characters.

Heartbreaker

"I got to say it and it's hard for me. You got me crying like I thought I would never be. Love is believing, but you let me down. How can I love you when you ain't around."

First, he told her she wasn't family. After everything they went through, she's not family. She felt stupid, used, and foolish for believing that this was ever going to be more than playing house and super nanny. Even though she loves his little boy like he is her own, she knows that she has to move on with her life. After all, she now has a baby of her own to think about.

If there's one thing she won't be, it's a scapegoat. She knew the life was dangerous and she was all in with full disclosure because after 11 miserable years, she thought their love could overcome the lies, the cheating, the violence and his history.

Well, his life put her and Abel in the crosshairs; watching Kip get murdered while barely escaping with her own life was something she would never forget. She would never apologize for surviving. If she had fought, the Irishman would have killed her. She survived Kohn, and would be damned if an insane Irish terrorist ends up being the death of her.

Then the deal breaker happened. Gemma told her to, "be the constant." No, if there one thing she won't be, it's put through the wringer every time he feels the need to deal with their problems by falling in bed with the nearest available warm and willing body. On that note, she also gets a full panel STD test done just to rule out any high-traffic zone issues his wayward dick may have been exposed to.

She then heads to Jax's house to pack a bag and head back to her childhood home, remembering what her father told her before she left for college. "Don't apologize to him for getting an education. If you have to leave to do that, then go. If he can't understand that, it's his problem, not yours." She's tired of trying to hold onto him.

She is relieved that she didn't sell the house when she moved in with Jax. Her father told her never to sell it because it would be her home base. He didn't leave her much money; his alcoholism drank that up, but he was a good father.

After her mom died, he coped with Jack Daniels and Jameson. He drank but made sure she had a roof over her head, food to eat, and encouraged her to work hard and go to college. His intervention when she was running wild with Jax and getting arrested helped her leave Charming.

Jax shows up while she's packing her bag and has the audacity to tell her that he didn't want to hurt her and that she doesn't have to leave right away because he's packing ans leaving for Ireland with the MC to find Abel. "Really asshole? I just found you in bed with a walking STD. You're lucky I don't key your bike and bitch slap you into next week."

The prince isn't going to get his way this time and for this last time at her expense. No, she's beyond the scorned woman stage at this point. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and move on down the road.

Singing songs from **The Wiz** reminds her that she is long overdue for a night in the couch, a date with Ben and Jerry's, and watching her collection of musicals. **Gigi** seems oddly appropriate.

Chapter End Notes

“Heartbreaker” lyrics Writer(s): Robin Hugh Gibb, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb

“Ease On Down The Road”; Main Artist: Diana Ross, Michael Jackson; The Wiz: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack (1977); Songwriter: Charlie Smalls

“The Parisians”; Main Artist: Leslie Caron; Gigi (1958); Composer: Frederick Lowe; Lyrics: Alan Jay Lerner;

Chapter 2: Moving On Up

Chapter Summary

Gossip travels faster than the speed of heartbreak in Charming.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own any of these characters.

Heartbreaker

“And I get to the morning and you never call. Love should be everything or not at all. And it don’t matter whatever you do. I made a life out of loving you."

Gossip is already making the rounds about their breakup. Even though Jax told Ima to leave the minute Tara closed the door on them, the porn slut is crowing all over town about her night with the prince to anyone who will listen.

One of the Croweaters finally told Ima that she is not special, is not going to be the next princess, is persona non grata to everyone not in Ireland, and is not welcome at the clubhouse. It is also fun to hear that the local nail salon owner told her to find a new salon because they were tired of hearing about her play by play of their night together. Yes, Jax might be the best looking man in central California but listening to the minute details of his dick size gets old after the hundreth retelling.

There is plenty for Tara to do at her house. Remodeling for a nursery during her off time after work is in itself a full-time job. It's early enough in the pregnancy that she’s not showing; she isn't going to tell Jax about the baby until after he is safely back with Abel. The Oracle at Gemma guesses that she is pregnant but Tara makes it crystal clear that the baby is her choice.

She has made her choice and makes sure to hire a high-end contractor in Sacramento for the remodeling with no connections to the MC. She is also no longer on call as the mafia doctor for the club. She told them to go to the ER when a prospect calls saying they need to be stitched up after a run in with Darby's crew at the Hairy Dog.

She hires a family law attorney in Sacramento, a friend from college, to establish exactly what Jax's rights are as a father. She is staying in Charming and will raise the baby there too. She will not keep this child away from Jax, but she will set boundaries, especially with Granny Dearest Gemma. She needs to make sure the boundaries are clear. The one she will always struggle with is loving Jax,

but she has to do this in the name of self-preservation, closure, dignity, and most importantly her child.

Like she told Jax, she didn't hate Charming, she hated who she was in Charming eleven years ago. She was a lovesick teenage girl ready to slap a ho if they looked at Jax a second too long. Now she is a doctor, a respected surgeon, and a grown woman who values herself and will soon be a mother.

Chapter End Notes

“Heartbreaker” lyrics Writer(s): Robin Hugh Gibb, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb

Chapter 3: Crying in the Rain

Chapter Summary

Picking yourself up means dusting off the good and bad memories.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own any of these characters.

Heartbreaker

"Only to find any dream that I follow is dying. I'm crying in the rain. I could be searching my world for a love everlasting. Feeling no pain. When will we meet again."

Tara wasn't sure what to expect when Jax returned from Ireland. She half-expected Gemma to be beating down the door and putting her into protective custody because bearing Jax Teller's baby is equivalent to carrying a royal bloodline in the Kingdom of Charming. She at least anticipated the Oracle at Gemma stopping by to see if her baby prediction skills are still sharp. So Tara is actually surprised when it's over a week after their return until someone even bothers to tell her that Abel is alive and safely at home.

It's not until Chief Unser stops by her house to answer a complaint about the noise from the remodeling crew that Tara gets any news on Abel. Apparently, the old hag two doors down clocked them working five minutes past the noise ordinance time. He's curious as to exactly what she's remodeling but she's careful and tells him it's just some basic repairs so the house stays up to code.

Tara knows Unser is tight with SAMCRO, especially Gemma, so any evidence of a baby is carefully stored away from the prying eyes she sees sweeping every nook and cranny in just the front room. He then casually drops that Abel is home safe and he's sorry he missed her at the party the night they returned.

Tara's poker face is on point and returns the sentiment before politely excusing Unser after the sound of the oven timer goes off for the lasagna she's making. After setting it out to cool, she goes to the bathroom where she vomits and cries.

Jax must really be done if he doesn't have the decency to let her know himself that the little boy she loved and cared for as her own is alive and safely at home. He has probably been too balls deep screwing more than a few Croweaters, Ima, and all the rest of the loose change in the couch, to pick up the phone or even send a basic text. She wonders if he still sees her face when he's with those women. She has to shake those thoughts from her head because that's a dark path that she can't go down. She will only end up doing some weak bitch shit like desperately calling him because she will never stop loving him.

She tells no one she is pregnant at work or otherwise. Supplying and decorating the nursery is done covertly and completely online thanks to Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman, and anything luxury she can think of. This will more than likely be her only child and since she has the means to support them more than comfortably, why not splurge?

It's exactly two weeks after Unser's visit that she runs into Gemma at the grocery store. She's in the dairy section stocking up on her Gogurt cravings when she hears the trademark staccato clicking of Gemma's stiletto heels roll up with a shopping cart behind her. Tara is still not showing but laughs with the thought that Gemma might be able to sniff out hCG hormones like a sort of human bloodhound.

At first, Gemma mentions nothing to Tara about Abel, but is uncharacteristically kind while not so subtly eyeballing her body for any telltale signs of pregnancy. Fortunately for her, the women in her family have a history of not showing until the very end of their pregnancies, so she's spared any histrionics Gemma will surely put on display when the news does hit the stands.

Gemma sees no evidence in Tara's cart and says nothing about the baby, only making polite conversation about Abel as if he was never kidnapped. She must think Tara miscarried or had an abortion, but has the tact not to bring it up in a public place. Tara thinks it's safe to assume that Gemma never told Jax; she is both relieved and saddened by this realization. She has been completely pushed out from even the basic civilities of having been apparently only a glorified nanny and feels no guilt in not telling Jax about this baby until she is absolutely certain and ready.

Steeling herself to the fact that he may not want anything to do with this baby is going to take some work. Fifteen years of love lost, found, and lost again has led to a dead end that is hard enough to work through without the added bonus of hormones that have her crying if she cuts a tomato wrong, let alone comprehending the crazy trajectory she never expected her life to take in the matter of just a few months.

The first OB appointment is approaching and Tara seriously debates calling Jax to see if he wants to be involved. It's almost comical picturing him in his kutte in an OB/GYN office surrounded by pregnant women and anxious husbands. That thought alone stresses her out so she decides to wait to let him know about the baby for the 12 week mark in case she does miscarry.

The OB is also in Sacramento for privacy's sake. If she tried to see a doctor within a 20 mile radius of Charming, Gemma would be on the horn quicker than the flick of one of her meticulously manicured nails. The trip is also a nice break from her predictable routine of working at the hospital and staying home when she's not at work. The first appointment is routine with a basic ultrasound and bloodwork to verify pregnancy. The ultrasound estimates her at 8-10 weeks pregnant and the bloodwork is routine and show no issues.

She also uses those appointment days to meet with her friend, George, the family law attorney to discuss the paternal rights issues. George encourages Tara to discuss the baby with Jax, sooner

rather than later. It’s better to initiate the discussion from a friendly perspective on her part; this way his response, good or bad, will set the tone for co-parenting for the next 18 years.

That night at home Tara debates when she will contact Jax. Just this simple conversation will initiate a chain of events that will determine the path for both her and this child's lives. She wants to believe that it will be calm and easy but knows from a lifetime of experience that anything involving Jackson Teller is rarely calm or easy.

Chapter End Notes

“Heartbreaker” lyrics Writer(s): Robin Hugh Gibb, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb

Chapter 4: Life Lessons

Chapter Summary

Tara looks back to the future to find the strength to move forward.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own none of these characters.

Heartbreaker

"Why do you have to be a heartbreaker? Is it a lesson that I never knew? Got to get out of the spell that I'm under. My love for you."

Flying under the radar in Charming when you're Jax Teller's Old Lady, well former Old Lady, is no easy task. Since she was 14 years old, Tara's identity in Charming had been intrinsically tied to Jackson Teller.

Jax's California golden boy good looks made him a magnet for almost every girl in town. On Valentine's Day in 8th grade he received so many cards the teacher had to put them in two separate bags. She was in 6th grade and like every girl had a crush on him. She didn't send him a card though because she figured, based on the sheer volume of offers he received, that he had enough girls to keep him occupied for the rest of his life.

Jax also had a reputation, even at 14 years old, as the bad boy who fought, drank, smoked, and hooked up with as many girls as possible. At one party, he hooked up with two separate girls. Both thought they were his girlfriend but when they found out they weren't exclusive, a catfight for the ages ensued.

Tara never understood fighting over another person. If you liked someone enough to expect exclusivity, well that should be firmly established before "giving up the goods" as her dad liked to say. Sacrificing your self-worth for a hook up was just plain sad.

She was also raised Catholic. Her mother was devoutly Catholic and they all went to mass regularly when she was alive. After her mom's death, her dad stopped going to church, saying that he was now agnostic. He told her once that he had trouble believing in a God that could take her mother away from them. He started attending the Irish-Catholic Church of Jameson (his words exactly) and

Tara continued going to the actual Roman Catholic Church because it was a happy reminder of her mom.

Her dad was Irish-American and his great-grandparents survived the potato famine by leaving Ireland. Her mom's family was Ukrainian. They had left the Soviet Union when Stalin decided to starve the Ukrainians into submission in the 1930's.

Both families knew if they didn't leave their respective homelands that their children would either die from starvation and her mom's family didn't want them to fall victim to indoctrination too. They had to break those cycles and knew the only way to do it was to leave behind everything they loved to save their families.

Her mother and father met in college and moved to her father's hometown of Charming, California. They taught her to respect herself and to never compromise her beliefs and values for any reason except the safety and love of her family. It's exactly why her grandparents escaped from the Soviet Union and her dad's family made it out of Ireland.

October 1994

Tara was 14 years old and absolutely beautiful for her age. Dark hair, porcelain skin, and almond-shaped hazel eyes made her the prettiest girl in her grade, if not the whole school. She was popular and had just started her freshman year in high school thanks to skipping the fourth grade.

Tara's social group was mainly the kids in clubs like the Young Astronauts, theater, science fiction and fantasy, and the National Honor Society. She was obsessed with shows like Highlander, Star Trek: The Next Generation, and read all the science fiction she could find. Ray Bradbury and Robert Silverberg were her favorite authors.

On the flip side, she loved watching the E! Channel for celebrity gossip, fashion, and MTV. She was also on the cheerleading and dance squads. Her mom had her take ballet lessons starting when she could walk. She quickly learned to love the routines and muscle memory of ballet, cheerleading, and dance. She was a perfectionist and quickly became the captain of the JV cheerleading and dance squads.

This is how she crossed paths with the human spider web known as Jax Teller.

She was getting ready to cheer and dance at the Homecoming football game. She was running late and was supposed to enter the field from the gym's girls locker room. Instead, she had to run through the designated smoking section* to get to the game on time to start the routines she had to lead. The area was pretty much populated by the burnouts, stoners, skaters, and bikers.

She knew this was going to be a nerve-wracking route but couldn't afford to be late. She felt like a complete idiot in her cheerleading uniform based on the stares she was getting when suddenly the loudest wolf whistle she'd ever heard broke the silence. She knew exactly who it came from and her heart skipped a beat.



Jax Teller stepped in front of her and blocked the path to the football field. As she ran into him at full speed, it was like hitting a brick wall when her face planted right into his leather jacket. The smell of cigarettes, motor oil, and an aftershave that could only be described as sex in a bottle completely invaded her senses, causing her to become dizzy.

She was desperately trying to avoid falling by grabbing onto Jax's arms which caused both of them to fall to the ground together. He landed on top of her in what ended up being a very embarrassing missionary position. If she hadn't been taking AP Human Anatomy and Physiology this semester, she would have sworn she lost her virginity in the process. Hell, the only reason she knew the name of the position was from watching some seriously Rated R movies snuck into the cheer camp slumber party by her best friend a week before school started.

To make the situation even more awkward, the new cheerleading uniforms the school had gotten at the beginning of the year left little to the imagination. Hers was a half top and mini skort that barely covered her butt; what little discretion it provided was in the form of built in biker shorts. Her dad said they were borderline stripper outfits and only half-jokingly said they needed built-in chastity belts.

So she was already beyond anxious at hopefully not having a boob slip out mid cheer during the actual routines and now here she was with Jax Teller on top of her with the skort completely rolled up to her waist. She could only thank Jesus, Joseph, and Mary that the biker shorts prevented complete nudity.

Up close, Jax was unbelievably good looking. Before she could linger on how the hell does a guy in high school have a beard, and how much she liked the feel of it on her face, his mouth hit hers. She struggled to get back up and they practically kissed as she tripped forward. Jax did help her get back to her feet but almost immediately cornered her against the tennis court fence bordering the smoking area in front of everyone currently in the smoking area.

"Well, well, if it isn't little Tara Knowles, the picture of innocence, tackling me in the smoking section of all places. If you want me, all you have to do is ask and we can get you completely out of that bikini they call a uniform right now."

Tara was horrified. She wasn't prude, but she barely just had her first kiss with David Hale during a game of spin the bottle that summer. Now she had Jax Teller cornering her like a wolf, looking like sex on legs, and smelling like pheromones gone wild whispering all the filthy things he was going to do to her in her ear while peppering her neck with kisses; electrical currents traveled from those kisses to her brain and then to the warm pit of her stomach.

Her brain turned to mush and her face blushed fifty shades of red. Her senses kicked in though and she tried ducking her way out of his grasp. Unfortunately, he was at least a foot taller and 200 pounds of sinewy muscle to her 110 pound petite yet shapely frame. He held her against the fence while trying to kiss her, but she was quicker and kneed him in the balls.

As he doubled over in pain, she made a break for it and just barely made it to the sidelines, starting the first routine. Everything went perfectly and she almost forgot the earlier embarrassment until the end of the drill when she heard that same wolf whistle.

As she looked up into the bleachers, she saw Jax Teller with Opie Winston and what looked like the entire motorcycle club his family ran. He stared straight at her and looked furious. At that moment, she felt the Earth shift on its axis and instantly regretted the shortcut she took to get her to the game on time.

Chapter End Notes

*Yes, some high schools in the 1990's had smoking areas for students.

“Heartbreaker” lyrics Writer(s): Robin Hugh Gibb, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb

Chapter 5: Life in the Passing Lane

Chapter Summary

Team Tara vs. Charming

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

.I own none of these characters

Heartbreaker

"Why do you have to be a heartbreaker? When I was being what you want me to be. Suddenly, everything I ever wanted has passed me by. This world may end, not you and I."

October 1994, cont'd

As Tara left the football game, she was pumping herself up for the inevitable confrontation with Jax Teller and his motorcycle gang. She told her best friend, another cheerleader, Donna Costello, what happened and Donna was ready to kick ass and take names. Donna was 5'2" and a gymnast. She was the one they threw up in the air during the more complex routines, so being able to kick guys twice her size's ass was actually not out of the realm of possibility.



The fiery Irish redhead was ready to do some backflips and take them all out. Her nickname was Tiny Beast for her temper. As they approached the gate, Tara was laughing uncontrollably at the thought of her drop-kicking Opie Winston, Jax Teller, and the rest of SAMCRO in one fell swoop.

Jax stepped in front of her again, regarding her with a smirk. “What are you laughing about Knowles? I think you owe me an apology.” Tara was aghast, “Are you freaking kidding me?! You owe ME an apology, Teller, for molesting me when I was just trying to get to the game. You’re lucky if you can ever piss again after I sent your nuts back in time before puberty. I can do it again for your friends amusement, if you like. Now let us through.”

Jax looked stunned and all of the guys with him were laughing as Tara pushed her way through the crowd of bikers. Donna followed and gave all of them the evil eye, daring with a glare to even look at them funny. Tara knew that Jax and his crowd weren’t used to girls not falling at their feet. She heard once that they had a motto that girls were there for, “sucking dick and serving beers.”

That was definitely not going to be her place in any world. Apparently, they had some real classy wedding vows too but she couldn’t remember them off the top of her head. With all of this information in her minds eye, she told herself that if Jax Teller wanted her, he was going to put the work in to get her.

November 2010

Tara sat in her living room going through the Neiman-Marcus baby section on her phone when the doorbell rang. The nausea was getting more frequent so she was sipping on ginger ale and trying not to eat too many bags of BBQ potato chips. She was also on high alert for any signs of the baby, physically and around the house and swept the room for any evidence.

Her stomach was starting to pooch too so she made sure that she was wearing baggy clothes at home and the loosest scrubs layered under her lab coat at work or out in public. She closed the browser on her phone, cleared the cache and cookies which coincidentally was not helping the snacking thoughts, locked the phone screen, and headed for the door.

It was 8 pm, so it was too late for any deliveries and since splitting with Jax, almost all of her friends stopped texting or calling her. As if catching him with the porn skank wasn't humiliating enough, it was even more depressing getting dropped like a hot rock by people she thought of as friends.

Team Tara, 0

Team Jax, the entire town.

Oh well, she figured if they weren't her friends now, after all she had been through, then she didn't need them. It was just as well, it would make it easier to start from scratch.

When she looked through the peep hole, she saw that it was Donna Winston, her best friend since high school, and she was so happy that she flung open the door and hugged her without even saying hello. Donna started laughing but then pulled back and looked at her with a combination of indignation and relief.

"Where the hell have you been, girl?! I haven't heard from you in weeks. Opie said you were probably staying away because of the "Rancid Pussy Incident." I have been working swing shifts all month at the hospital and seriously just now have had the time off to get a hold of you at a decent hour."

Tara brought her inside and they sat on the couch. She was trying to keep it together but finally broke down. She told Donna how she didn't get any news on Abel returning until over a week after the club returned from Ireland. And that the only reason she did get any news was because Unser checking up on a noise complaint from Old Mother Hubbard two doors down about the remodeling.

Donna looked flabbergasted and told her that the assumption when Tara didn't show for the party was that she was being petty after being dumped by Jax. Jax was groping two Croweaters when the subject came up and Gemma did nothing to refute it either.

Donna then dropped the bomb that Opie did tell her that he called Jax out on Ima being a dick move right after she caught them at the clubhouse. Jax responded, saying that he was pushing Tara away to protect her from his life.

Donna went on to elaborate that Opie then told Jax that after all he and Tara had been through over the last fifteen years, it was going to take more than some rancid porn pussy to scare her away. In

true Jax form, he responded that he didn't want to talk about it right then and there when they had to be at the table; he would figure out what he is going to do with his dick after he finds his kid and gets back home.

Leave it to Jax to so crudely and thoughtlessly dismiss their breakup like she was just another one of his Croweaters or "hundreds" of cheap thrills during their ten year separation. With that bit of information, Tara has even more motivation to steer clear of Jax, Gemma, and the club. She knows it's not going to be easy to set and maintain boundaries with people that can treat the people they claim to love so flippantly.

Their treatment of women as disposable by the men and cheating as expected to be tolerated by those women "lucky" enough to achieve Old Lady status could not be passed down to their child, boy or girl. She would not have a son treat women as interchangeable and disposable. She would not have a daughter expected to be submissive in such a way that they compromise their basic sense of worth and dignity for the honor of hooking up with some garbage dumpster bargain bin men on motorcycles.

Tara was lost in her thoughts when Donna excused herself to use the bathroom. Suddenly, Tara heard her scream like she had been scared by a ghost. Tara ran back to her and Donna was holding up her copy of What to Expect When You are Expecting that she forgot she left in the bathroom. The look on Donna's face was like she had a heart attack and a cocked eyebrow. "Now we know why you've been a hermit." The first thing out of Tara's mouth was, "Oh shit! Girl, you better keep this on the down low or I'll lock you in the haunted closet in my old bedroom for the rest of your life."

Donna was beside herself with giddiness. "I'll move into that closet right now if you let me pick out the baby names AND I get to shop til we both drop." Tara then grabbed her hand and ran with her to the newly remodeled nursery and pulled out her stash of Neiman's, Bergdorf's, and Saks catalogs. She knew she still had to be careful but Donna was over the moon.

Tara was so happy in that moment to finally be able to share this openly with someone, especially her best friend. She knew it wasn't the end of the world when "whatever this is" with Jax crashed and burned, but having her friend to share the struggle with snapped her out of the of the end of the world and other depression clichés. They even did their old school pinky-swear but this was so much better than the last time when they were fourteen years old and planning their response to-the ."Jaxass"incident

Chapter End Notes

"Heartbreaker" lyrics Writer(s): Robin Hugh Gibb, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb

Chapter 6: Across the Universe

Chapter Summary

Tara's guide to hitchhiking across the universe, or at least Charming.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own none of these characters

Heartbreaker

"My love is stronger than the universe. My soul is crying for you and that cannot be reversed. You made the rules and you could not see. You made a life out of hurting me."

"You know you're going to have to tell him eventually. It's either that or just show up on his doorstep when you go into labor. Or you could do one of those Maury Povich episodes and have it narrowed down to between Jax or Hale. We could sell tickets. That shit would sell out the Charming movie theater in a heartbeat."

Tara snorted and spit out the chocolate shake she was drinking. She was having lunch with Donna at Daisy's Diner on Main Street. They staked out a booth in the corner, and were trying to discretely brainstorm ideas for how to break the news to Jax. "That would require me to actually have sex with David. Honestly, he is good looking and I'm really horny so I'm not ruling it out." Tara replied half-jokingly.

Donna wasn't ruling it out for her friend either. It had been about a month and a half since the Ima incident and she knew Tara was trying not to let the rumors around town get to her. Jax was wasting no time burning through the fresh stock of Croweaters at the clubhouse, local dive bars, and all of the strip clubs between Charming and Sacramento too.

According to Opie, at least Jax had enough of Ima after that one time though. She had started showing up uninvited at TM so he told her she was not welcome there or at the clubhouse. If she needed an oil change, she could drive to the Jiffy Lube in San Francisco for all he cared.

Donna knew Tara was living in her head because of all of this. Tara was lonely. She had no family in Charming and almost all of her friends through Jax stopped talking to her out of their fucked up allegiance to SAMCRO, Jax, and Gemma. Donna told Opie she was not abandoning her friend, and neither was he, out of some twisted sense of loyalty to Jax's wayward dick.

October 1994

Tara and Donna were finishing up at cheerleading practice when Opie Winston showed up. He walked over to Donna and was talking to her. After a few minutes Donna came over looking dazed, confused, and a little bit giddy. “Opie just invited us to his birthday party at the SAMCRO clubhouse this weekend. We can go right after the football game. He said Jax is out of town on some kind of run, so he won’t be there to bother you.”

Tara was beyond shocked. “Those parties they have are notorious. I am pretty sure they aren’t PG-13. My dad barely lets me watch PG-13 movies, let alone go to a SAMCRO party.”

It was true, her father barely let her watch Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, and she had only seen a R-rated movie for the first time when Donna snuck 9 1/2 Weeks into their section of the cheer camp slumber party that previous summer. After watching that, Tara said about 100 rosaries and never looked at honey the same way again.

“It’s Opie’s birthday, I highly doubt there will be strippers at a teenager’s birthday party.” Donna replied. “Come on we never go anywhere except the jock parties after games and this will be fun.”

Tara relented, “Well, I guess it won’t be so bad if Jax isn’t there. I don’t want to get dragged off anywhere by that Neanderthal. I’m still getting shit for what happened in the smoking area by half the football team. All of them are too chicken shit to fight him though.”

After that incident, she had decided that no matter how good looking Jax was, she could not get caught up in him after seeing how he was with girls at school and around town. He was going out of his way to irritate her at school and it took everything she had not to kick him in the nuts again.

That Friday, as she was leaving for school, she told her dad about her plans to go to Opie’s birthday party at the SAMCRO clubhouse. To her eternal surprise, he agreed as long as Piney was there. “John Teller was a good man, and Piney is a great guy too. I’m not so sure about Clay Morrow, but if it gets crazy call me and I will pick you up.”

Tara was nervous about the party but made sure to pack a change of clothes and Donna was over the moon about how cute Opie was so she stayed positive for her friend. As she was leaving the game, David Hale approached her and asked if they were coming to the bonfire at his parents property outside of town. “Opie invited us to his birthday party, so we are headed there. Maybe next weekend?”

David was shocked that Tara was going to a SAMCRO party. “Are you serious? Those parties are insane.” Tara responded that her dad was ok with it because Piney was there and that she was a big girl who could handle herself. Besides, she could call her dad if it turned into a Bacchanalian orgy.

As they entered the SAMCRO lot, Tara noted the scantily clad women. Donna was shocked too. Opie went to Piney and they had a hushed and heated conversation. He came back and told Donna that the SAMCRO president, Clay Morrow, had changed up some plans for the party. Opie looked pissed because he really liked Donna and didn't want to scare off Donna and Tara five minutes into the party.

Donna and Tara stayed close together, and Opie made sure none of the hangarouds bothered them. Everyone was chatting it up when suddenly a loud noise like a few dozen engines came closer to the lot. Suddenly, a storm of bikes pulled in and Opie was shocked. "They weren't supposed to be back from the run until tomorrow." He looked nervously at Tara when Jax pulled up with Clay.

Tara was shocked and Donna grabbed her hand. Tara internally wanted to run, but told herself to get it together so that she wasn't a nervous wreck. Neither her nor Donna had a chance to change out of their uniforms so the group of bikers were interested immediately.

"Who brought the jailbait?, it looks like Clay really did plan a welcome party for us. I've always wanted a couple of cheerleaders" yelled a guy with curly hair and piercing blue eyes. Opie stepped menacingly up to him, "Tig, they are my friends from school so stay away from them unless you want to go to the hospital and jail instead of the party. Shut the fuck up and go find a Croweater to blow you."

Suddenly, a guy Tara recognized from the football game shouted in a thick Scottish brogue, "Hey, isn't that the lass that kneed Jax in the balls a few weeks ago? I bet he's ready for round two." Tara wanted to run right then and there when Jax Teller turned and sauntered up right to her, looking like a spider closing in on its catch.

Tara was holding onto Donna for dear life and a feeling of an unsettling combination of fear and desire trickled from her chest to the core of her stomach. He regarded her with a wicked grin as he grabbed her hand. "Well, well, if it isn't little Tara Knowles. It looks like you're on my turf tonight and we are going to have some fun."

December 2010

With the information on The New Adventures of Jax's Dick, all Tara could think was that she was glad she wasn't here for Jax's last bout of man-whoring after she left for college. After Abel had been kidnapped she told him that she wasn't meant to leave Charming and that they were better people when they are with the person they were meant to be with. How wrong had she been? Now she was watching the person she thought she was meant to be with move on so easily; now she was alone and preparing for the baby that she had told Jax she wanted when she also told him about the deal breaker.

She wondered how long he had wanted to hook up with Ima. She was fairly certain she got pregnant during their bout of hot sex in the bathroom after her confrontation with Ima at the porn studio wrap party. She had to stop going down that emotional drain though and went back to preparing for the neonatal consult research for work.

Tara was also officially 16 weeks pregnant and her lawyer was trying to get her to talk to Jax as soon as possible so that they could figure out the starting point and where Jax's head was at. Tara knew Jax's head was buried in a murder of Croweaters and most of the strippers in Northern California. She was anxious because the possibility of Jax not wanting to be involved made her even more nervous to talk to him. The pregnancy hormones were doing a number on her emotions and she was afraid that she was going to have a complete breakdown when she finally talked to him.

She missed Abel so much it hurt, but reaching out seemed desperate. She was just so confused and tried to stay busy to avoid the downward spiral that her brain took when she thought about Abel. She was hoping they could at least keep things amicable so that they could have a pleasant sibling relationship if Jax wanted to be involved. She was also already on the receiving end of pitying stares and didn't want to come across as bitter too.

Tara was on a sabbatical and working from home doing neonatal cardiology consults via Skype. This helped her avoid having to try and find more ways to camouflage her belly which was still fairly small. She could thank those genetics for helping to avoid the inevitable conversations that would occur when she did start showing.

After lunch, Tara went to Charming Apothecary to pick up her refills on Zofran and new prenatal vitamins. As she checked out, she was distracted by a text from Donna. The pharmacist started explaining the dosage change in the Zofran dosage for her morning sickness to her and also the newer prenatal vitamin formulation as indicated by her OB/GYN.

If she had not been distracted by the text, she would have stopped the pharmacist because of her being a doctor she already understood the medication changes. As she grabbed the bags, she turned around and was face to face with none other than Jax Teller right behind her holding a box of condoms waiting in line to checkout.

Tara was beyond mortified. This was her first encounter with Jax since the Ima incident. She felt her lunch trying to come up and her mind completely went off the rails when she saw the condoms and exactly what that implied. In that moment, all she could think to do to was try and get around him as fast as she could.

Jax looked at the prescription bags she was carrying and then back at her. He was visibly shocked from what he heard the pharmacist say about her prescriptions and reached out for her hand. Tara was not ready for this conversation to happen at all but it looked like the universe had other ideas.

Chapter End Notes

"Heartbreaker" lyrics Writer(s): Robin Hugh Gibb, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb

Chapter 7: Out of My Mind

Chapter Summary

Tara learns that losing your mind can be liberating.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own none of these characters.

Heartbreaker

"Out of my mind, I am held by the power of you, love. Tell me when do we try. Or should we say goodbye."

As Tara looked at Jax and then looked at her hand, all she could do was try and get her head back on the rails. Jax was looking at her like he saw a ghost and honestly that's what she felt like in that moment too. However, she couldn't help but notice the warmth, strength, and the electricity that happened whenever his hands came into contact with any part of her body.

Even the simplest touch, like holding hands, had her wrecked. Good grief, here she was a grown ass woman swooning like a lovesick teenage girl. He knew exactly what he was doing too; he'd been doing it since she was fourteen years old with the desired effect usually involving her dragging him off to nearest secluded spot and losing all sense and clothing.

The pregnancy hormones, which had her mind doom scrolling off into depression scenarios lately, were now driving her to drag him out to the Cutlass for some relief in the back seat like they were teenagers again. She forced herself to look up at Jax and finally was able to put a sentence together.

"Hey, how are you doing? I was just on my way home from having lunch with Donna and stopped here to get some things." Tara felt like a case of verbal diarrhea was about to happen so she cut into that impulse and tried to keep it light and breezy. "How have you been? I hear that you've been pretty busy."

Oh fuck, did she just say that? The level of cringe in her brain was 100/10 right now so she forced herself to shut up and not think about the fact that he was obviously stocking up for his run for the gold medal in the Man Whoring Olympics.

Jax looked at her with the shadow of a smirk but seemed to think better and cut right to the chase. "Can we talk? It looks like we need to talk." It took everything in her not to slap the shit out of him.

Really? It's been eight weeks since he got back and now we have to talk because he saw her at the pharmacy picking up medication? Fuck that noise.

The petty bitch in her came out of hiding but kept it short, sweet and diplomatic. It's been two months of hell for her, he can wait two more days. "You know, I'm exhausted from running around today and have plans tonight." I would love to catch up, so how about Tuesday? I'm off and we could meet for lunch." She really didn't have plans but there was no way she was going out of her way to accommodate him. And hell, if she was going to put herself through the wringer she might as well get a free meal out of it too.

Jax looked confused but she gave literally zero fucks about what he wanted right now. As long as they've known each other, his absolute density when it comes to the fact that not everyone will accommodate him at the drop of a hat never failed to amaze her. He could go have his Saturday night special and sit on it until Tuesday.

He knew better though than to make a scene with her in public. They had some huge blowouts as teenagers and he knew she had a hair trigger temper. She also had a strong feeling he was going to straight line it back to Gemma anyways.

In fact, going to a hotel sounded like a great plan for the next two nights. Gemma was going to beat down her door the minute Jax told her what he saw and she relished the idea of disappearing for two days of spa treatments in Sacramento while they stewed in it.

Jax stuck his hands in his pockets and said, "Sure, how about I pick you up around noon on Tuesday. Tara thought ahead and said, "I'm not really up for a bike ride so I can meet you at Daisy's." She really didn't feel like putting herself in a situation where she would vomit all over his back, even if the thought did give her some degree of satisfaction.

She also wanted to control the narrative. If the conversation went south, she didn't want to be dependent on him for a ride home. Then she would have to call Donna for a ride, risking Tiny Beast kicking Jax's ass right out in the middle of Main Street.

Wait. That might be fun. She was definitely calling Donna to be on standby.

He leaned in to give her a hug and she let herself be weak in that moment. Tara felt like she was out of her mind; she missed the familiar scent of motor oil, cigarettes, and that sex in a bottle aftershave he'd worn as long as she had known him. He held her for about ten seconds longer than socially appropriate and it took every ounce of restraint for her not to kiss him on the release.

As she left, she called the Hyatt Regency in Sacramento and booked the deluxe spa package. She stopped to gas up right outside of Charming and headed off for a weekend of rest, relaxation, and satisfaction. With a pinch of schadenfreude for good measure.

October 1994

As Jax led Tara away she looked desperately back to Opie and Donna. Piney yelled out to Jax, “Oh no, you aren’t taking her anywhere we can’t see your hands and dick at all times. And that means right where I can see you.” Jax looked pissed, “Hey old man, I’m just taking her to the bar for a drink. Mom is all good with us drinking as long as we stay here.”

Tara’s brain hit the brakes. “My dad only gave me permission to come here because Piney is chaperoning. I also don’t drink so there’s no need for me to stay anywhere. My curfew is 11 pm.” Opie spit out his beer laughing, “Piney is chaperoning? When did that happen?”

Donna elbowed him in the hip, “Hey, what was that for?” Piney gave Jax and Opie a death glare, “Damn right I’m a chaperone. JT and I served with her dad on two tours of duty in ‘Nam. You lay a finger on that little girl and her dad, me, and the ghost of JT will kick your ass into next week.”

Jax flipped him off and still led Tara away into the clubhouse. “So what do you want to drink? You can drink anything and we will still get you home on time.” Tara was chewing on her bottom lip. “I’ll have a Shirley Temple.” Jax laughed so loud everyone in the clubhouse looked at them. “You’re adorable, Knowles. You really can have the big kids drinks here, I promise no one will slip you a Mickey.”

Tara felt like an idiot but took her drink, “What? I love them. My dad has a full bar in our basement. I’ve tried every drink on the planet and still think a Shirley Temple is the best drink out there.” He looked at her funny so she decided to change the subject. “I really need to change out of my uniform though. Is there a bathroom?”

Oh hell no. Jax knew the bathrooms were NOT the place for anyone to change clothes, and the thought of Tara changing clothes in his dorm room took all the restraint he had not to drag her back there and keep her clothes off. Everything about Tara screamed innocence and he really didn’t want to scare her off. Plus, she looked really hot in the cheerleader get up and if he couldn’t get her naked, this was the next best thing.

“There really isn’t anywhere to change. Just hang out with me and no one will bother you. I promise to be a complete gentleman too.” Tara knew he was full of shit but didn’t feel like questioning him.

It turned out Jax actually was capable of being a gentleman and was fun to talk to. He told her about the motorcycle club. It was a club, not a gang, this was an important distinction for him. He also talked about how much he loved motorcycles, and to her surprise how much he loved reading. He admitted to not being the best student but English was secretly his favorite class and he had an A in it.

She told him all about loving science fiction, fantasy, and dancing. “My mom loved ballet. Before they left Ukraine, she was in a dance school in Kiev. They had to spend all of their money to get to America so she couldn’t continue to take lessons. She signed me up when I was three and I have loved it ever since. It really helped me cope when she got sick with cancer. No matter how bad she felt, she came to every recital. Now it helps me think she would be proud of me for continuing it.”

Jax told her about losing his dad. He never talked to anyone, not even his mom, about losing his dad. He liked how easy it was to talk to Tara. For the first time ever, he actually thought he would like to have a girlfriend. That wasn’t going to happen though. She was in a whole different crowd

and he didn’t like the idea of being tied to one girl. He was definitely still going to try and hook up with her though.

Opie, Donna, and Piney came in looking for Tara and Jax. Well, Piney was looking for Jax and to make sure Tara’s virtue was still intact. That kid could charm the pants off of a snake charmer and he really didn’t want Dave Knowles breaking out a can of whoop ass on Jax, or him for that matter.

The kids were at the bar and Donna was relieved that Jax hadn’t dragged Tara off and that his hands were where they could see them. Her and Opie were hitting it off and were talking about going to the movies next weekend.

Jax was dying laughing because neither him nor Opie took girls on dates. Dates took work, and why work for it when Croweaters gave it up for free? He was definitely giving Opie shit after this for being pussy-whipped before getting any pussy.

Music was playing from a jukebox that had mostly hard rock and heavy metal. Jax decided to fuck with Tara, “Are you even allowed to listen to anything besides Mariah Carey?” Tara almost died laughing. She called Donna over to the jukebox where they looked at the songs and decided to fuck with the guys right back.

The dance team had just competed at a regional competition. They were allowed to use any songs they wanted and come up with a routine. “Do you want to see a dance routine we won a competition with? And no it wasn’t a stripping or wet t-shirt contest.” Jax and Opie looked like they hit the jackpot.

They cleared a space in the clubhouse and the girls turned on Kiss Me Deadly by Lita Ford. Jax spit out his beer as the girls proceeded to do a routine that was sexier than anything he had ever seen a stripper do. Holy shit. This was allowed at high school dance competitions? He had definitely found a new pastime.



The Croweaters were cheering the girls on too. They were also taking notes because some of those moves might come in handy with the guys. In fact, Tig was loving it way too much and dragged two Croweaters back to a dorm room right away.

10:30 pm rolled around and Tara was getting ready to call her dad to pick her up. Jax stopped and offered her a ride home. Piney gave him the side eye, but Tara asked her dad if it was ok. He was ok as long as Piney was ok. After Piney set his watch to time the trip, Tara went with Jax. He helped her onto the bike and gave her a helmet. He showed her how to wrap her arms around his waist and they were off.

As they pulled up to the house, he helped her off and she thanked him for a good time, “and being a gentleman.” Jax walked her to the front door and looked at her in that unnerving way that brought on a mixture of desire and fear. She couldn’t help being drawn into a kiss. The way his lips felt, along with the softness of his five o’clock shadow, had that same electrical impulse from her lips to the warm center of her stomach. Her dad opened the door, and she said goodbye.

Years later, she would pinpoint this moment as the one where she was caught in the wicked web of Jackson Teller. No matter how far away, how long she had been gone, or unhealthy it became, this was the moment when she fell in love with him. First love doesn’t die hard, because she could never stop loving him, no matter how hard she tried.

Chapter End Notes

“Heartbreaker” . Lyric Writer(s): Robin Hugh Gibb, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb

Chapter 8: Outro

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own none of these characters.

Heartbreaker

"Why do you have to be a heartbreaker. When I was being what you want me to be? Suddenly everything I ever wanted has passed me by. Tell me, why do you have to be a heartbreaker?"

Jax's mind was going a hundred miles an hour. One minute he's looking for condoms in the aisle at the Apothecary and the next he's standing in line behind Tara overhearing that she's on medication for morning sickness and prenatal vitamins. The fact that she was standing in front of him in Charming was enough of a shock.

Gemma told him that Tara was pregnant while they were in Ireland. She said that Tara was going to abort the baby and leave town since he obviously wasn't ready for another child after she caught him with Ima.

In that moment in Ireland, his entire world collapsed. He was the reason Abel was kidnapped and Tara was almost murdered trying to protect him. Knowing now that she was pregnant when Abel was kidnapped made it all so much worse.

He had been such a dick to her and instead of actually dealing with his problems like an adult, he buried them in used up porn pussy. He knew Tara wouldn't leave unless he did something drastic and cheating was always the deal breaker for her. It had been since he fell in love with her when he was sixteen years old.

He was so angry and depressed when he got back to Charming he didn't bother to go by her place. In fact, he stayed away from there purposely. He couldn't get crushed like he did after she left 10 years ago. That lasted almost two days and then he started the 10 year cycle all over again. Booze, pussy, weed. Nameless, faceless women. Rinse and repeat.

But she had never left Charming. Gemma said she sold the house and left town. Unser told them that there were remodelers working on the house to get it up to code, which almost always means the house is for sale or sold. He said nothing about her still being there. But here she was, very much still in Charming, pregnant, and alone.

Wait. Donna knew she was still in town because they had lunch. Did Opie know? He was going to have words with Gemma tonight. Unser too.

He could tell by the look on her face that she was uncomfortable and who could blame her? Here he was, after eight weeks of what had to look like he was ignoring her, standing there like an asshole, holding a box of condoms.

Here he is out fucking anything with a pulse to distract him from the pain and she's sick at home and alone. All he sees is her face with the hurt on it when she opened the door to his room at the clubhouse. He's a piece of shit and if she never forgives him, he will understand.

She didn't want to talk right then and there and said she would meet with him in a few days. She also said she had plans. What kind of plans? He knew he didn't have the right to know but if she was pregnant, he had to keep her safe.

That's why he tried to push her away in the first place. She has to leave. The Irish are crazy and already proved that with her, Abel's kidnapping, and almost losing him to their black market baby factory. Everything he is will keep him pushing her away from him for the rest of their lives. He has to keep her safe but still can't let her go.

November 1994

Since the day he met her he knew she was too good for him, but he was too selfish to stay away. She was just too beautiful. When school started that year, him and Opie were always checking out the "freshmeat" freshman and hanging out in the smoking area. He had hooked up with almost every girl that hung around there and the girls outside of that section of the social hierarchy were either nerds or snobs.

The snobby bitches would hook up with him on the down low, because while they acted like he was white trash at school, they loved that bad boy dick and he sure as hell wasn't going to deny it to them if they were half-decent looking.

Then little Tara Knowles stumbled into the smoking area in her cheerleading uniform looking like a goddamned wet dream. She was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. Tara was a nerd but not a snob. The nerd girls could be cute but were either too weird or prude to even bother messing with.

Tara was just beautiful and existed on a whole different level than everyone else. She still went to mass every Sunday and volunteered at everything possible. His mom said she was always helpful at the Taste of Charming and if purity was a person, she was it personified. She was just too good to be true.

His dad told him once that he served with her dad in 'Nam and that she was half-Irish and half-Ukrainian. Her dad started drinking after her mom died from cancer but was a good man who was even more protective now that her mother was gone.

The first time he really noticed her was at the Charming High School Cultural Festival. They got a pass from class to go and every year it was usually everyone doing their version of Lord of the Dance since everyone in Charming was either Irish-American or some variation of the British Isles.



Tara dressed up in traditional Ukrainian clothing and gave a presentation. She walked out on the stage looking like a porcelain doll, dressed up in a traditional Ukrainian dress, gave a presentation, and did some kind of folk dance. She also did a ballet dance with a leotard that showed every curve. Every single guy in the gym hit puberty after that performance.



Now here she was in the smoking area and without even thinking about it, he whistled and stepped in front of her. She was trying to get to the football game but he had this one shot and fuck it all if he wasn’t going to try.



Fucking with her was going to be fun. He knew she would never let him in her panties, so this might be his only shot at even talking to her. She ran full throttle into him face first into his chest. She grabbed his arms trying to not fall back but then they fell into the ground, him landing right between her legs. Holy shit, she was the most beautiful girl he had ever laid eyes on.

Her shampoo or perfume completely clouded out any common sense. He helped her back to her feet but immediately pushed up on her like they were already somewhere private and not in front of half the school.

He started kissing her neck and telling her exactly what he wanted to do to her. At first, she seemed to like the kisses which completely threw him over the edge. Then she came to her senses and tried getting loose. He easily outweighed her but then she kneed him in the nuts and ran for it.

Opie couldn't stop laughing, "It's a good thing she kicked you in the nuts, because I was on my way over there to kick them too. You're an asshole. What the fuck was that? You molesting girls now? I'll help her kick your ass if you ever pull that shit again."

After the game, he waited for her along with the guys from the club. He figured he would fuck with her and then go hit up some Croweaters at the Friday night party at the clubhouse . When she got to the gate, he stepped up but so did she, along with Donna Costello.

She told him to get the hell out of her face and leave her the hell alone which no other girls ever did. This was going to be a challenge and he was going to have fun irritating the living shit out of her. Part of his brain said he might be starting to like her a little too much, but he shut that up with thoughts of Croweaters later.

Chapter End Notes

"Heartbreaker" lyrics Writer(s): Robin Hugh Gibb, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb

Chapter 9: I Can Do Bad All By Myself

Chapter Summary

Tara teaches Jax a lesson on pain and gain.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own none of these characters.

I Can Do Bad All By Myself

"Somebody told me once that pain is a game we all gotta play. Then why am I in overtime and sudden death every other day. I know that for the good of life there's a price we all gotta pay. But I'll pay 'til I'm poor and I still don't know what it is to have a good day, yeah."

Donna couldn't believe Jax was tearing up Charming trying to find Tara. For two months she sat at home with not a word from him and now she's supposed to clear her schedule for the Prince? When he came to Donna acting like she was wrong for not telling him Tara was still in town and pregnant, she told him to fuck all the way off. She wasn't going to bother Tara, hell she was probably off somewhere getting laid and good for her. She left her a message trying to give her the heads up on Jax and his posse looking for her.

Tara thoroughly enjoyed her two-day spa treatments and some luxury shopping in San Francisco. So much relaxation. She was heading back to Charming after meeting with her attorney, George, when suddenly saw at least two charters worth of motorcycles behind her, along with SAMCRO, right outside the city limits. Shit, she should have gotten a rental car instead of taking the Cutlass. What the hell?

Jax pulled alongside her and waved her to pull over. Christ, what the hell is going on? He walked up to her window and looked livid. "Where the hell have you been?"

She was floored. "What do you mean? I had plans and am on my way back. I told you I would meet with you today at noon. Besides, since when do I have to tell you where I am going? It's been two months since we split up. You don't see me asking what Croweater or porn slut you were hooking up with when you were stocking up for the Man-Whore Olympics at the Apothecary."

Jax just kept right on, “We need to talk.” Tara was done with this bullshit. Maybe staying in Charming wasn’t great idea if she was going to have to deal with his entitled patriarchal bullshit. That familiar urge to pack up her shit and run as far away as she could creeped in. No, that’s exactly what she shouldn’t do.

“You can’t stay here. It’s too dangerous.”

No, she has the right to live wherever the hell she wants. It’s not her fault that his life is so ludicrous that it puts everyone he touches in danger, trapped below a pendulum in a pit.

“Ok, here we are. This is where we will talk.” Jax was stunned, “We need to go some place private.”

She was beyond done. “No Jax, let’s cut to the chase. I’m having a good day and you are not going to steal my joy. You are not going to push me around, gaslight, or manipulate me. You don’t get to tell me where I can live or where I can go. I have earned the right to make my own decisions and have dealt with worse.”

She hesitated to go on but knew the bandaid had to be ripped off. “I have been beaten senseless, sexually assaulted, and survived. You helped me end that fear. However, I am not leaving Charming. I grew up here and will raise our child here. This town is not poisonous, you are. The fact that you would choose "this life" over our love and the presence of your own flesh and blood is beyond insane. Why is ok for Abel to stay here but not JT?”

“What do you mean JT?” Jax responded.

“Jackson Thomas Teller is the name of our son. Yes, our baby is a boy. I just had my appointment this morning and have the ultrasound. I would have invited you, but you bailed on us eight weeks ago.”

She knew it was a mistake but told Jax anyways, “I love you so much and am staying so you can be a part of our son’s life. I can’t be with you because you are stuck in this arrested development hot wheels life and have made it clear that is your priority by fucking porn sluts and gods know who or what else.”

She continued, “If you choose this ridiculous outlaw life over our love, and more importantly your own son, that’s on you not me. I have a family law attorney that has a more than fair custody agreement drafted and will send it over to you and your attorney.”

“Oh, and if your Mommy Dearest can’t learn boundaries and respect them, then she can stay the hell away from me too”

The absolute shock on Jax’s face summed up anything he could say so Tara got back in the Cutlass and looked at him. “I am tired now and am going home.”

Chapter End Notes

“I Can Do Bad All By Myself” Main Artist, Malted Milk; Mary J. Blige, Composer - Lyricist;

Chuck Harmon, Composer - Lyricist

Chapter 10: Worry Wart

Chapter Summary

The worry that Tara gets pushes everyone's buttons

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own none of these characters.

I Can Do Bad All By Myself

"Since everybody knows what it is that I need to do. Well do me a favor, let me worry bout me and you worry bout you."

Tara was so absolutely euphoric after driving away from Jax that she couldn't think straight. For the first time since before she met Kohn, she felt empowered and was excited to head home and go through all of her shopping bags and add to the baby's room.

As she pulled the Cutlass into the driveway, she thought about talking to Jax earlier. On one hand she felt relieved for finally starting to break off the emotional entanglement, on the other she felt nervous wondering how hard it would be to keep those threads untangled.

The chemistry she and Jax shared made almost every teenage drama turn into hot sex. With how hormonal she had been lately she knew she couldn't resist that pull if she tried. Would it be wrong to use him for sex? No! That's exactly the weak bitch shit she needs to stay away from. She had to be stronger.

Maybe get some sex toys. Yes, that's a better idea.

As she walked into the house, she heard a car pull into the driveway. Holy shit, it was Gemma, and Unser pulled up right behind her. Gemma got out of the car and looked pissed. The next thing that came out of Gemma's mouth shook Tara to the core.

"Listen you crazy bitch, I don't know what game you are playing with my son, but you told me you were getting an abortion."

Wait. What? "No, I told you it was my choice." Holy shit, you told Jax I had an abortion didn't you?! You are seriously the Mother of All Lies in this little hamlet. Your end game was to convince

him I killed our baby because you knew that was his deal breaker. Then you would have him under your thumb again. Your Oedipal complex is absolutely sinister, you sick bitch."

Gemma lunged at Tara but she was quicker, slammed the door, and bolted it. She then ran to her safe room as Gemma and the Unser started pounding on the door. Unser was saying something about wanting to see her permits for the remodeling but that was obviously not the reason for his house call that coincidentally happened as Gemma pulled up.

Fuck this noise. She went to her safe room, got her gun, and dialed 911, then Jax's number while praying that he would pick up.

As Jax watched Tara drive away, Opie pulled up next to him. "Well, I guess that didn't go the way the prince planned now did it?"

"Oh fuck off" Jax replied.

Opie couldn't stop laughing. "Since when did Tara ever take kindly to you commanding her to do anything.? You always knew she wasn't going to be some 'suck dick and serve beer' Old Lady back when we were teenagers. What made you think she would as a grown ass woman?"

This time Jax flipped Opie off as he strapped his helmet back on.

It was too late to worry about that that "suck dick and serve beer" shit now. What rocked his world the most was that he was going to have a baby with Tara. The one thing he always wanted and he is going to get it. The cost was she won't be with him even though she still loves him. His own stupidity is at fault, like always.

Abel is his whole world, but now he is going to have JT too and needs Tara. She is his true north. This is his chance to actually do it better. She is staying and he will make sure she is safe. That's the least he can do. He knows he can't watch her move on with someone else but he will figure that out later.

Just then he got a phone call from Tara. He didn't even finish saying 'Yeah?" when she interrupted. "Jax, you need to come get your mom. She is screaming and pounding on my front door. I'm safe inside but Unser is with her and I'm scared she'll get away with murdering me."

Three Days Earlier

When Jax left the pharmacy to confront Gemma about Tara still being in town, she tried to play

stupid. Then he dropped the baby bomb on her and she said, “What?! I saw her at the grocery store…”

That’s when Jax lost it. “You knew that at least she was still in town. You knew that the Irish are looking for her to settle the score and she’s the easiest target. They don’t like leaving anyone alive.” He couldn’t fathom how twisted this woman’s brain was.

“So you were ok with her being a target but now you’re not because she’s pregnant with your grandchild? You are one sick bitch.”

Gemma knew the shit was deep with him and Tara but letting this high school sweetheart gash bullshit interfere with her family was too far. He couldn’t talk to her like this.

“We are supposed to meet Tuesday because she has plans. I sent a prospect straight to her house just to make sure she stays safe and she never made it back from the pharmacy. She’s not answering her cell phone for anyone.”

Gemma started to interrupt, but Jax cut her down with an evil look she hadn’t seen since JT almost beat a man to death for disrespecting her. At that moment she knew he had snapped.

“You are exactly why Old Ladies aren’t privy to club dealings. You think you’re the Queen Mother but have the maternal instincts of a pit viper. You will stay the fuck out of my personal life and any club business from this point on. Go worry your own shit for once.”

With even more venom, Jax finished. “You and your lapdog, Unser, better pray nothing happens to her.”

Gemma knew right then and there that this gash had to go for good. She had to take back control. She knew just who to call and how to do it.

Chapter End Notes

“I Can Do Bad All By Myself” Main Artist, Malted Milk; Mary J. Blige, Composer - Lyricist; Chuck Harmon, Composer - Lyricist

Chapter 11: Lies and Black Eyes

Chapter Summary

Sex, Lies, and doorbell cameras.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own none of these characters.

I Can Do Bad All By Myself

"I don't need no one to put me down I'm on the ground, can't get no lower. And I don't need no one to hang around and make me frown just makes me look older. And I don't need no one to black my eye and tell me lies. Don't wanna cry over nobody else. No, no, no, no, I can do bad all by myself."

By the time Jax arrived at Tara's with Opie, and the whole fleet of SAMCRO he called in to help find her, the police were there. David Hale had Gemma off with Candy Eglee and Unser with him. Jax almost jumped off his bike before he stopped. "What the actual FUCK is going on here?! Tara called me panicking saying Gemma and Unser were beating on her door and she was afraid Gemma was going to murder her. "

"Baby, it's all a lie. I came over to talk to her about the baby and she freaked out on me." Jax shot her a death glare. "What the hell, Ma? I told you to stay away from her!" Before he could say anything else, Hale interrupted, "We can't get Tara to come out and give a statement. She told us through her door speaker that she wouldn't come out until you got here.

Hale continued, "Apparently she has a doorbell camera installed too and says she'll give us the footage when she feels safe enough to come outside."

Gemma's face instantly paled at the mention of camera footage and Unser shifted uncomfortably next to Hale.

Jax was impressed that she had a door speaker and camera. Hell, the MC has some basic CCTV monitors but doorbell cameras? Those renovations are some 007 level upgrades. He was instantly relieved and enraged at the same time. He was happy that she had security installed, but upset that this proved exactly why she needed the security. If Gemma was this nuts, what would the Irish do?

Jax went to the door and pushed the button. Tara's voice came out of the speaker and quietly spoke, "Jax is that you?" His heart skipped a beat at how scared she sounded. "Babe, it's me. The cops are here too and have Gemma and Unser. All the SAMCRO and charter guys are with me too. You're safe. Will you come outside?"

The silence was deafening. "I'll let you in, but only you." She then whispered, "I will meet you in the kitchen." Hale nodded his approval. Tara pressed the door lock button from the safe room. Jesus, she thought of everything.

Tara was sitting at the table in the kitchen with a Beretta in her hand when Jax walked in. He walked up to her and pulled her up to him from the chair. The hug lingered a second too long for her rational mind's liking. Fuck it, she thinks she deserves a good cry after all of the drama she endured today and she gave into the sobbing.

He smelled so good and she always felt safe in his arms. She missed that. They can still be friends and hug it out too, right? Her mind started wandering to other friendly things they could do…damn these pregnancy hormones.

She quickly stepped back from the hug and started talking. "I just wanted to come home and take a nap. I am not going to waste my energy explaining everything. I'm going to email the footage to Hale and will send you a copy too."

Jax was taken aback by her neutral tone. She wasn't being dismissive, but he could see the fight or flight walls she always put up when she felt cornered. She used to run away when she was scared but this was a new Tara. She was staying and fighting. He was happy for her in that moment, but also somewhat sad that it took him breaking her heart to bring this out of her.

The house looked brand new and, well, expensive. Tara looked expensive. The kitchen was completely gutted and state of the art. Her wardrobe was definitely upgraded and brought out her natural beauty. He wondered if she had expensive lingerie. Christ, only he could get turned on in the middle of a crisis. Well, they both did that after the Kohn incident so it's not a stretch.

He shook those thoughts and sat down at the table. "Give Hale a quick statement. He can come in here so you don't have to see Gemma or Unser."

Tara began, while trying not to sound overly formal, "Thank you for coming over and getting your mom. This is exactly why I didn't tell anyone for so long. I will not tolerate this bullshit ever. If there are charges, I'm pressing them." She has no sense of reason or boundaries."

"I told her that the baby was my choice, I never said I was explicitly having an abortion. I won't even have this conversation with you now because I was actually coming to the clubhouse to tell you I was pregnant when I found you with Ima."

Jax's stomach dropped out and he started to say something but Tara stopped him. "Protecting me is being an actual adult and talking this out like we started to do when Abel was first kidnapped. It's not sleeping with anyone else, regardless if they are porn sluts because you know it will hurt me. No one in their right mind thinks that's the mature way to handle things. Even we knew better than that as teenagers."

"I am going to take a nap now so please let Hale know I'll email him the footage and call him tomorrow about a statement. We can sit down later and have a more formal conversation because we do have to come to agreement on custody issues. Here is my lawyer's card. Either call him

yourself or have your attorney call. I recommend you have an attorney so they can go over all the details with you and make recommendations based on what's best for you too. It's better to do it this way so that there are less issues once the baby is here. It will allow us to focus on co-parenting."

Jax was floored, looked at Tara and told her. "I know what I did was wrong and I can never take it back. I love you and know that we need to be together. My life was absolute shit before you came back. Everything bad that has happened is because of who I am and what I do."

Tara's heart broke into a million pieces hearing him say that but she had to stay the course, "You didn't force your life on me and I have tried to see what you see and how you see it, but I can't. I don't fit into this life. The lies, violence, and cheating are part of the life, outlaw or not. Especially if you are involved in 'legit' businesses like porn. Sex work is not shameful but it is exactly that, sex work, and the logical result, along with the history of your wayward dick, has led us here."

"This life has also already almost killed my medical career. I wanted so badly to believe that our love, our bond, was stronger than the pull of your history; that you would choose us, and our family, over this life."

"I have worked way too hard to give up any part of my life, but especially my medical career, for anyone, not even you. I will never risk it again. It's why I can't be your 'mafia doctor' anymore either, so don't even ask for me to put a bandaid on someone. Do you know how hard it is to fight against medical license discipline? Or revocation? Administrative Law is a Byzantine labyrinth to navigate on a good day. It is no joke."

"I can't live in your life and I can't ask or make you be someone you are not to fit into mine. We can be parents together in Charming but you are the one who has to change things drastically, if only for the good of yourself and our son."

Tara walked Jax to the door and kept up the neutral facade until the door closed. That's when she sunk to the floor and let herself really cry for the first time. Grieving the death of their relationship had always been put off but now she was really able to let herself go.

Jax lingered for a minute and heard her crying. He knew he was a piece of shit and that everything she said was true. For the first time he had absolutely no idea how to even try to salvage even the smallest bit of anything that was left between them.

Chapter End Notes

"I Can Do Bad All By Myself" Main Artist, Malted Milk; Mary J. Blige, Composer - Lyricist; Chuck Harmon, Composer - Lyricist

Chapter 12: Green Grass and Septic Tanks

Chapter Summary

Tara learns why the grass is always greener over the septic tank.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own any of these characters.

I Can Do Bad All By Myself

"Somebody told me once that running from the rain don't make no sense. I had my own dark cloud for a while now, it goes where ever I'm going, yeah. They're telling me the grass just might be greener on the other side but I don't wanna take a chance on dirt when I got grass even though the grass has died."

Tara picked herself up off the floor when she heard her phone buzzing. Donna's name popped up and she quickly pulled herself together. "Hello"

"Don't you hello me! Opie let me know what is going down there. I'm on my way to kick ass and take names!"

Tara quickly replied, "Hold up there, Tiny Beast! It's all done now and I was going to take a nap." Donna quickly interrupted, "That's fine. It's noon now. Get a few hours of sleep and I'll be by around five-ish. I'm going to bring take out and we are having a girls night."

Tara was so relieved after talking to Donna that she almost forgot all of her bags in the trunk of her car. She looked out the window and saw Hale writing some notes and no Gemma, Unser, or Jax outside. She cautiously opened the door and Hale looked up from writing notes on his report.

"Hey, Tara, are you ok? Jax told me you were going to email me the footage and give a statement later. It's ok if you don't feel up to it right now." Tara smiled and said, "It's ok, come in and we can talk in my living room."

As Hale entered the house, he was impressed with the changes Tara made. He had hung out with her in high school here several times and picked her up for the Homecoming dance shortly after her first run-in with Jax during the Homecoming game her freshman year.

“I don’t think I’ve been in here since we went to Homecoming together.”

Tara laughed, “Oh for the good ole days before I fell for Jax Teller’s extra special brand of bullshit.”

The prospect that Jax had park halfway down the block called and let him know Hale was in the house with Tara. He knew it was related to the incident that day but it also brought on a twinge of what he thought was an ancient insecurity where all three of them were involved.

October 1994

Tara was getting ready for her first high school dance, Homecoming. David Hale asked her right after school started. She liked him. He played football, baseball, and was on the student council.

They had hung out over the summer when they played spin the bottle, and he was her very first kiss. After school started, he walked with her to class and the cheerleaders and football players all ate lunch together. It seemed like a natural consequence of their mutual orbit in the high school social hierarchy.

Then there was Jax Teller, or “Jaxass” as Donna and Tara had started calling him after the incident at the Homecoming game last weekend. Everyone in school had heard that Jax pushed up on Tara after she ran into him while cutting through the smoking area to get to the game on time.

Half the school, well the female half, were insanely jealous of her. The other half, the guys, wished they had the cajones that Jax had because they all had a serious crush on Tara.

Hale was royally pissed and wanted to defend Tara’s honor but they weren’t a couple so he just made sure to walk with Tara between classes. Jax had started making it a point to irritate her after she had the audacity to reject his advances. He thought she should have some backup trying to deal with the obnoxious, self-styled biker Prince of Charming.

Hale was probably the only guy in school who had no issue stepping up on Teller and his white trash band of “brothers.” Sure, he’d had his ass handed to him a few times over the years but it was worth it. His dad was a county judge who knew that the Sons of Anarchy weren’t just “Harley enthusiasts” and their automotive shop and clubhouse were a front for some seriously illegal activities.

So when Tara said she was going to Opie’s birthday party at the SAMCRO clubhouse, he was shocked. Those guys would eat her alive. Then Tara said her dad was alright with it because him,

John Teller, and Piney Winston were old war buddies. Hale knew Piney would watch her like a hawk but she could also hold her own after kicking Teller in the nuts.

He had also overhead Jax say in Algebra that he was “going on a run” the night of the party, so at least he wouldn’t be there to harass Tara. David knew enough to know that a run was usually sketchy but the less he worried about that, the less he cared about Teller.

Tara thought Jax would be nicer after Opie’s party and the kiss they shared, but he said nothing at school. He kept right on irritating her. She knew he was acting like he played her, so she kept playing right along. She was not going to give him the satisfaction of knowing his snub stung even a little. That is exactly what Jax’s playbook worked on. High school girls’ insecurities. Treat them bad and they’ll want you more.

“Oh look, it’s Miss Goody Two-Shoes and Captain America. Have you named all of your babies yet?” taunted Jax from behind them as David walked her to math class. He was ready to retort back when Tara interrupted, “Oh looky, it’s Jaxass, the Biker Gang Prince Of Nothing. Shouldn’t you be hitting up some skank Croweater-in-training instead of harassing me?” Hale almost fell on his ass laughing at the look of disbelief, then rage, on Jax’s face.

No girl ever talked to Jax that way. Every girl wanted Jax to just look at them, let alone corner and kiss them, and here was little Tara Knowles, a freshman, calling him out on his bullshit. That shit couldn’t go unchecked. “Oh darlin’ you only wished you were half as talented as a Croweater.”

Tara laughed so loud half the hallway stopped to see the side show. “Yeah, I’ll think I’ll pass on having the honor of catching whatever strain of gonasyphaherpalitis that Petrie dish you call a ‘club’ have cooked up this week.”

With that, she turned on her heels and dragged a dying laughing Donna into class as the bell rang. Opie looked at Jax and couldn’t help but laugh at Tara’s ability to get under Jax’s skin and stay there. He knew Tara had ties in Jax and it was fun to see him finally meet his match.

Chapter End Notes

> “I Can Do Bad All By Myself” Main Artist, Malted Milk; Mary J. Blige, Composer - Lyricist; Chuck Harmon, Composer - Lyricist

Chapter 13: Do You Know?

Chapter Summary

Tara has to leave love behind to find out where she's going to.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own any of these characters.

Theme From Mahogany (Do You Know Where You're Going To)

"Do you know where you're going to? Do you like the things that life is showing you? Where are you going to? Do you know?"

When Tara left for college to San Diego, Donna almost went with her. They both were at the top of their class and both were with the loves of their lives. Donna stayed and went to nursing school at the community college. Opie and her married before Tara left. Tara was the maid of honor and Jax was the best man. They were married at Saint Bernadette's and the reception was at the clubhouse. That's where Tara first got to hear the club's classy wedding vows.

"I promise to treat you as good as my leather and ride you as much as my Harley."

Her father laughed, but the look on his face when he looked at her and Jax told Tara that this was not the life he wanted for her. He liked Jax, and had been good friends with JT and Piney, but knew that they lived a completely different life than he, or Tara's mother, wanted for her. He knew this was not a world she could try to fit into without compromising who she was at her core. He also knew that she would have to ask those questions and find the answers for herself.

Jax was madly in love with Tara, and she the same. She wanted him to leave with her, to build a life together outside of Charming, away from the club. He almost left with her until Gemma got wind of their plans.

Tara met Jax at the bus depot ready to leave together. When she arrived, Jax was on his bike but had no luggage. It was in that moment that she knew he would never leave Charming. She didn't even have to ask why, she knew it was the club. In that moment, she thought she couldn't hate anyone more than she hated Jackson Teller.

She hated him for choosing the club over their love. Over the life they could build together. She should have known that the crown prince would stay. Why leave when your entire life was already

laid out for you?

Jax asked her to stay, knowing she couldn't but he had hoped. He even bought a ring. He didn't propose right off the bat, and in that moment that she said she couldn't stay, he hated her. "Little Tara is packing her bags and running away." She felt like he had stabbed her right in the gut. She cried right there in front of him. Little Tara had become his term of endearment for her, and now it was his weapon, cutting both ways.

Jax felt like a complete shitbag but wouldn't show it. He just loved her so much and even thought for a hot second that knocking her up would be a good idea. Then in that moment he knew it was the worst idea and realized he had to let her go.

She knew they couldn't do long distance. She could stay faithful, he was her first and only boyfriend. Just staying faithful with her in Charming was a challenge for Jax. There was always the threat of other girls, and grown women, Croweaters, ready and willing to service him the minute she was out of sight, out of mind. She knew he would be balls deep in a Croweater before the bus hit the city limits.

This was normal for him. She would have to abide by a completely different set of morals and standards if she was going to live in his world. She tried but couldn't and was tired of fighting random girls and women over him. Maybe time and maturity would change that but deeper down she knew there was a limit to what either could change in Jax Teller.

When Tara arrived in San Diego, she completely immersed herself in college life. She loved it. She had taken AP classes all through high school and was able to enter as a sophomore. Right away she joined every club she could find. Sororities didn't appeal to her, but she definitely enjoyed the parties. She made fast friends with the pre-med students and her life revolved around school.

She didn't date, telling herself she was focused on school. She had plenty of guys interested and her dad's cousin that she was staying with finally talked her into going in a date right before the end of the first semester. She felt like she was cheating on Jax the whole time. They went to dinner and a movie, and when he walked her back to her cousin's apartment she excused herself with a hug. She then cried in the bathroom. Luckily, her cousin was out so she was able to really let it all out.

She tried not to think about what Jax was probably doing because she knew exactly what he was doing. When she talked to Donna she avoided any talk of Jax but surreptitiously got updates via Donna couching it in terms of whatever Opie was doing in the club.

Tara visited her dad during the holidays and would see Donna. They would have lunch and catch up. Donna avoided any talk of Jax and Tara avoided any places she knew he would be. So basically she went to Mass, met with Donna, and hung out with her dad.

Tara graduated in three years and then went Chicago for medical school. From that point on, her dad came to visit her because of her grueling schedule. She was tired of having no life and decided to go out with some friends from school.

She met Joshua Kohn in the bar they were at that night. When they exchanged numbers, he handed her his business card with the ATF logo. She saw that as a good thing, knowing exactly that he was the opposite of everything Jax was. Little did she know that this was an evil omen rather than a good sign.

Chapter End Notes

"Theme from Mahogany (Do You Know Where You're Going To?); Main Artist, Diana Ross; Songwriters: Michael Masser and Gerald Goffin

Chapter 14: Love at First Sting

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own none of these characters.

Rock You Like a Hurricane

"The night is calling. I have to go. The wolf is hungry. He runs the show. He's licking his lips. He's ready to win. On the hunt tonight for love at first sting“

Tara gave her statement to Hale and the most she could go with against Gemma and Unser was disturbance. Apparently, Unser was in some shit for saying he needed to see permits because if there was an issue with permits, that office would contact her directly. He was looking at disciplinary action too.

Gemma and him would get fined since there wasn’t a direct threat. Gemma might have community service too. That was rich considering she reigned over the Taste of Charming every year. Tara was fine with that too. As long as Gemma faced some consequences for acting like she was the actual Queen of Charming instead of an obnoxious, menopausal biker mom with a serious reverse Oedipal complex.

Tara really enjoyed talking to Hale. She didn’t realize how much she missed his friendship and easy way of just listening and actually finding what she liked interesting. Back in high school they could talk about stuff like science fiction and fantasy for what seemed like hours.

He asked her to lunch and she agreed to meet him the next week on one of her days off from the hospital. She was happy just to be living in a good space on her head where she wasn’t worried about caring for anyone but herself and the little nugget on the way.

As Hale left Tara’s, he drove past the prospect Jax had stationed a block down from her place and had to laugh. Jax’s territorialism over Tara had not changed in the 15 years since they started dating. Now that she wasn’t his to claim ownership over anymore, he was going to be her friend again. If that led to something more, well he was more than ready to pursue and persist, no matter how long it took.

All Jax could do was get updates from the prospect on how Hale was at Tara’s for almost two hours. It didn’t take two hours to give a statement, did it? Hale was loving this turn of events and definitely milking any time he could get with Tara. She’s pregnant with his child though and he’ll

be damned if Captain America thinks he is going to worm his way back into Tara's life, pregnant or not.

December 1994

It was now basketball season and Tara was busy with Donna planning all of the cheer and dance routines for the season. Jax had not let up in his quest to aggravate her, but she honestly didn't care. She was still harboring the crush, but since he decided to try and play her, she was actively ignoring him. They didn't run in the same crowd, except for Donna was now dating Opie Winston.

Opie had no issue with Tara avoiding Jax, because he didn't blame her. He knew Jax was in deep but would never admit to anything beyond claiming he was just proving that she was a snob. Opie had no issues with being pussy-whipped by Donna.

She was the best thing that ever happened to him, especially since his mom tried to take off with him and he had pretty much hitchhiked his way back to Charming. He spent any time not working at TM with Donna. It was only a matter of time before Jax would admit too that Tara had ties in him and the pull would overcome his pride.

Jax was still was the town pussy hound. When he wasn't irritating Tara, he was fucking girls and getting blow jobs under the bleachers. This was par for the course for him. The thing that was changing was that he was starting to see Tara's face every time he hooked up with anyone, high school girls or Croweaters.

He brushed it off as coming up with better ways to annoy her. In the back of his head, he knew it was more than that, no matter how hard he tried to explain it away. The night he hung out with her at Opie's party at the clubhouse was always on his mind. No amount of sex, booze, or weed seemed to be able to rid his mind of how much he actually missed the connection they made.

He was obsessed with that kiss they had when he dropped her off. He knew he was into something because the minute they started kissing he wanted to take her right then and there. As if by telepathy, her father opened the door and the moment was over. All he could do was think of it on a loop in his head no matter how hard he tried to stop, he couldn't.

When Hale walked with her in the halls, it drove him absolutely insane. He could not let Captain America go any further than that with her. She wasn't his, but he knew that this shit was going beyond any kind of just hoping for a hookup when he made sure to follow them everywhere to bother her. He even started trying to figure where she was after school in case Hale was trying to push up on her without him around to keep that shit in check.

Tara had been talking to David more since he was walking her to class. They would go out on weekends as a group with the cheerleaders, football, and basketball players. Jax knew this but

couldn’t follow them all over the place without looking like a psycho stalker so it drove him nuts. He figured they weren’t doing anything past PG-rated with a group of other kids around though.

The point of no return for Jax was the pep rally for the first basketball game of the season. The girls had planned a routine and dance number that topped anything they had done so far. They worked with the varsity squads and were excited for the rally.

David was on the sidelines with the rest of the juniors for the rally and Tara had told him they had a pretty intense cheer and dance routine planned. As the girls came out, for the first dance routine the outfits they had were, to say the least risqué. They had Bowie lightning face paint and black and gold leotards with low cut necklines. It was the music that took it to the next level though.

The first routine was to **You’ve Got Another Thing Comin'** by Judas Priest. Jax was sitting with the smoking section crowd who were pretty much all heavy metal fans. Holy shit, who knew cheerleaders listened to heavy metal?

If that Lita Ford, "**Kiss Me Deadly**", routine at Opie’s birthday was hot, this was a teenage boy’s fantasy come to life, right in front of them, and at school. The whole section started catcalling and head banging. The principal had to get on the air horn to quiet them down.

As if that wasn’t the best thing since Baywatch, the next dance was to the radio edit of “Rock You Like A Hurricane” by the Scorpions. Even Opie was shocked. Talk about love at first sting. Jax was absolutely done. This shit was for real now and he had to get to Tara as soon as possible.

Chapter End Notes

“Rock You Like A Hurricane”; Main Artist: The Scorpions; Composer: Rudolph Schenker; Lyricists: Klaus Meine, Herman Rarebell

“You’ve Got Another Thing Comin’ “; Main Artist: Judas Priest; Songwriters: Rob Halford. K.K. Dunning, Glenn Tipton

Chapter 15: Crowded House

Chapter Summary

It’s getting crowded up in Tara’s house when she lives in a town like Charming

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Don’t Dream It’s Over

"There is freedom within. There is freedom without. Try to catch the deluge in a paper cup. There's a battle ahead. Many battles are lost. But you'll never ysee the end of the road while you're traveling with me.”

"Hooooly shit. I can’t believe they want $280 for a Burberry jumpsuit. That’s about half of one shift of pay. Opie would die if I spent that much money on a baby suit.” Donna brought takeout and she and Tara were shopping online for luxury baby clothes. Tara agreed, “Yeah, they outgrow about a week later too” as she took another bite of the Happy Family Chinese takeout.

“So how’s Jax doing with the whole ‘boundaries’ thing?” Donna knew that when it came to Tara, Jax had no sense of physical or emotional space. When they were teenagers, Jax was glued to Tara’s side once they finally came together.

“Well, it’s basically an episode of ‘National Geographic presents Jax Teller marking his territory.’ There’s a prospect with me 24/7. He stops by nightly to check on me and always looks impossibly handsome. I have to keep at least 10 feet of space between us because he’s pouring on that pheromone sex in a bottle aftershave he’s had since he was 16.” Tara let out an exhausted laugh. “I swear he wasn’t wearing it regularly when we were together just a few months ago. He knows that shit gets me naked in less than three seconds.”

Tara’s hormones have wreaked havoc on her judgement lately, but she did buy some sex toys which have helped. However, a substitute is one thing, actually being in close proximity to him on a daily basis for the first time since the incident at the clubhouse is really testing her resolve.

“Well, I wouldn’t fault you if you gave into temptation but that’s a Pandora’s Box, so tread lightly” Donna warned.

Everyone in Charming now knows that Tara is pregnant with Jax's baby after the Jerry Springer drama that went down in her front yard earlier that day. Old Mother Hubbard two doors down was on the party line with the rosary prayer circle in 2.5 seconds flat. They'd been praying for Tara since she was 14 and started dating, "that bad news Teller boy." Now they really have some praying to do when the old biddy heard Gemma Teller-Morrow yelling in Tara's front yard about her having that Teller boy's baby.

Tara closes the drapes after seeing the prayer police talking down the block and looking towards her house. Jax has stopped by for the evening check-in and she's trying to maintain that distance and lit some candles to try and distract her from Jax's cloud of cologne.

They are talking about her day and she brings up that she misses Abel. She has made it a point to make him part of their discussions, hoping to work back into some kind of relationship with him. She doesn't doubt that Gemma will be even more possessive of Abel now that she has been ordered by Jax stay away from Tara, so she is treading lightly there too.

"Please bring him by one of these nights. I miss him so much." She gets emotional with this and Jax steps towards her, "I am so sorry for not stopping by to let you know he was safe and back home." In just that split second she gives in to a weak bitch moment and lets him hold her.

Unser gets an administrative reprimand and docked pay for a week and Gemma is going to do community service for the front yard debacle. Tara has to laugh at the reigning Queen of the Taste of Charming doing community service. She is all about sending a message from this point on though. Tara Knowles is staying in Charming and will not be manipulated by the MC royal family or their sycophants.

Once the dust settled after the confrontation with Gemma, Tara called Jax to invite him to her next OB/GYN appointment. She knew it was going to be a crapshoot on him actually being able to go due to the nature of his "job" with the MC. They don't exactly work 9-5 hours so she just goes with the flow. Que sera, sera.

The conversation with Jax goes surprisingly well. He says he will try and make as many appointments as possible. Jax also insists that he drive her. He tells her that this is his chance to do it better. She knows that he is also keenly aware of their history in cars usually ending up with them in a backseat.

She wouldn't put it past him to try and use it to his advantage. With how horny she is, she might just pounce. Hell? everyone in town is getting some of his dick, she might as well too. Maybe she should buy some condoms.

NO. Cold showers and sex toys have to win the day.…Christ these hormones are off the chain.

Opie tells Jax about how the pregnancy hormones made Donna a wild animal. Tiny Beast wore him out. Jax loves this scenario playing out with him and Tara. He's nothing if not an opportunist and is not above using the same charms that won Tara over when he was 16 to win her back now.

December 1994

As Jax left the pep rally, he looked around for Tara. He saw her with the cheerleaders and dance team in the main atrium. He tried to keep a calm demeanor, but the thoughts of their kiss kept invading his mind. It took all of his self-control not to walk up to her and just run his hands through her long, silky black hair and kiss her again.

Tara clocked him approaching and the predatory look on his face triggered that same sense of desire and fear she's gotten around him since the smoking area incident. David was coming at the same time and she knew this was going to not end well unless she ran interference with a quickness.

She called out to David, "Hey, David! How did you like the dance?!" David watched as Teller rolled up on Tara along with him. He could sense and see that predatory glint in his eye. "Tara, it was amazing! You guys killed it out there." He went to hug her and that's when Jax moved in.

"Knowles, that was the hottest thing since you and Donna danced at the clubhouse." The innuendo dropped in that was not lost on David since he wasn't there to know it was a dance/cheer routine; not them swinging from the stripper pole clad only in titty tassels and the rest of what his imagination could think of.

Tara was not oblivious to what Jax was implying too and knew she had to clarify that scenario real quick.

"Yes, Teller, you got front row seats to the cheer dance that helped us win the regional cheer competition. I'm glad you enjoyed this one too."

They all stared in silence for a minute and David started to ask Tara if she needed a lift home. Jax interrupted and said, "I'm giving you a lift home tonight, Knowles, come with me when you are ready."

Tara could not believe the arrogance in that statement. He's not just going to order her around because he liked their dance after being nothing but a thorn in her side for weeks. Now he's crowding in on her trying to make nice? This Prince of Charming bullshit stops right here and now.

"Thanks, but I'll have to take a rain check for both of you since I'm catching a ride with Donna and her mom. I'll see you later at the library, David." She turned and walked away at that moment and left both guys in a stunned silence.

Chapter End Notes

“Don’t Dream It’s Over”; Main Artist: Crowded House; Writer: Neil Finn

Chapter 16: Here You Come Again

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Here You Come Again

"Here you come again just when I've begun to get myself together. You waltz right in the door just like you've done before and wrap my heart 'round your little finger."

Tara and Jax are falling into a weird sort of domesticity. They go to their first OB/GYN appointment together in Sacramento. It becomes weekly until they rule out if the baby has the congenital heart defect that runs in his family. They make a day of it and have lunch in the Old Sacramento Waterfront district.

Then she goes shopping for baby clothes and it's fun watching him look at the prices. It reminds her of when they were teenagers and in love. Back then she would daydream about marrying Jax and having a family with him. She did the cliché teenage girl stuff like writing Tara Teller or Tara Knowles-Teller in her notebooks and naming their babies.

She doesn't trust her hormones, so she chooses the path of magical thinking and believes they're both still in love for just a few hours a week. It's supposed to make it easier for her when they go their separate ways at the end of the day. At least, that's what she tells herself.

He comes to her house almost every night to check in on her or he calls to check in if he is on a run or other club business. Since she was working from home, she makes the Prospect lunch and then she started having dinner ready when Jax stopped by. She told herself that it was just the polite thing to do since she was already having dinner.

It starts to feel like love again when they do dishes together. Then the bubble breaks and he heads home, leaving a prospect stationed for the night shift. When she is in bed alone at night she tries not to think about what he is doing after he leaves to go home or, more likely, back to the clubhouse.

She wasn't trying to fool herself but when she thinks about how Donna has her family, she thinks it would be at least worth a try with Jax. She finally just admits to herself that she is lonely and still in love with him.

About a month into them playing this bizarre version of Ozzie and Harriet, she thought it would be fun to make a nicer dinner and see if he wants to watch a movie afterwards. She keeps telling herself this is just a friendly thing to do, but finally admits to herself again that she is tired of being alone and still loves him.

It's a Friday and she subtly made sure the previous night that he will be there for dinner the next night. Around noon on Friday she decided to go to the grocery store to pick up his favorite dinner: steak, shrimp, baked potatoes, and a Black Forest cake mix for dessert.

As she is picking up items, her back is sore since she is now six months pregnant and showing. As she turns down the pharmacy aisle to get some Tylenol, she sees a couple at the other end of the aisle laughing and kissing by the condoms. She laughs and thinks they are cute.

As she got closer, however, her heart dropped into her stomach when she realized she was looking at the back of Jax's kutte and shaggy blonde hair, kissing a very pretty girl in her early 20's. She heard him say he would see her at the clubhouse later tonight, "after I check in on the baby mama."

The girl giggles loudly at the baby mama phrasing. As they break apart from the kiss, Jax turned and saw her behind them. He's shocked and immediately started to say something, but she turned away quickly, ready to cry and vomit right there in the middle of the aisle.

She felt absolutely humiliated and went into auto-pilot, walked away from the full cart, and left the store. When she got to her car she saw Jax run out the front of the store and towards her car.

Logically, she knew she shouldn't be upset. He is single. She hadn't given him any signs that she was interested in getting back together. Tonight she was going to see how things went and maybe watch a movie. Well, now she has her answer.

Jax ran up to her, "Tara! What are you doing…" She looked at him. "I was grocery shopping for dinner tonight. I was going to make steak, shrimp, and Black Forest cake for you. After that I was going to see if you wanted to watch a movie."

She was trying not to cry but failing miserably. "Well, I guess I have my answer. You're single and don't have to explain yourself. Please don't worry about, 'checking in on the baby mama.' I'm going to eat some leftovers and finish some work that I am behind on. Please don't worry about checking in on me, you can go through with your other plans."

How could she be so dumb? Did she really think he was going to settle down with her again when he obviously has other younger, prettier options? She wonders if she's a porn star, Croweater, or an actual fledgling girlfriend. Does he see her face..of course he doesn't, the girl is younger and prettier than her.

She feels absolutely stupid for letting him back into her life so easily and allowing herself to think about them so intimately again. This is exactly why she avoided this weak bitch shit for so long. She needs to call David and go to lunch with him. Nobody wants to date a pregnant woman, but if they start being friends again maybe by the time she's popped the kid out, they can go on an actual date.

And why is it when shitty stuff happens, the worst songs are on the radio? She adores Whitney Houston but why does **Where Do Broken Hearts Go** have to be playing right now?

December 1994

Tara walked away from Jax and David and approached Donna. “Hey, can your mom give me a ride home?” Donna looked up and saw Jax and David staring after Tara. “Is this a rhetorical question because those two are trying to go National Geographic and both want to take you home?” Tara gave her a begging look and Donna laughed. “Of course you can, but only if you tell me the juicy details of what just went down.”

When they get back to Donna’s, they finish their homework and then talk about the drama. “Well, David is definitely better boyfriend material, and Jax is absolutely arrogant and presumptuous rolling up on you like that. ‘Get on my bike, woman’ That’s some cave man shit right there.” Tara bites her lip and admits, “I can’t see myself making out with David. Would it be wrong to make out with Jax, and have David for the steady relationship?” Tara knows that is just wrong and goes against everything she knows is right. “Jax will never settle down. I just know I can’t trust that he’s not hitting someone else up on the down low.”

At that moment, they heard a motorcycle pull up in front of Donna’s. “Oh, it’s Opie! Let’s go see what he says. As Donna opened the door, they were both surprised to see Jax with him. Opie looked confused too and said immediately, “I had no idea why Numb Nuts here wanted to tag along, but now seeing who else is here, I know exactly why he came along.”

Donna looked questioningly at Tara, “Are you good with this?” Tara nodded, “Yeah, I’m good.” Donna didn’t look so sure, Ok, well I’ll be in the den with Opie if you need anything.”

Jax looks at Tara in a way that she is not sure she really likes or should be really scared of. “So are you busy right now Knowles? I wanted to talk to you back at school but you seemed to be in a hurry to get away from us.”

Tara is not sure how to take that and tries to come across as nonchalant but has a feeling this is going to get serious quickly, “No, I’m free at the moment, what’s up?”

Jax cuts right in the point. “Let’s go for a ride on my bike.” Well, that’s blunt. “I’m not really keen on going anywhere with you unsupervised after what happened in the smoking area. There were witnesses there and you practically molested me so I’m not comfortable going anywhere alone just yet.”

“That’s fair. Would you be interested in just making out then?” Tara turned to walk away, and Jax grabbed her wrist. “Relax! I’m just kidding. I do want to ask if you’ll go on a date with me.”

Tara was in shock. “You’ve been nothing but rude and irritating to me for the last few weeks. We had that kiss and I thought you liked me but then acted like you just were playing me at school. So no, I don’t want to go on a date. Besides, from what I heard from Candy Eglee in gym class today, Jax Teller doesn’t do dates, he just hooks up under the bleachers for blow jobs and booty calls.”

Jax figured all out honesty was the best approach at this point. “Look, I’m sorry for being an asshole. I’m not going to lie. I’ve never been on a date. I usually just hook up. Hit it and quit it, but I really do like you. I’m sorry for being an asshole. I want to take you on an actual date, in public, if you don’t trust me. We can double with Opie and Donna if that makes you feel more comfortable.”

Tara wasn’t sure what to think and figured since he was being startling honest, one date, with Donna and Opie would be ok. “Ok, I’ll go on a double date with you. If you try and play me again you’ll wish I just kicked your nuts back to puberty again.”

Donna was obviously listening at the door and walked right into the room with Opie who looked like he just saw the second coming of Christ. “Are you serious? You, of all people were just giving me shit for being pussy-whipped for going on a date, and now you are going on a date. This is rich.”

Jax flipped him off and replied “Fuck you, too.”

Classy. All Tara could think was that this was never the way she envisioned her being asked on her first official date. She had a feeling that this was going to be a bad idea, or the worst idea ever.

Chapter End Notes

"Here You Come Again” Main Artist: Dolly Parton; Songwriters: Barry Mann, Cynthia Well

“Where Do Broken Hearts Go”; Main Artist: Whitney Houston; Songwriters: Frank Wildhorn, Chuck Jackson

Chapter 17: Closer to Finest

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Closer to Fine

"I'm trying to tell you something about my life. Maybe give me insight between black and white. And the best thing you've ever done for me. Is to help me take my life less seriously. It's only life after all"

"Tara, that's not what it looked like. I was joking." Jax tried to throw out casually like it was meant as some off kilter stand up schtick that she should be laughing along with him like his latest hook up did back in the grocery store.

Tara found her mental footing for the first time since she saw and heard him in the grocery aisle. "Seriously? How is that even funny? Talking about me like some sort of low-rent Croweater you knocked up to one of your hundreds of cheap thrills? I'm good. Did you talk about Wendy like that? You know what, don't answer that question."

"I get that we aren't a couple but just a basic level of respect for me as the mother of your child isn't too much to expect. I guess 'baby mama' is on par for the course for your basic bitch garbage dumpster bargain bin misogynistic motorcycle gangbanger, though."

The look of shock on Jax's face was matched only by the sadness on Tara's face.

"Tara, we need to talk."

"About what? About how you keep finding new ways to humiliate me? First Ima, then ignoring me for eight weeks, now this. Nope. Look, I'm going to be late for my prenatal yoga workout session and you've done your check-in with me for today. I'll see you later."

She was exhausted and reached for her purse on the seat. She saw the pamphlet that she picked up at the hospital when she was there last week to get some things from her office. "Oh, and here is a packet I was going to show you tonight about Lamaze classes. Think about it. It's actually helpful, if you're interested. If you're not interested, I'm going to ask Donna because I need a partner to take the class. I'll talk to you soon."

As Tara drove away, she realized how much better she actually felt. The level of clarity she felt in that moment was like she had flushed out a septic system that had clogged her mind. She was glad she ran into this. It's the universe once again reminding her why she shouldn't put faith into things she has no control over. Jax has his life and she has hers. They just don't fit together anymore.

She has to be rational.

He lives by a different moral compass and she's resetting hers closer to fine. Back to the way it's meant be. His life is the one that's not normal. Hers is.

When she got home she texted David. “How about that lunch?”

Jax watched as Tara drove away from him and all he could think was, how the hell did he manage to fuck up this chance, again? The universe brought her back to him after ten miserable years where all he did was pray to a God he’s not sure exists to bring her back.

She came back and instead of owning his shit he tried pushing her away in the worst way possible. Since he first noticed her all those years ago in that folk dress and ballet outfit, all he has ever seen is her beautiful face, her black shiny hair, and her shy smile.

Then he saw her at the Apothecary and the Earth tilted its axis closer to right and he had been given another chance. She told him that she couldn’t be with him anymore but he was determined to change that. Those trips to Sacramento were the best part of his week. He noticed that Tara was warming up but he was giving her space and knew that she wasn’t easily wooed. She had always been that way.

She guarded her virtue like Fort Knox when they were dating and it drove him crazy. A girl that actually respected herself was new to him. All of the usual lines and moves didn’t with on her. As he got to know her, he fell hard and fast.

Of course his dick had to do the thinking after running into one of the newer Croweaters at the store which led him like a magnet to the condom section. All the girls knew about Tara and were careful not to say anything even remotely disrespectful. He thought it was a harmless comment that got the girl giggling and his dick twitching. When he turned and saw her face, his heart dropped 10,000 feet off the cliff.

He drops Melanie, Mandy, Melissa or whoever she is, off at her house and tells her he can’t make it to the clubhouse tonight. She gets it and he heads back to TM to try and figure yet again out how to fix yet another one of his fuck ups.

December 1994

As Donna and her prepared for their double date, Tara asked her what Opie and her do on their dates. “Well, mostly we’ve gone to the movies and I have hung out at TM. We leave before the parties start on the weekends though. We come back to my house and we hang out, watch movies and talk. We have made out but he respects me and hasn’t pushed for sex. We discussed it and when I’m ready we’ll figure it out”

Tara was shocked that they discussed sex. She was a year younger than most of her classmates due to skipping a grade so she hadn't thought that far ahead. She wasn't naive or prude but she definitely wasn't ready for sex. With Jax's reputation she figured they would get through one date and he would move on because he needs to get laid.

"My parents love Opie. My dad knows that the Sons of Anarchy aren't Boy Scouts, but he knows Piney too and says he's good with him as a chaperone if we do stay for parties."

Tara was nervous because she still couldn't believe Jax asking her out on a date that wasn't some idea of a joke again to play her. She liked the guy that she got to know at Opie's party. It would be interesting to see if he could actually maintain the maturity level of at least a sophomore.

The guys show up and the girls get on their bikes. Jax is so good looking it's unfair. In turn, Jax is overwhelmed by how beautiful Tara is.

She's absolutely ethereal. Suddenly, he remembers reading and watching Doctor Zhivago in Honors World Literature and History, the only two classes he gives a shit about. Lara was the classic blonde beauty and the great love of Zhivago's life but it was the black-haired Tonya, Zhivago's long suffering wife, who appealed to him. She was darkly beautiful like Tara and faithful to a fault. She understood his flaws and loved him to the point that she risked everything to save their family after Zhivago seemingly abandoned them.



As Tara approaches, he still just can’t believe how beautiful she is. Her almond eyes, porcelain skin, poise, and grace remind him of one of those ballerinas in a music box. And that’s exactly what he wants to do, put her safely somewhere where only he can have her. A place where nothing evil or violent will ever come near her.



What the hell is happening to him? Something has fundamentally changed and he decides whatever it is, he wants to hold onto it for the rest of his life.

Chapter End Notes

“Closer to Fine”; Main Artist: The Indigo Girls; Songwriter: Emily Saliers

Chapter 18: Impetuous Fire

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own nothing you recognize

What is a Youth?

"What is a youth? Impetuous fire. What is a maid? Ice and desire. The world wags on."

Tara met David for lunch the next day. She decided to go to the pizza place they used to hang out in high school. "So how is pregnancy treating you? I will say that you are definitely glowing."

Tara blushed, "It's uncomfortable. I feel like an alien has invaded my body. I constantly eat and he's sitting on my bladder. They both laughed and Tara forgot how much fun she had talking to David. He was such a great friend during high school, even after she started dating Jax.

"So what's new with you?" I feel like your whole life was building up to you being a cop." David laughed. "Yeah, my dad and brother both said I was born a cop." Tara agreed, "We were always playing cops and robbers on the playground and shockingly I came in to patch everyone up after you and Jax inevitably started fighting."

The elephant in the room was obviously her status with Jax, so David just went for it. "I heard what happened with Jax cheating, I'm sorry. That's just shitty.." Tara shifted uncomfortably. "Look, I'm not going to lie. I've liked you since high school. If you're with Jax, I respect that but if not I would like to see you more if that's a possibility. I get that this might not be the best time but I'm here for you as a friend too."

Tara was so happy to hear this. "I was thinking the same, David. I really would like to see you more too. Maybe we can start hanging out again. I'm not with Jax right now." It's been weird thinking for her thinking about that, much less saying it out loud. "Being pregnant is a roller coaster so if I act possessed, it's the hormones." David laughed. "I can handle hormones. You should see some of the people I arrest, at least pregnancy is a legit reason to be in a bad mood."

She laughed loudly at that. Just then her phone buzzed with a text. "I have a yoga class to get to so text me your number and here's mine. Thank you so much for a great lunch." David hugged her and just as they were leaving six motorcycles pulled up.

Tara had to roll her eyes. Of course, the prospect let Jax know where she was and who she was with. She was surprised he didn't show up earlier. David hesitated but Tara looked at him. "It's all good." As David walked out, Jax bumped into him as he walked in. "Hey, Davey, What's new? I see you're having lunch with Tara."

David knew better than to take the bait but responded, “Yeah, it’s great reconnecting with old friends.” He paused and looked at Tara, “I’ll see you soon, Tara, maybe same time next week?” Tara loved his calm demeanor. “Definitely” and David headed to his car.

The look on Jax’s face was priceless. All Tara could think was, good grief, this alpha male shit never changes.

Opie, Tig, Happy, Juice, and Chibs stayed outside on their bikes. Jax sat at the booth and looked at her like he was going to throw her over his shoulder and take her back to a cave. “So, you going on dates now?”

She looked at Jax and started laughing. “Yeah, I’m going on hot lunch dates with David. What’s up with you rolling up with the posse? Are you here to take me on a hot lunch date, too?

Jax looked at her in that same way that always sent a trickle of a mixture of desire and fear from her chest to the pit of her stomach. Why did he have to do that? Think sex toys, Tara, think sex toys.

“No, but I would like to take you out to dinner” Jax replied.

She looked at him suspiciously. “Oh really? And where are we going?” Their dates in high school usually started out at the movies, or Daisy’s Diner, then progressed to making out and eventually lead to…ok, this train of thought has to stop.

But hey, if he’s going to pull this alpha male, caveman bullshit, she’ll take all of these free meals and they save her the trouble of cooking.

“Well, the club is helping a family open a Thai restaurant down the street and the grand opening is tonight. Will you be my dinner date?”

December 1994

As Tara, Donna, Jax, and Opie left for their date Tara wondered what exactly they were going to do. They pulled up to the Charming movie theater which had The Crow and The Flintstones.

No one questions Jax or Opie on their age since it’s R-rated, exactly because it’s Jax and Opie. Tara tries not to act shocked, but actually holds onto Jax’s hand when they tell her the basic plot as the movie is starting.

Jax was genuinely surprised but loves when she grabs his hand. It gives him a feeling of that alpha male protectiveness. He snuck glances at Tara as they watched the movie. She is so beautiful. He put his arm around her as they share a popcorn.

As the movie is ending, Tara is trying not to cry but fails miserably. She's embarrassed that she got so weepy but Jax was actually sweet and gave her a hug and kissed her forehead.

They all head over to the ice cream parlor and talk about how they loved the movie. Jax gets flirtatious looks from the girl behind the counter, which Tara notices he actually ignores as he's placing her order too. She gets a death glare from the girl, a junior, who she assumes either hooked up with Jax, or wants to.

The front door to the ice cream parlor opened just then and David Hale walked in with another football player and two girls. They looked to be on their own double date. Tara saw David and he looked surprised to see her. Surprise turned to shock when he realized she is also on a double date with Opie, Donna, and Jax.

"Hey, Tara, how are you doing tonight?" David walks over and sees Jax place his arm possessively around her shoulders. Tara nervously looks between the two, "Great, we just saw The Crow and are hanging out. What are you guys up to?"

Hale's football buddy was eyeing Jax and looked at Tara, "Didn't Teller push up on you in the smoking area at the Homecoming game?" Tara could sense Jax switching gears. She grabbed his hand under the table.

"Oh yeah, we were just laughing about that, weren't we guys?" Donna laughed, "I was just telling Tara I was going to do some backflips and take out him and Opie that night. Jax went to stand up but Hale didn't want this to go any further, for Tara's sake.

"Well, it's good seeing you Tara. I'll talk to you soon. Jax, Opie, Donna too. Have a great night."

After Hale left, Tara had never felt more relief in her life. She looked at Donna who could obviously tell they dodged a huge bullet. Donna breaks the silence and brings the conversation back around to the movie.

As they talk about the movie, it's closing time and they get up to leave. Jax takes her hand and she's pretty sure she's falling for him. When they leave on the motorcycles, Opie takes off towards Donna's and Jax takes Tara home.

He walks her to the door and she holds her breath as he gives her that look. "I had such a good time, Jax. It was really the best first date I could think of." Jax thinks the same and as he leans in to kiss her, he has decided that she is his first and last girlfriend.

Chapter End Notes

"What Is a Youth? (Love Theme from Romeo and Juliet (1968)"; Main Artist: Sofia Karlsson; Songwriter: Nino Roto; Lyrics: Eugene Walter

Chapter 19: Coming Home

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own nothing you recognize.

Mama, I'm Coming Home

"You took me in and you drove me out. Yeah, you had me hypnotized, yeah. Lost and found and turned around by the fire in your eyes. You made me cry, you told me lies but I can't stand to say goodbye. Mama, I'm coming home."

August 1998

When Jax met Tara at the bus depot to leave for San Diego, he knew she was going to be devastated. He wanted to leave with her and almost made it out of TM's lot when his mom stopped him.

"Where are you going to? Are you really running off with that gash without even the decency to tell your family?" Gemma looked like a pit viper ready to strike. "That bitch has poisoned you into thinking that the club isn't good enough for you. This is your legacy. Your father built this club for you."

Jax cut in, "Dad told me he wanted me to do what I loved."

Gemma laughed and just kept on like Jax wasn't there. "Oh please, once you're done prospecting you will be Clay's right-hand man. You will take this club to new heights that your father never dreamed of, and if that little bitch thinks she's going to rip you away from me….the club well she's got another thing coming."

"Don't call her a bitch or a gash. I have my GED and am going to take classes at the community college near UCSD. I can get a journalism and business degree then come back here. It will help us run the club, build, and expand it."

Gemma laughed, "You don't need a degree to do that. She really has you believing that we aren't as good as they are because we aren't as educated as her family."

”Her mother was an uppity bitch and her father is a drunk who thinks she’s the smarter and prettier than everyone else. She has turned you into a pussy bitch with all this talk.”

Jax finally had enough, “I get to decide what I do with my life, not you. Just because you’re happy being an Old Lady doesn’t mean she’s wrong for wanting to do something different.

Gemma slapped his face so hard there was a visible handprint, “I’m only going to say this once. Take your shit back in the clubhouse. Go tell that little bitch that you are not leaving and that you, and this town, will be better off without her.”

Jax started to interrupt but Gemma was so quick to the draw he knew better than to interrupt.

“If you don’t straighten this out, Clay and I will be more than happy to and she will wish she never laid eyes on you.”

Jax knew the threat wasn’t just implied anymore when she brought Clay into it. Jax had seen Clay punch a sweet butt at a charter in Nevada for getting mouthy with him while they were on a run a few weeks ago. He knew Clay had no issues with meting out violence to women in the name of the club, or any perceived threat to his personal honor.

Clay had made it clear on more than one occasion that he thought Tara was just some passing teenage sweetbutt pussy. He told Jax that he would eventually get tired of her once he found new pussy to chase.

He just knew that Jax would drop her once he was done prospecting and had free rein over the pussy buffet that came with being fully-patched and the Son of John Teller, President of the First Nine of SAMCRO.

As Jax pulled into the bus depot on his Harley, he checked his pocket to make sure the ring he bought her a week ago was still there.

If he could talk her into staying, they could get married. They could leave right there from the depot for a few days, get married, and return to Charming. Once they were back, he would help her find a way to still accomplish her dreams.

He just knew that he had to have her and couldn’t live without her. He was also scared of what Clay and Gemma would do to her, if he left with her, but he could make it work, love, and protect her if they were married. If they had kids, his mom would come around and love Tara too. They wouldn’t hurt the mother of his children.

When he saw Tara, he saw her face and knew that his plan wasn’t going to work. He held off on proposing and started with asking her to stay. Once he talked her into staying he would propose.

“Jax, where is your luggage? Why are you on your motorcycle? We agreed that Opie would drop you off after you met him at the end of the block by TM.”

Jax tried not to look at her but could see the betrayal in her eyes. “Tara, please stay with me. We can be together and you could take classes with Donna.” Tara was in shock. “Jax, I have a full ride scholarship for pre-med. If I pass it up I won’t get another chance.”

Jax knew then that marriage and babies were off the table. He couldn’t take this away from her and he didn’t want Gemma and Clay coming after her if he left with her. He had to push her away so she would leave for the scholarship.

“Your mom talked you out of this, didn’t she? Jax, I love your mom but you have to live your life. We could have this life together. Don’t let them take this from us.” She reached for him but he stepped back.

“This is my life too. The club is my father’s legacy and we could have a life together here. What’s so wrong with that? Are you too good for the bikers now?

Tara looked stunned, “What? No! We talked about this. You could get a degree and come back and build up the club”

Jax felt like a complete shitbag but kept right on, “So you do think we aren’t good enough without a degree. College isn’t the end all to everything.” He almost couldn’t finish, but knew he had to, “So I have to leave but you can’t stay; of course, Little Tara is packing her bags and running away when her loyalty is tested.”

Tara started crying. He wanted to hold her so bad but right as he almost folded, she walked away before he could take it back. He wanted to take it all back and hold her.

He knew he couldn’t so he walked away and sat on his motorcycle. He lit a cigarette and watched her look back. He could see the hope in her tear-streaked face, but all he could do was watch her walk away.

“I’m gonna miss you, babe.”

Jax got back to the clubhouse and right off the bat grabbed the nearest Croweater. Clay looked at him and pressed. “Did you see the little lady off to school?” Jax knew he had to play it off and right away tapped back into his pre-Tara persona. “I’m over her already. Now it’s time for a party and some pussy.”

All he saw was her face. All he would ever see, ever again, was her face.



The ten year cycle of weed, booze, pussy, rinse and repeat was in full effect.

Gemma looked smugly on from a distance. She knew now that they could mold Jax exactly into the tool they need to build the club up. More importantly, she would keep her crown now that the gash was gone.

Chapter End Notes

“Mama I’m Coming Home”; Main Artist: Ozzy Osbourne; Songwriters: Lenny Kilmister, Ozzy Osbourne, and Zakk Wylde

Chapter 20: Playing Games Again

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Love

"I used to think that I wasn't fine enough. And I used to think that I wasn't wild enough. But I won't waste my time tryin' to figure out. Why you playing games, what's this all about?"

Tara looked at Jax and was suspicious of his sudden interest in going on a "date" the very same day she has lunch with David Hale. As long as she's known Jax, dates were never his strong point. It was usually, a burger, fries, then the backseat.

"Since when did Charming become a hot spot for Thai food?" she asked incredulously. She had a feeling this might stem from a conversation they had when they hooked back up when she returned to Charming about how she loved Thai and Vietnamese food.

Her dad loved cooking and brought back recipes from ARVN soldiers he served along with during the war. He would tell her stories about serving with Piney Winston and John Teller too.

She had a hard time imagining Jax Teller in the army so when she met his dad at one of the SAMCRO bbq's as a kid she remembered seeing him and Piney in a black and white photo with her dad. They were all so handsome and she used to think how handsome Jax would be as a soldier.

She was six and Jax was two years older than her. She would usually end up helping Mrs. Teller and her mom prepare the food at the BBQ's since the boys were off pretending to be Prospects.

Girls weren't allowed to be part of that game and she laughed at the memory because Kyle Hobart actually told her to go get him a soda because girls could play if they brought the boys sodas. She told Kyle to go ask his mom for a soda and walked away to help her mom and Mrs. Teller.

She realizes now that what they were playing was the boys version of hearing their dad's tell the women to go get beers, among other things. She couldn't stop laughing and Jax looked at her funny. She told him about that memory and he started laughing too. Then the memory of Kyle in the TM garage at the last Taste of Charming sobered that laugh up real quick.

This abruptly returned him back to the present conversation.

"Well, we actually were talking about investing in businesses to revitalize Charming. Thai food was outside the box of typical takeout that's already available here, so a family that was looking into moving here from Stockton talked with us."

Tara was impressed with how genuinely excited Jax was about the restaurant as he continued, "After Bobby crunched all the numbers, did all the taste testing (of course), and approved the menu

we voted it in unanimously. Piney really liked it too and mentioned that your dad loved Vietnamese food when they served with my dad during the war. Hopefully, this will be a good memory for you too."

Tara almost started crying right then and there. Damn these pregnancy hormones. "Smooth, Teller, I'm not ready for this to be a date, but I'm definitely down with some Thai food." Tara was really loving all these free meals that also saved her the trouble of cooking too.

"Well, you'll have to pick me up in a car because I get sick way too easily to get on a bike nowadays. You know what? You can drive me in the Cutlass. Just park your bike at my place and we can go from there."

Jax loved that idea. He really wanted to make up for the dinner she had planned that he had ruined. This would also mean that he would bring her home and hopefully they could get back in the right direction. He still loves her so much it is physically difficult to not be with her now that he knows she never left Charming.

He might still be single but had drastically cut down on the man-whoring because he wants to be with her. "So this is a club event, kind of a family dinner, so my mom will be there with Abel. I told her not to pull any bullshit, but if you're not comfortable don't hesitate to tell me no."

Tara thought about it and knew it would be good to go. She needs to get out of the house and genuinely wants Gemma to be a part of the baby's life too. She knew Jax was playing it a bit dirty too by bringing Abel along but she wants to see him so bad. Maybe this will be a good way to start mending fences since they will all be a family soon.

Jax arrived at Tara's at 5 pm and he drove her to the restaurant in the Cutlass. Tara looked absolutely beautiful. She was wearing a Caroline Herrera Hydrangea-print Silk midi dress with a light bolero jacket and pair of Givenchy ballerina flats. She was absolutely beautiful. Jax couldn't believe the change in her style. It was so elegant but not over the top.



As they walked into the restaurant, Tara was nervous to see Gemma, but Abel too. Would he remember her? Jax held the door open for her and as they entered the dining area, everyone stopped to look at them.

Apparently, Jax had not let them know he was bringing Tara, because the look of shock was on almost everyone's face. Gemma actually came over first and said hello with a hug for Tara. Unser too.

She couldn't help but feel like this was too good to be true but then caught sight of Abel as Jax brought him over. Abel reached for her and she worked overtime to try not to cry. She held him and gave him hugs and kisses.

Jax led her to their table. It was a beautiful restaurant with sunken booths with tables that could seat 10 people. The decor was gorgeous and Tara couldn't help but feel happy for the first time in a long time. All of the club members greeted her warmly, congratulated her and Jax on the baby, and gave her hugs.

Dinner was served and Tara had a traditional Thai roasted duck curry. She normally loved plum wine, but passed due to the bun in the oven, so to speak. She was careful to eat slowly too due to her nausea issues. She also only ate a little due to duck being so rich. She had the rest packaged to go home.

There were so many people in the restaurant. Some other charters came to celebrate so it got crowded quickly. She then excused herself to the restroom.

As she came out of the stall she was surprised to see Wendy applying her makeup at the mirror. Tara instantly knew this was a setup. Not on Jax's part, because the first thing Wendy said was, "It's great to see you and Jax together. I was just with Jax last night at the house and was telling him that Abel is getting so big."

She gave Tara a knowing smile as she thickly layered on her signature raccoon eyeliner and mascara look. "It's wonderful to see him thriving with us together as a family. You know, we almost got back together when he spent the night with me after Donna was almost killed."

Tara had to laugh, which was the last thing Wendy expected. "That's wonderful! I'm glad to see you're doing so well after rehab. Jax just invited me to the restaurant opening earlier today. It's great to be able to spend time together now because it's going to get so hectic once the baby comes."

Wendy glared at her, but Tara continued as she reapplied her Dior lip balm. "You know how hard pregnancy is. I'm too worn out to think about anything more physically or emotionally demanding than getting dressed most days. It's great working from home doing my neonatal consults via Skype."

The look of shock on Wendy's face in reaction to how utterly unbothered Tara was to anything she was saying was priceless. The old, insecure Tara that was worried about soon-to-be ex-wive's, deal breakers, and porn stars was completely replaced by a poised, refined, elegant, and composed woman. Wendy had no idea how to even respond, so Tara did.

"I am so happy for you, Jax, and Abel. Do you think you'll get remarried? Family is so important for children. It's going to be wonderful seeing our boys growing up together." That one sentence completely shut Wendy down. Tara could see Gemma's last season stilettos reflected in the mirror in one of the stalls and had to stop herself from hysterically laughing out loud.

These two white trash fabulous bitches thought they were going to get one over on her. The new Tara had to seriously try not to fall out laughing right then and there. As she closed her YSL clutch, she looked at Wendy through the mirror and said sweetly, "Make sure to get in touch with me so we can set up play dates!"

As she left the bathroom with Wendy hot on her heels, she caught Jax's eye. The look of love he had for her went south real quick when he saw Wendy right behind her. That's when Tara knew that Wendy wasn't supposed to be there and this was a total setup by Gemma.

Completely unbothered, Tara made her way over to Jax and for shits and grins, she repeated the exact kiss that she gave him at Abel's homecoming, except with quite a different outcome this time.

Donna had just arrived with Opie and gave her that you go girl look. It may have been petty on Tara's part, but she gave zero fucks because damn, it felt good to be a bitch in that moment. Then Jax leaned into the kiss Tara thought "Oh shit, I just opened Pandora's Box."

Chapter End Notes

“Love” Main Artist: Keyshia Cole; Songwriters: Keyshia Cole and Greg Curtis

Chapter 21: In The Name of Love

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bloodfeather

"A Georgia rain just kissed my lips. I live, I live for moments like this. Steady your aim, girl. I know you won't miss. I wish that you would aim for the blood of my heart, yeah."

As Tara kissed Jax, he brought his hands up to her face and deepened the kiss. He drew her into his arms and that protective force that he seemed to always have wrapped itself around her and drew her in. Or was it the wicked web he weaved? His kiss was the venom that paralyzed all rational thought and common sense.

The warmth of desire was tempered by her underlying hesitation. She broke the kiss and rested her head on his shoulder. "I'm not ready for this, Jax." He looked at her . "Tara, I'm not expecting anything from you tonight. I mean a man can hope.." She laughed. "You're still a class act Teller."

He laughed and kissed her again. "Do you remember our first time?"

The question shocked Tara. She hadn't thought about it since the last time they had made love. Truthfully, she thought about their first time every time they made love. When she had sex with anyone else when they were apart for so many years, it was never love, only sex. That's all it would ever be.

It was like a sickness she could never shake. It was why she loved him so much. It was also why she could never break the spell he had her under almost her entire life.

The spell she was under in that moment was broken when Jax looked over her shoulder and realized that Wendy was still there. She didn't have time to react because Jax looked at Wendy and said, "What are you doing here? You were supposed to be heading back to rehab this morning."

Wendy picked the wrong time to get cute and said, "Oh, Tara and I were just having a little girls talk in the bathroom weren't we?" What Wendy didn't count on Tara to call out her shit right there in front of everyone.

"Wendy was just telling me that you are a happy family now. I told her it would be wonderful for you to reunite as a family. After all, it's best for Abel to be with his both of his parents. Tara

continued, “Also, it will be great for JT and Abel to grow up together as brothers since I’m staying in Charming.” Tara then directed her focus onto Wendy.

“Don’t forget to call me to set up play dates. Jax has my phone number. At this point, Tara was already tired and didn’t want you deal with anymore drama. “I’m going back to the booth, Jax. When you are ready, I am tired need to go home.”

The look Jax gave Wendy let her know in no uncertain terms that she fucked up big time. She tried backtracking and saying Gemma invited her but she knew in a logical world that Gemma would never back her up.

Jax led her outside. “I don’t know what game you and Gemma are playing, but we are not together. We will never be together again. I was trying to be nice by letting you stay at the house, but now that you’re playing games, go pack your shit and stay with Gemma.”

Gemma had just walked outside and heard the last part of the conversation. Jax looked at her and in the coldest, most detached voice possible told her, “You need to leave now with Wendy. I don’t care if you put her on a Greyhound or let her stay with you, but both of you are not welcome at my house right now.”

He then focused on Gemma. “I told you not to play games with Tara, and what do you do? You try and play checkers when I am playing chess. This is the last time I am going to say this: Stay the fuck away from Tara.”

The last sentence chilled both women to the bone. “I love Tara. I have always loved Tara. No amount of manipulation will ever change that. Now get your sorry asses out of my sight.”

Jax turned around and saw Tara standing a few feet away. She was visibly upset. “Jax, I’m really tired and just want to go home. I’ve had a wonderful night with you but I really need to prop my feet up and relax.”

Jax looked pleadingly at her. “Babe, I had no idea they were messing with you. I will never let them mess with you again.”

Tara sighed as she got into the Cutlass. “This shit is going to be the death of me, Jax. I’m not mad at you. I know the games your mom plays. I just don’t have the energy for that right now. Please take me home and we can unpack all of this bullshit later.”

They drove back to her house in an awkward silence. As Jax opened the car door for her, Tara stepped out of the car and became dizzy. Jax saw her sway and caught her by the arm. He panicked, but Tara had the keys in her hands. Jax grabbed the keys and carried her to her front door.

“I’m fine, just take me to bed. I need some nausea medicine, water, and sleep.”

Chapter End Notes

“Bloodfeather” Main Artist: Highly Suspect; Songwriters: Highly Suspect

Chapter 22: Mama Gemma’s Pit Viper Potion

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

> **Sympathy for the Devil**
>
> ***“Pleased to meet you hope you guess my name. But what's puzzling you is the nature of my game.”***

“Violence as does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another.”

~ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Gemma was at her wits end. Every which way she tried to come at the problem of Tara had backfired. She thought she had run the gash out of town over a decade ago, but then she returned like a wayward angel and Jax fell right back into her honey trap. Now she was carrying her grandchild and she had to tolerate her at least until her grandson was born.

Jax always had a weak spot for Tara.

Gemma had been friends with her mother before she passed away after fighting cancer. She came to Charming when Dave Knowles returned from college after serving in the Vietnam War, which wasn’t too long after Gemma returned with a baby and a motorcycle club in tow.

Gemma knew Dave growing up in Charming and always thought he was handsome. He was known for being the best looking and charming guy in town, pun intended. Gemma was used to being the the best looking girl in Charming, and thought they would make a great couple. That didn’t pan out, and then she left town and returned with a motorcycle club, John Teller, and a bouncing baby boy named Jackson. She was Queen of the world.

Now, what were the chances that Gemma’s husband, Piney Winston, and Dave Knowles served in the same platoon during the war? Gemma’s luck just never ended. Then, of course, Dave Knowles

had returned from college with the most beautiful woman any of them had ever laid eyes on, Taisia Knowles.

Even Gemma had to admit that she didn't hold a candle to Taisia. The woman looked like Snow White as the princess in an Eastern European folk tale. All almond eyes, porcelain skin, and ruby red lips without the help of makeup. Hell, even Gemma had the hots for her.

Gemma wasn't petty though and befriended her because lord knows the Croweaters and Sweetbutts weren't the kind of women you made friends with. Sucking dick and serving beer didn't require a degree and the conversation usually didn't require more than a dim bulb for brains.

Taisia was actually a lot fun to hang out with too. The Russian side of Gemma and the Ukrainian of Taisia, along with Luann's crazy ass drank any of the guys under the table when they got together for girls night.

Dave Knowles was so head over heels for Taisia that she never had to worry about him straying with the temptations around the clubhouse when the guys got together. He quite literally only had eyes for her. The guys gave him shit for not taking advantage of the pussy buffet but Gemma could see quite clearly that any of them would never stray if they had Taisia at home either.

It didn't take long for Taisia to pop out the prettiest baby girl anyone had ever laid eyes on. Jackson was two years older and by the time he was four, he was smitten with Little Tara too. It was the cutest thing she had seen and they joked that they could arrange a marriage like Fiddler on the Roof.

Taisia developed breast cancer when Tara was eight and gone by the time she was nine. Dave didn't lose his mind, but he got lost in the bottle. He took good care of Tara but he drifted away from hanging out with the boys to care for Tara as best as he could. Gemma made sure to have Tara help out at community events here and there but she just wasn't wired to nurture a girl so she left it at that. Then Thomas got sick, John left for Ireland, and everyone lost their minds.

When Jax came home from school after a Homecoming game talking about some girl who had the balls to not drop her panties for him she half heard him telling Clay the story but didn't catch the gash's name.

Gemma encouraged Jax to follow the MC bro code and hit up as many girls at school and Croweaters too. After all, he was John Teller's son and with the rapid expansion of the Sons of Anarchy under John and Clay's leadership, Jax had a legacy to carry.

In the MC world, legacy was all about sex and violence. Gemma knew how to use both and together with Clay made sure that the club stayed on the right path. John's untimely death helped bring Jax into the fold under Clay's guidance. Girls were pussy and puppy love was not an option. It made you weak and weakness was a liability.

A few weeks after the Homecoming game, Jax went on a double date with Opie and his new piece, Donna. Piney and Mary were softer on Opie and actually encouraged the whole girlfriend phase.

Both boys were known for being players so she thought nothing of it until the day he said he was bringing a girl home for dinner.

Gemma blew it off but then Tara Knowles walked through the door and she knew they were fucked.

Tara had blossomed since Gemma last saw her after Taisia's s death. Actually, blossomed didn't begin to describe her. She was more like an eclipse. It shouldn't have been possible but Tara was even more beautiful than her mother.

She looked just like that princess right out of that same Eastern European folk tale Gemma remembered her mother telling her as a child. Tara Knowles blew that childhood fantasy to hell and the dopey grin Jax had when she was in the same room turned Gemma sour to the girl instantly.

The whole good little Catholic girl was a ploy as old as time and Tara worked it as far as Gemma could see. Jax actually had respect for a female besides his mom. She made him want to be a better person. Then she gave him her virginity and Jax lost his damn mind. Like father, like son.

It was war.

The next few years were an actual battle with Tara for the heart and mind of Jax. She had to give the girl credit for not backing down, either. What she didn't know was that Tara's mother warned her to watch out for Gemma before she died.

Taisia saw how Jax was around Tara and she knew Tara would be a threat to Gemma. After fleeing the Soviet Union with her parents, she knew that Gemma's Russian nature would stop at nothing to preserve her power and her power was based on her control of Jax. So she told Tara exactly how to handle Gemma because she knew she would need it to literally survive if Jax ever truly fell in love with her.

All of the work Gemma put into making Jax the heir to the MC was almost lost when the harpy had Jax almost out the door to go to college with her when she caught him trying to leave the clubhouse lot.

The only way Jax would listen was if she made it crystal clear to him that Tara would suffer the consequences if Jax left Charming with her. If she had no issues with trading one husband for another to retain her crown, then getting rid of this nuisance would barely pierce what was left of her conscience.

Chapter End Notes

“Sympathy for the Devil”; Main Artist: Rolling Stones; Songwriters: Jagger-Richards

Chapter 23: Eternal Flame

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Eternal Flame

"Close your eyes, give me your hand, darlin.' Do you feel my heart beating Do you understand? Do you feel the same? Am I only dreaming? Is this burning an eternal flame?"

January to May 1995

In the days and weeks that followed their date, Jax talked to Tara every day at school and on the phone at night. He picked her up and took her home from school. He took her everywhere on his motorcycle. He also had a pickup truck for dates at the drive-in which usually ended up with them missing the movie because he couldn't get enough of just kissing her.

He felt like a lovesick puppy. He tried not to overwhelm her but he did not know how to handle this. It was like he had been looking at a cloudy sky and now he was seeing everything new on a clear and completely unclouded day. Christ, he felt like such a pussy but he honestly didn't care.

This was completely new territory for him and all he could do was try and take it at her pace. When they kissed, she was so nervous; he wanted to calm her so he tried not to get too aggressive but the effect she had on him was physically impossible to hide.

She would giggle in such a completely innocent way that made it so much worse. He wasn't sure how much more of this he could take but he knew he had to because everything about her made his life so much better and brighter.

He finally realized it was useless to pretend he didn't want a girlfriend when he had absolutely no interest in the Sweetbutts, Croweaters, or other girls at school. It was a Friday and byn pulled her aside during lunch and led her to the library. That was her first clue that something was up. She laughed, "Really, Jax? I'm not making out in the restricted section with you."

He gave her a wicked grin and just asked her right there to be his girlfriend. She was shocked. There was no hesitation on her part, "Yes! But wait, this means no other girls, Sweetbutts, or Croweaters." He laughed, "Darlin' I haven't thought about anyone but you since our first date."

She looked incredulously at him with those almond eyes and it took everything in him not to take her right there in the school library. It was actually true though. He felt like a monk but it was just

not right trying to fuck someone else when all he would think about was her. So he pilfered some girly mags from the clubhouse and let it go from there.

Tara was scared that Jax would want to jump right into having sex and she had only just gotten to second base. She wanted to go all the way but was terrified. Candy Eglee said that she heard from Emily Duncan that he had the biggest dick she had ever seen and lord knows she was a senior and had been with the football and baseball teams.

Rumor had it she was actually considering just being a Croweater right out of high school. Like it was an actual career track. Tara joked with Donna that SAMCRO should set up a booth at the next career fair and see how many girls actually check it out. They could have their own prospect system just like the MC.

Tara then decided she should ask Donna about sex. She had been dating Opie for three months and it was pretty hot and heavy. She said they were at third base which Donna said was oral sex, hand jobs, and fingering. Tara almost passed out. She couldn't imagine putting it in her mouth and was thinking she might just become a nun if it got to that.

This was when Tara finally decided to talk to her dad. They were so close and she knew he would be honest to a fault with her. It was awkward at first. Once her dad realized Jackson Teller was interested, he remembered Taisia saying how younger Jax always had puppy dog eyes for Tara. She had also said to worry about Gemma, not Jackson.

So her dad finally had the whole sex talk with her. At first it went jokingly, "I will kill anyone who thinks about it so wait til you're married." Then he actually did sit her down and explained everything.

It was mortifying at first but then he told her to never feel pressured and if they didn't understand then they weren't worth it. After that, him and Piney Winston would take care of anyone who even looked at her funny, much less tried pressuring her.

He also told her to beware of Gemma.

Jax never pressured Tara, and they had been together almost six months. This was when he decided to officially introduce Tara as his girlfriend to his mom and Clay.

Jax asked Gemma if they could have a family dinner with just them and his new "girlfriend." She had heard that Jax had cooled it on the Croweaters so she was interested to see what kind of tail had her son so whipped that he wasn't hitting up the pussy buffet at all. This girl must be all that and a bag of tricks to keep him satisfied.

That Sunday night, she decided to make Jax's favorite meal of steak, shrimp, and Black Forest cake. She put on her highest stilettos and teased her freshly highlighted hair extra high. If this girl was going to be Old Lady material she was going to give her the crash course that night. If not, she was going to run her off with a stiletto and a smile.

She was setting the table when Jax sprinted down the stairs to answer the front door in the foyer. Clay was behind him and she heard a small voice say hello to him. As they rounded the corner to the dining room, Gemma's heart almost stopped when she swore she saw the ghost of Taisia Knowles walk in the room.

It then hit her like a freight train right then and there that Jax had brought home Little Tara Knowles.

As Tara got ready to go to dinner at Jax's, her dad gave her a necklace with a pendant. It was her mom's Zlye Glaza necklace. She was floored. It was protection from the evil eye her mom always said. As he handed it to her, she remembered her mother's talk with her about Gemma Teller.

She was all of nine years old and had laughed it off when her mom said that one day uJackson would look at her, "like a woman" and she would need faith, knowledge, and the necklace to deal with Gemma, his mother. Jackson was the cutest guy at school so there was no way he would look at her except to not run into her in the hallway. Her dad put the necklace away after the funeral and she forgot all about it.

Her father said the same the night of the dinner as Tara got ready, and told her she didn't need luck but just knowing her mom was there with her in this way, eased her nerves exponentially. She was not a superstitious person, but she couldn't help but feel that maybe there was some deeper connection now with her mother, Jackson, and Gemma.

As Tara walked in the door, Gemma got herself together and let Jax introduce her. "Of course! I remember you as just the sweetest little girl with your hair all braided up beautifully by your mother. She was such a beautiful woman and I miss her dearly." Gemma didn't have it in her at that moment to be Bad Bitch Biker Queen to the girl.

That snapped when she looked at Jax and saw that dopey panty-dropping grin John used to give her and immediately she knew Jax was actually in love with Little Tara Knowles.

The fickle finger of fate just then reminded her of Taisia and her joking that they could set them up like Fiddler on the Roof. That was when she knew that all of that Eastern European folk lore she learned from her mother actually meant something real. Nothing is serendipitous. This was some old world generational trauma in the making and she had to hit the brakes on this before it turned into Romeo and Juliet.

Dinner was served and Gemma started out with observing Tara. She was wearing her hair up braided like her mother and was wearing a burgundy button down cinch-waisted sweater over a matching camisole and forest green knee-length skirt. Paired with knee high burgundy and green plaid stockings with black Mary Jane's. It complimented her complexion perfectly and she was the picture of absolute innocence. She had a small silver crucifix and..and an evil eye pendant.

"So what are you up to now? I can't believe you're so grown up." Tara was cautiously optimistic that things were starting off so well. "I'm a freshman, and am on the cheerleading and dance squads. I'm still taking the ballet lessons my mom started. I absolutely love ballet. I'm also active at Saint Bernadette's in the youth group and am going on a youth retreat this summer to the Our Lady of Peace Shrine in Santa Clara."

The table was very quiet with Clay shooting a knowing look at Gemma. Jax knew that Tara still went to church but didn't realize she was that active. She always called him after she got home from Mass and he didn't really think of her as super religious, especially when they were getting hot and heavy later the same day.

He knew exactly where Gemma was going to go with this and he shot her a look that said drop it but of course she didn't. "So have you spent any time at the clubhouse with Jax? He's very active there." Tara understood the implication of what Gemma was saying since she went to Opie's party and saw all of the scantily clad Croweaters and knew exactly what activities went on there.

"Oh, yeah, I was at Opie's birthday party and we had a great time. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming." Tara started to understand a little of what her mother had been alluding to and braced herself for it to get more aggressive than passive.

"What are your plans after high school, sweetheart?" Tara felt like this was a safe question, "I'm thinking about becoming a doctor., I really love babies and Neonatal surgery fascinates me. I really want to study babies with heart and other congenital defects."

The room suddenly got very quiet. Tara felt like she might have said something wrong, Gemma looked straight at her and her eyes softened. "Jackson's brother, Thomas, passed away a few years ago from a heart defect." Tara felt awful. She remembered hearing that Jax's little brother had died but didn't know him well enough at the time to know the details.

"I..I am so sorry for your loss" was all Tara could think to say. She was mortified and knew her face was beet red. She went to excuse herself asking where the bathroom was. As she closed the door she heard Jax tell his mother, "What is this, the Spanish Inquisition? What is your problem with her?!"

Gemma was on a tear. "How long have you been seeing her, Jax? That girl will never fit into the MC life. What are you thinking? She is the picture of innocence. Jesus's Christ, have you even had sex with her? Shit. She's a virgin isn't she?! I was good friends with her mother and her dad was practically brothers with your dad. You need to end this before you break her heart."

Tara held her mother's pendant and then she heard Jax hotly reply, "That's none of your business! We've been dating for six months and I love her…"

Holy shit. He hadn't even told her that he loved her and here he was defending that love to his mom not even fifteen minutes into dinner.

”Oh for gods sake! You are sixteen years old. A tight snatch comes along and suddenly you’re in love? Does she even know what SAMCRO does? How many Croweaters and Sweetbutts you’ve fucked?!”

Clay finally interrupted, “That’s enough Gemma! We will discuss this later. PRIVATELY. The girl is nice, smart, and pretty. Let the boy have his fun and he’ll move on when the time is right. Let’s have a nice dinner and be civilized for her sake.”

At this point, Tara knew she had to return to dinner and she acted like she hadn’t heard a thing. She lightly and politely asked Gemma about some mundane topics and brought the conversation back to a respectful tone.

As dinner ended, Tara thanked Gemma and offered to help with the dishes while the guys grabbed beers to watch TV. Jax gave her an apologetic look, and Tara went with Gemma.

Gemma actually did feel bad for making Tara uncomfortable about the subject of Thomas. “Tara, I think it’s wonderful that you want to become a doctor. Thomas was such a joy and I’m hoping that you can help kids like him.” Tara was floored. “Thank you so much, Mrs. Teller-Morrow.”

“Oh honey, please call me Gemma.”

As Jax drove Tara home that night in his pickup truck it was awkwardly silent. He decided he had to break the tension. “I’m really sorry about my mom. That was really embarrassing. You’re my first girlfriend so she’s a little, well a lot, territorial.”

Tara looked over at him and reached for his hand. “Jax, I’m sorry if I upset your mom by talking about being a surgeon. I can’t imagine how hard that was for all of you.” Jax pulled over and looked at her. “Don’t apologize for any of that. You were perfect. Look, I need to tell you something that’s going to be hard for me.”

Tara braced herself for the breakup. She knew it was too good to be true. Well, at least she got some great lessons in making out and at least didn’t give up her virginity. “Listen, Jax, I overheard everything when I was in the bathroom and if you need to break up with me, I completely under…..”

”Tara, I’m in love with you.”

Holy shit, her head was spinning. This was not what she was expecting. Jax reached over for her face and drew her into a bruising kiss. She was so overwhelmed that she moved over to his side and straddled him between the seat and steering wheel. “Oh Jax, I feel the same way. I want you…to be with you so bad.”

She was trying not to go too far but at that moment she knew she wanted him to be her first time. Not right there in the pickup truck so she tore herself away from him and sat back down on the passenger side, embarrassed and focused on smoothing out her dress.

Jax looked at her and was amazed that she didn't get up and walk out of the house right then and there when Gemma started the Law and Order: Teenagers in Love interrogation.

"Hey, there's still no hurry. I'm just relieved you didn't walk out on all of us right then and there. I'm so sorry that you heard all of that."

"It's ok, Jax. Just take me home and pick me up for school tomorrow." They were pulling up to her house and as she got out, she leaned over and gave him a sweet kiss. "I love you too."

When Jax got home the first thing that happened was Hurricane Gemma waiting at the door. "Ok let's talk." Jax knew where this was going and sat down. Clay and Gemma laid it all out. Tara was not cut out for the Old Lady SAMCRO life and he knew it. Yes, they are only sixteen and fourteen but this has to end before you're in too deep and everyone gets hurt.

He knew deep down that he wasn't good enough for her. She deserved better. She needs the kind of life where she didn't have to worry about him not coming home, jail time, Sweetbutts, and Croweaters.

Or Gemma.

Chapter End Notes

"Eternal Flame"; Main Artist: The Bangles; Composer: Tom Kelly; Lyricists: Susanna Hoffs, Billy Steinberg

Chapter 24: Meant to Be

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Eternal Flame

"I believe it's meant to be, darlin'. I watch you when you are sleeping. You belong with me. Do you feel the same? Am I only dreaming or is this burning an eternal flame?"

Tara woke up with a start in her bed. She was confused at first and then saw a very familiar tattooed arm wrapped around her waist. Then she saw a very familiar hand that was resting on her pregnant belly. She glanced at the vanity chair next to her bed and saw his kutte thrown over the back. Holy shit did she have sex with Jax and not remember it?

She remembered being dizzy when they got out of the car. He carried her in the house and laid her on the bed, then got her a glass of water and her nausea meds. She was so tired that she thanked him and just drifted off to sleep in her dress thinking that he would let himself out.

If she wasn't carrying around a human beach ball she would have jumped out of bed. She knew then that they just slept. She was not mad about it but those boundaries were feeling really fuzzy right now with how good he smelled and she knew that he looked just as good because she could feel his toned bare chest up against her back.

Jax moved behind her and pulled her closer. Part of her wanted to freak out but the tired, pregnant part of her said fuck it and snuggled into him and fell right back asleep. She would deal with the emotional fallout later. Right now she just wanted to sleep and be held by the man that she still loves.

May 1995

Tara went into her house after Jax dropped her off. She was overwhelmed by what happened at dinner. She was hoping that she would hit it off with Gemma but that didn't go as planned. At least she wasn't outright hostile but it was obvious that she would not accept her as Jax's girlfriend.

She wasn't cut out for the MC life. What did that even mean? And what does SAMCRO really do? That didn't sound reassuring either.

When Jax picked her up the next morning, she wanted to ask him so many questions but figured everything that needed to be said, needed to be said by him. When they got to school, he was quiet but pulled her into the sweetest kiss. “I don’t care what they said, we are not breaking up.”

The next several weeks were the end of school so Tara was caught up in studying for finals. Jax did the bare minimum of studying and was maneuvering around his mom’s insistence that he should break up with Tara.

Gemma was frustrated but Clay told her to, “Let the kids figure it out.” He was convinced that Jax just wanted to, “pop her cherry and then he’ll be onto the next girl because the thrill of that chase will be gone.” Gemma didn’t want him necessarily doing that to Tara, of all girls, but saw the logic in Clay’s take.

This would help build and solidify his MC pussy hound persona. He would hit and quit it once he got the prize. She didn’t want to think about Tara as the virgin sacrifice in this scenario so she closed off that part of her conscience. She finally told Clay that she would follow his lead and let boys be boys.

The last week of school was so hectic that Tara was so happy on the last day. Jax snuck up behind her at her locker she nuzzled into her neck as he hugged her from behind. “Guess what, babe.”

Tara looked at him, “What?” He gave her a rakish grin. “Clay and Gemma are out of town starting tonight for five days. The club is doing a run to Portland and they are adding some days on for their anniversary.”

Tara looked at him expectantly, “And?” He kissed her, “We have the house to ourselves. You are looking at a vacation at Casa Jax. All the movies, popcorn, and soda you want.”

Tara looked at him laughing. “Seriously? Oh, come on! Your mom is leaving you unsupervised for five days and nights with no strings attached?”

“Well, I did promise not to have any wild parties. They are cool with you coming over for movies. I told Opie to bring Donna over for movies too. I am not telling anyone else though because they will think it’s an open invite to show up and start a party.”

She laughed loudly and Jax laughed too. “Hey, I’m not kidding. Don’t tell anyone or it will turn into a real-life version of Animal House.”

Tara was beyond nervous heading to Jax's house. She was nervous because they would have a house to themselves for five days. She had decided she wanted to have her first time be with Jax, but there was never any good time or place and she refused to lose her virginity in a car like some 90's version of American Graffiti.

Now she had five days (and nights) of opportunities and was terrified again. Tara had gone to Stockton and hit up Victoria's Secret with baby sitting money she saved. She had at least a weeks worth of some seriously sexy bras and panty sets so she would make sure to have them on each of those five days in case this actually happened. Even if it didn't, at least she had some cute underwear.

Chapter End Notes

"Eternal Flame"; Main Artist: The Bangles; Composer: Tom Kelly; Lyricists: Susanna Hoffs, Billy Steinberg

Chapter 25: The Crow and the Nightingale

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

What is a Youth?

“What is a youth? Impetuous fire. What is a maid? Ice and desire. The world wags on.”

”No nightingale: look, love, what envious streaks

Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east:

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day

Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

I must be gone and live, or stay and die.”

Romeo and Juliet; Act III, Scene V; William Shakespeare

May 1995, cont’d.

As they settled in with a bucket of popcorn Tara had the movie pick for the night and it was, oddly enough, American Graffiti. She loved the story and all of the classic cars. Jax was relieved it wasn’t a total chick flick. The last two nights were his and they had gone with Die Hard and The Terminator. Tara was a good sport about the violence and he loved when she would snuggle in closer during a thrilling or scary scene.

American Graffiti’s ending always reminded Tara of lost opportunities and what might have been. She knew exactly what she wanted to do and decided right then and there to do it.

After the movie was over, they were sitting on the floor of the den with their backs against the couch. The silence was awkward and she finally started kissing him and climbed onto his lap to straddle him. She started grinding and feeling exactly how big he was through the basketball shorts he was wearing and under her pleated skirt. She was shocked that the feel of his size excited her.

Jax was trying to be patient but was losing control at this point. Without saying anything, he picked her up and carried her to his bedroom as he was kissing her.

”Are you sure you’re ready for this, Tara?” She was so flustered that all she could do was nod yes.

Jax was so gentle with Tara that she finally had to beg him to make love to her. He knew that she needed to be relaxed in order for this to feel good at all. He began to kiss her small waist and shocked her by finding his way between her legs. She forgot that that kind of pleasure goes both ways and couldn’t believe how good it felt as she gripped his blonde hair.

Tara grasped his face and brought him back to her for a kiss. She reached for him as he quickly put on a condom. The fumbling made her giggle and that all but snapped his restraint. He gently entered her and the stretch she felt was so exquisitely uncomfortable that all she could do was breathlessly kiss him. As he thrusted through her barrier, she couldn’t help but grip his back so roughly that she scratched him.

She closed her eyes tightly and Jax had to tear his own eyes away from looking at where they were joined. “Look at me, Tara, am I hurting you? I’ll stop.” He didn’t really want to stop but would never hurt her.

Her mouth was slackened from the uncomfortable pleasure and she breathily replied. “No, no! It really does feel good.” She was so tight that he almost came right then and there. He then felt the pinch of her nails again into his back, and reminded himself again that he needed to go slow; it's her first time and he would die right then and there if he hurt her.

Slowly, he pushed forward and began to thrust deeper and harder. He wanted her to come with him so he reached quickly where they were joined and his fingers found her clit. She went into a state of white hot shock and all she could see was his face. She came hard around him as he thrusted harder and his orgasm was triggered by hers. He was kissing her so greedily that she was at a loss for air.



She was so beautiful, all flushed rose red under him and saying his name over and over so breathlessly that all he could think was that he will never let her go. She belongs to him now.

All she could do was cling to him as he peppered her neck with kisses while resting his face into her slender shoulder. As he held her, he couldn't help but watch her like she was Snow White and he was there to break the sleeping spell. As she drifted off into that sleep, she knew that she would never truly belong with anyone else.

Chapter End Notes

"What Is a Youth? (Love Theme from Romeo and Juliet(1968); Main Artist: Sofia Karlsson; Songwriter: Nino Roto; Lyrics: Eugene Walter

Chapter 26: Go Away

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Make the World Go Away

"Do you remember when you loved me, before the world took me astray. If you do then forgive me and make the world go away."

Tara woke up later, much later, than she planned. Because she fell right asleep she didn't set her alarm clock. She also woke up facing a bare, toned chest that she knew very, very well. When she fell back asleep she was facing the window. Now that she was waking up she realized Jax was still in bed with her and very much awake.

Because her line of sight was right at the Abel tattoo on his left pec, she pretended to still be asleep so she could enjoy the view before coming to her senses. One of her favorite parts of has was his chest, and that part groin that looked like a V.

She also took a few minutes to enjoy the scent of the pheromone cologne that he always wore. She heard a chuckle and looked up to see Jax catching her gazing at his chest and breathing in his scent.

"Do you like what you see?" he asked in that low, husky timbre that he knew affected all of her senses. It was hypnotic and he knew exactly how to use it to lure her into his web. She knew exactly what he was doing and it was pitting her self-control against her hypersensitive pregnancy-fueled hormones.

"Yeah…I need to take a shower and put on fresh clothes." She cursed her pale complexion because it always betrayed her and she turned beet red and became flustered with embarrassment.

"Hold up, there's no hurry, you have some where to be?" Jax held onto her and good gods she just wanted to kiss him. She told herself not to look up and whispered, "No, I'm off today." She figured it was probably a better idea to stay clothed than go shower.

That was their favorite place after the bed to make love. She was pretty sure that she would lose all control if she even tried to turn on the shower with Jax in the vicinity so she looked up at him while lying flush with his chest.

That was her first mistake. As she looked up, he looked down at her and placed his right hand possessively on her belly. He kissed her gently but it quickly turned heated.

Jax broke the kiss and looked at her with that familiar softness she missed so much. "God, you are so beautiful, Tara. I am so sorry for everything I've done. I love you so much. Please forgive me."

Her mind went to hell and six months of frustration took over. "Jax, it's not that simple. This won't fix what went wrong in the first place."

“Tara, please just give me a chance. I really want us to be a family.” he pleaded.

Ok, I’ll put together some time alright?, We can see where it goes", Tara promised. Jax gave her a strange look, as if she struck a nerve full of déjà vu.

May 1995

Tara was still coming down from the high of the first orgasm she had ever had. Jax was staring at her in a way that made her want to do all of that all over again, too. From the way he was kissing her, she knew he felt the same way.

Suddenly, Jax’s home phone rang and he went to pick it up. It was Clay telling him that he was needed at the clubhouse to deal with some club business since he was out of town with Gemma. Jax knew “club business” meant he couldn’t take Tara with him.

He felt bad having to take her home right after having sex with her for her first time. As he came back to the bedroom, he ran his hand through his hair. Tara looked at him, “What’s wrong, Jax?”

“Clay called and they need me to go to the clubhouse to deal with some club business since they are out of town. I can’t take you with me. Is it ok for me to drop you off at home?”

Tara had a bad feeling that this was becoming the teenager cliche she worried about. He took her virginity and now it’s time to dump her at home. She tried not to look upset but didn’t succeed.

Jax saw her face and instantly came over to kiss her. “It shouldn’t take too long. I promise I will call you right when I’m done. It shouldn’t take long”

Tara nodded and got dressed, she would shower when she got home. As Jax dropped her off, he grabbed her and pulled her into a deep kiss. “I love you and will call you as soon as possible.” Tara smiled weakly and went into house and straight to her bedroom to get ready for a shower.

Gemma and Clay knew that Tara had been at the house with Jax the last two nights thanks to some covert drive-bys done by a prospect. Gemma’s female intuition knew that by the third night, Jax would have bagged Tara. The next step was to get him away from her and back to the clubhouse.

When Jax got to the clubhouse, there was a SAMCRO party in full effect. He went to find one of the guys and Tig came up to him and told him to grab a beer and they would do some shots. Jax

was confused. “Clay told me to get back here for some ‘club business.’ What’s going on except for a party? I was with Tara and if this is just a party, I’m leaving.”

Tig knew he had to keep Jax there per Gemma and Clay’s instructions. “Hey, just hang out for a minute.” Jax started getting suspicious when a lot of out of town charters started showing up.

Then about forty-five minutes later, Clay and Gemma came out from the chapel with a surprise.

“Congratulations, you’ve been voted in and are now officially a Prospect!”

Jax couldn’t believe this was happening as he was handed his kutte. He had had several shots and at least a six pack of beer when he realized he didn’t see Opie. He needed to find him and have someone go get Tara since he had so much to drink.

As if the universe was listening, Opie walked in the clubhouse doors with Donna…and Tara. He was so happy he practically ran over and lifted Tara off the floor spinning her around. She screamed and then laughed while kissing him. Everyone in the Clubhouse started cheering them on.

Everyone except Gemma.

Jax didn’t leave Tara’s side the whole night. He actually ducked out of his own party by telling Donna to cover that Tara was sleeping over at her place. He then pulled Tara back to his dorm room.

“What is this place?” It looks like a closet.”

Jax laughed, “This is my dorm room. It’s where we crash when we’ve had a party. He smiled wickedly. “And this is the perfect party; a slumber party, but you won’t be sleeping.”

Tara definitely did not sleep. She was sore in all the right places and finally had to push Jax off when she almost passed out from absolute exhaustion.

Chapter End Notes

“Make the World Go Away”; Main Artist: Eddy Arnold; Songwriter: Hank Cochran

Chapter 27: Love Letters

Chapter Summary

Ten years gone and back again and down the rabbit hole.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Our story goes real Choose Your Adventure Gen X AU starting now so prepare to really suspend your disbelief and be on the lookout for Easter eggs and plot holes.

Love Letter to Japan

"From the west to the east I have flown to be near you. I have come all this way to be close, to be here with you. And now, all my heart I will lay down precisely at your feet. I have come all this way to be close, to be here with you. And now, all my heart I will lay down precisely at your feet."

The day Tara decided to return to Charming was the day she learned of her father's death. The years of alcohol and grief finally had short-circuited the electrical impulses in his heart. Bundle Branch blocks, alcohol-induced cardiomyopathy, and heart failure finally ended his grief.

She never stopped talking to her dad after she left Charming. He was a good father and loved her dearly. When Kohn started stalking her, she wanted to tell him but was terrified that his Irish temper and Fenian connections would come out of the woodwork. Her father would rain hell down on anyone who hurt his daughter.

He would call in the entire army and that would be a disaster. They weren't supposed to exist after the Good Friday Agreement. Telling her father would be a disaster for everyone on an international scale.

Even better no one, not even Clay, knew that he had helped JT hook up with the Irish and he had tried to help get him out the deal with no bloodshed but Clay and Gemma got wind of JT's end of the plans and took out JT.

They still never knew Old Man Knowles was ever involved. Even if they did find out, they would have learned real quick who was an actual King and who was a sad usurper.

No one knew that she was now the last of the Fenian Knowles. The Irish are all about lineage and legacy and she was now the closest thing they had to their own royalty. They would never hurt her. In fact, Cameron Hayes' unwise decision to tie her up and run off with Abel inadvertently signed his death warrant the minute he laid hands on Tara.

Besides the real threat to Tara were the Russians and the Irish would protect her at all costs, no matter who was after her.

Tara's mother's family had fled the Soviet Union after Stalin decided to starve the Ukrainians into submission in the 1930's. Thousands starved or were rounded up and shipped off to the Gulag archipelago. Her family were all Ukrainian dissidents from an old line of White Russian supporters dating back to the Great War. They had barely escaped that slaughter but there was still a bounty on any surviving family and Tara was the last of her mother's family.

They wouldn't hurt her either. The terms of the bounty dated back to the 30's and hinged on bringing any female survivors back alive. The women of that family were known to be beautiful and if there was one thing Russians valued it was true feminine beauty. She would live like a princess trapped in a tower and break the last cycle of a classic Slavic generational curse started long before she was ever a gleam in the eyes of her mother.

They tracked her to Charming right when Abel was kidnapped by the idiot Irishman Hayes. They knew that was not the time to collect their bounty. The Fenians found out about the bounty and knew right then and there they had to go to any lengths to protect her. She could not be taken anywhere but Charming, or if absolutely necessary, Ireland.

Tara made sure that no one knew about any of these bizarre parts of her life. Her life was like a weird fairy tale meets le Carre novel. Even Kohn couldn't dig that up. He was singularly obsessed with just keeping her and Teller apart and for himself.

With all of this in mind, she packed her bags when she received the news of her dad's death and called his cousin to come get her.

The princess was returning to Charming.

Tara didn't tell Donna she was back until she showed up on her doorstep one hour after she arrived. Donna almost passed out when she answered the door. When Tara walked into the house, the last person she expected to meet was Jackson Teller's WIFE. She looked every bit the rode hard and put away wet Croweater you would expect and that Donna dragged Tara into her bedroom to tell her all about.

Donna went into Tiny Beast mode. "Holy shit girl, I am so happy you are back but you should have called and told me you were coming back you crazy bitch!" Apparently, Wendy was over at Donna's to get Old Lady lessons if she could stay off the crank now that she was pregnant. Gemma

refused any more enrollment Old Lady Finishing School after her last crank binge right before she managed to get knocked up with the Prince of Charming's heir apparent.

According to Donna, Jax had filed for divorce but got horny one night when the clubhouse Croweaters were on a girl's trip to Vegas to recruit a fresh batch to bring back to Charming. So he ended up hammered at his house where Wendy was staying. One thing led to another and all hell broke loose when he called out She Who Must Not Be Named's name at the climax.

With this in mind, when Wendy realized the actual Tara was back, she knew she was fucked when she laid eyes on her. She was too beautiful to be true; silken black hair, almond eyes, and porcelain skin. This bitch had the market cornered on natural beauty.

Wendy high-tailed it out of Donna's and headed straight for Gemma's. "Jesus Christ, Gem, you expect me to compete with that?" Within the hour, Gemma, everyone at the clubhouse, and Old Mother Hubbard and the Peyton Place Prayer group found out Tara had landed. Gemma was trying to figure out how to not tell Jax and actually thought it was a good idea to go to Donna's.

Gemma regretted that decision almost on arrival. Tara was the spitting image of Taisia and the same age as she was when she came to Charming with Dave Knowles. It should be against the laws of nature for her to be even more beautiful than Taisia still. Regardless, here was the harpy live and in person upending those laws. She was also now sticking a huge thorn in the side of her carefully crafted kingdom.

It had taken all of the last ten years to get Jax into a good head space after Tara left for college. The night she left began an endless cycle of weed, booze, and pussy. Jax somehow managed to bag almost the entire state of California, parts of Nevada, and down into Mexico in his quest for the gold medal in the Man-Whore Olympics. He was just now finally getting his shit together.

He was also now the VP of the mother charter, all callous, cocky, and primed to be the Prince. He was no longer the lovesick puppy that the harpy had left behind, crushed and broken. Gemma cleaned up that mess once and she would be damned if she ever let that happen again.

Everyone knew that Dave Knowles had died. Gemma tried to arrange it so that Tara wouldn't come to Charming but like always, Tara was two steps ahead of her and arrived in town less than 24 hours after she received the news. Everything was pre-arranged to begin with, so all Tara had to do was call the priest and set up the wake and funeral mass.

Tara also had been working on transferring to Saint Thomas from Chicago Presbyterian when Kohn started the stalking. It was also obvious that the law was not on her side when it took her three precincts to get a restraining order and knew she had to get back to the one place she would be safe on at least two fronts.

She had a house ready to go. It needed some decluttering and remodeling but that was manageable. The minute the Club left for Ireland, her dad's high-end contractor cousin was called in remodel the house to protect Tara, especially now that she was pregnant.

That baby boy would prove important in the scope of lineage when shit with the Irish would go off the rails with Galen and Clay down the yellow brick road. But we digress. No expense was spared. It definitely proved its worth when Gemma's crazy ass showed up trying to bully Tara. That doorbell camera came in real handy when Gemma tried to lie her way out of it.

Jax found out that Tara was back when he drove by Tara's and saw the Cutlass in the driveway and a very familiar flash of silken black hair as the front door closed.

He almost had a heart attack.

He had driven by her house once a day for the last ten years. It helped him cope just to make sure it wasn't being sold. If the house was sold it would forever kill his hope that she would come home.

The last he had heard about Tara was that she was in Chicago and had become a surgeon. He was so damn happy that at least she had achieved her dreams, even if she had landed a million miles away. He had to bury the thought of what might have been if he had actually left with her every single night with the weed, booze, and pussy.

It never worked. Hundreds of women and a few stints of jail with some felonies attached later, all he had achieved was a rap sheet, a pickled liver, and a sore dick that he at least made sure to wrap. No one but Tara could have his babies.

The plan was solid until that one night with Wendy. He had met her at the clubhouse during a party with the Vegas chapter. She was a sweet butt stripper that tagged along with the Vegas chapter for a patch-over party. She clocked Jax the minute she walked in the door and they became quick drinking and eventually fuck buddies.

On a trip back to Vegas a year later he was trashed when they thought it would be fun to get married. He was lonely and by the eight year mark he had given up hope that She Who Must Not Be Named would ever return.

There were rules around talking about her. Everyone with half a brain knew not to say her name. Wendy had fucked around and found out when she tried pushing that button after Gemma told her to test the waters. Gemma wanted grandbabies and while she knew Wendy wasn't the ideal Old Lady, she was probably the closest she would ever get to an incubator for her grandbabies.

That incident triggered the crank binge that killed their marriage. Jax knew she was using but didn't care enough to even want to help her. He filed for divorce the day after the incident.

His dumb ass was nice enough to let her stay at the house he bought right before they got married. The Croweaters were out of town and he was horny so he stopped by the house and found a very willing Wendy.

The condom busted and he freaked out. The next day he got a morning after pill through a friend and watched Wendy take it. What he didn't know was that she went to the bathroom and upchucked it right back up and flushed it down the toilet.

When she tried to tell him that she was pregnant a few weeks later he very calmly told her that he had already filed for divorce. He would have a paternity test and even if it was his, they were done. He would support his child but they were over.

When Tara returned he was a couple of months away from the divorce being final so he would try and wait until the finalization and he knew she was back for good. He would then find her that very day and propose to her with the ring he still had from the day she left for college.

If she was married or with anyone else, he would take care of that because she was ever only his. He would then he would throw her over his shoulder and run off to their happily ever after.

All of those plans went to hell the day Wendy OD'd while pregnant and Tara helped save his baby. The first time he finally laid eyes on her was when she was coming out of the hospital room to talk to him about Wendy. He was with his mom and the club after his mom found her in a pool of blood in his house.

It took all of his willpower not to throw her over his shoulders and lock her away so she could never leave again. They talked about Abel and he left to deal with the Nords who sold the crank to his pregnant ex-wife but for the first the time in ten years he had a feeling that he thought had died when she left for college.

He tested the waters when he told her that she didn't have to do this, that she had other patients to care for. When she told him that she asked to assist with Abel's case, he finally had the feeling that he thought had died the day she left Charming without him.

He had hope.

Chapter End Notes

"Love Letter to Japan"; Main Artist: The Bird and the Bee; Writers: Greg Kurstin and Inara George

Chapter 28: Stranger Things

Chapter Summary

Tara taps into her inner spy girl and does whatever she has to do to make it through the night.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Put Your Records On

"Maybe sometimes we feel afraid, but it's alright. The more you stay the same, the more they seem to change. Don't you think it's strange?"

Tara realized that while snuggling with Jax was something she could do all day, every day she had to get up, eat, do laundry, and run errands. Meanwhile, Jax strategically decided that walking shirtless around the house after taking a shower was completely appropriate.

Tara's hormones agreed but her mind knew better. She made sure to get real busy with the laundry. Jax knew she was hiding so he went looking for her. As she was putting clothes in the dryer, he leaned up against the washer.

"Tara, I need you to listen carefully. I know things are fucked up between us and it's my fault. No matter what you say though, you are still my Old Lady and always will be. So it's still full disclosure." He paused, wrapped his arms around her from behind, and Tara couldn't help but melt into his embrace.

"I'm going out of town for about a week. The Irish are acting strange and have been spotted in Santa Clara. This isn't just the RIRA. They are big players. A prospect will be with you at all times, but you have to be careful. They are still looking for payback after we got Abel back and exposed their black market baby factory."

Tara became very still. She prayed he wasn't trying to take them on because the reason they were there wasn't to hurt her but she couldn't tell him any of the bizarre family history just yet. Then he said something that chilled her to the bone.

"Some Russians that are new to the area have sent out signals that they want to do business. These aren't the strip club Russian mafia we usually deal with. They are oligarchs and old money that

have real international power. It could help us get enough to go legit and not have to run guns and pussy anymore."

Tara knew exactly what types of Russians they were and they weren't the good kind. She couldn't tell Jax anything until she talked to her dad's cousin so she knew the only thing to do now was get Jax to stay with her until Sunday because she needed all the protection she could get until the Irish made it to Charming.

Tara felt like she was never good at seduction. Mainly because it didn't take much to seduce Jax. Since he was sixteen, if she smiled in his general direction he was ready to drag her to the nearest cave. In college, she didn't have to work much harder. She was one of the prettiest girls on campus and after she finally started dating her junior year she had a couple of steady boyfriends and even threw a one-night stand in the mix.

With all of this in mind, she felt like Mata Hari working her charms. "When are you leaving?" Tara put on her best nervous face. Jax looked at her and could sense a change in her demeanor. "Sunday, so three days. I'm staying at the clubhouse, my mom has Abel." Tara knew she had to work quickly because he was putting on his white shirt and reaching for the kutte.

"Do you want to stay for dinner? I'm making some of my mom's dishes, borscht with dumplings. I crave it a lot lately so I keep all of the ingredients handy. Jax loved borscht and dumplings. Tara made it for him in high school. He made fun of it at first because it always sounded weird but was shocked at how good it was when Tara made it. The dumplings were amazing too.

She hadn't made any for him since high school, even after they got back together when she returned to Charming. He had nowhere to be until they were leaving town on Sunday and dinner with Tara was so much better than the Croweater cooking at the clubhouse.

"That is definitely the good stuff. I'm going to grab some smokes at the gas station and will be right back."

As soon as Jax was off on his bike she dialed her cousin. She only called when absolutely necessary so he picked up right away. She told him everything Jax said and the information on the new Russians.

"He is right about the high-end Irish that just got here. They are actually in Redding to throw off the scent. The Russians are in Stockton so do whatever you have to do to get him to stay with you until Sunday."

Tara was nervous about letting Jax back in. "Can't I have Hale watch me?" The response wasn't unexpected. "Look, I know he hurt you, but he knows how to deal with what is going to go down. He is the father of your baby and will protect you no matter what. Tap into your self-preservation and do whatever you have to do to get through this."

Not that she was complaining and definitely liked the idea of “whatever you have to do” and finally putting those hormones to use tonight.

Her cousin’s instructions brought her back to Earth. “This will give the Fenians time to get to Charming. Whatever you do, do NOT leave your house. Make sure the safe room is set up and everything is on lockdown.”

He continued, “They have been biding their time since Abel was taken. Hell, they have been on this trail for almost a hundred years so they know how to play the long game. Do not underestimate them. They know you are pregnant so that makes you vulnerable. If they somehow get past all of this, do not fight them. The safety of you and the baby is absolutely essential.”

She knew this was the end game. “Hey, your dad and mom prepared you for this. You can speak Russian, Ukrainian, and Gaelic fluently so keep your ears open if they do get to you.”

Tara had dinner going by the time Jax was back and offered him a beer. “Since when do you keep beer around, babe, you’re pregnant.” Tara laughed, “It’s been there forever but they're still good.” Jax grabbed one and watched as Tara prepared the food.

He always loved watching her cook and take care of everyone. He missed this desperately. In his mind, he was going to win her back no matter how long it because he wanted to come home to this, her caring for him, Abel, and now JT too. During the eleven miserable years they were apart, he thought every single night how he wanted her to come home so they could have this.

Tara served dinner and made sure Jax had everything he needed and put one of her favorite records on quietly. She was trying not to appear over the top, but was already planning how to keep him after dinner. As she started on the dishes, he came up behind her and put his arms around her. He started kissing her neck. She leaned back into him and let him work his way to kissing her mouth.

She moaned into his mouth and the switch in him flipped. “I have to have you, Tara. Please let me back in. I want to take care of you and our family.” Tara ran her hands through his hair and led him to the bedroom.

Chapter End Notes

“Put Your Records On”; Main Artist: Corinne Bailey Rae; Songwriters: Corinne Bailey Rae, John Beck, Steve Chrisanthou

Chapter 29: Masquerade

Chapter Summary

All the world’s a stage and Tara’s life is a soap opera.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Masquerade

Thoughts of leaving disappear each time I see your eyes. And no matter how hard I try to understand the reason why we carry on this way. We're lost in this masquerade.”

Tara led Jax to her bedroom. She loved him so much but remembered that loving him was also pain and heartbreak. She knew he loved her too but the fucked up world he lived in had normalized all of his baser instincts. Their moral code was about survival of the fittest and was made up as they went along; it was used to justify everything from cheating to murder.

The few years they had together when they were younger had been buried somewhere deep inside of him. She knew instinctively that he could never be that carefree teenage boy again. Even though glimpses of him surface occasionally when she catches him looking at her with something similar to what she can only describe as hope.

Ten years apart had changed him though from a carefree teenager to a hardened tool of the MC, Gemma, and Clay. Their love would never be stronger than the pull of his history but Tara also realized it wasn’t enough to overcome hers now either. She would still never fit into their life but they also knew nothing of hers.

The painful story of both her parents and how they passed the burden of their familial traumas on to her. How it was now up to her to finish that story while hopefully making it out alive with her baby. All of this threatened to derail her thoughts so she focused on using this as a survival mechanism; after all, motherhood was the world’s second oldest profession.

As they entered the bedroom, Jax grabbed Tara by the waist and kissed her deeply. It was such a relief to be able to finally have a good reason to give into his charms, so she tapped into hers. She

found it disturbingly easy to dissociate from their history as she pushed him to sit down onto the bed.

The logistics of doing this while pregnant were not lost on her. She straddled his lap and untied the satin dressing gown she had changed into while doing laundry. The lingerie she was wearing caused his breath to hitch.

”Is this what you’ve been wearing underneath all of those expensive new clothes?” Her breasts were at least a cup size larger and he was instantly obsessed with holding them while kissing and licking her nipples. Tara threw her head back and remembered just how much she loved his fascination with them. She could orgasm from this alone.

The awkwardness of angling around her belly made Tara start to have second thoughts about going any further. She was self-conscious about her belly and he sensed her nervousness. He then brought her in closer as he kissed all along her abdomen.

“I’ve been thinking about this every day since the night you left town for college, Tara.” Her heart dropped into her stomach when she saw the way he looked at her. It was the exact look he had when he tried talking her into staying eleven years ago; the part of him that had been buried since she left Charming.

“I have only ever wanted this with you. This is our chance to do it better together. Me, you, Abel, and JT.” This confession triggered something tender in him and she almost believed they could have their happily ever after as he turned her carefully to her back and undressed.

He quickly took off her lingerie and settled in between her thighs. His tongue found her and she almost came right there as he hummed on her. “Jax! Please, please, please. Right there” she begged desperately and was so wet she was embarrassed.

He smiled and kept right on torturing her with his tongue. She grabbed his hair and practically held his face to her as she threw her head back, moaning embarrassingly loud. “Oh my god, Jax, I can’t take this anymore. It’s been so long. I’m going to cum now if you don’t stop.”

Jax laughed teasingly. He had seen her sex toys after she left the room earlier that morning and acted like he was moving up to kiss her, when he went to her drawer and pulled out the vibrator. Tara’s eyes widened and she shook her head no almost desperately.

“Jax, how did you know that…oh god…” she moaned as he applied light pressure with it to her clit. He kissed her and she grabbed his head holding his mouth to hers while she tried not to lose it right then and there. He laughed into her mouth meanly as he also slipped two fingers into her.

She bucked against him and finally reached for him. He groaned and she wrapped her hand around him and ordered him to make love to her and pointed him to the condoms. She might be carrying his baby, but he’s still a high-traffic zone for all she knows. All Jax could see was her beautiful face as he entered her slowly and looked down possessively at her belly.

“You are mine, Tara. Only ever mine.” She gasped as he started to thrust slowly into her. Her hormones heightened everything and as she grasped his butt, pressing him in deeper as she came hard around him.

He decided to prolong her pleasure by holding out on his own. He buried his face in her neck as he held her arms above her head and rolled his hips so torturously slow. She said his name so loud that

she was pretty sure the Peyton Place prayer group was going to call the police. That's all she needed was Hale showing up.

She made him lay on his back and lowered herself deliriously slow onto him. The stretch was as exquisite as their first time. It was difficult to do this for her so he grabbed her by the hips and pushed up into her slowly, then he increased the pace. The pressure he applied to her lower back drove him in deeper than she expected and she begged him to let her cum again as she kissed him.

He laughed at her desperation and finally let go at the same time she did. He came hard but kissed her through it and cupped his hand around her chin so she didn't collapse onto her abdomen.

She was exhausted by the time she made it back onto the bed. As he kissed along her neck, while holding her, she fell fast asleep.

Jax woke up with a start the next morning and felt Tara next to him. She was still asleep while he began kissing her gently. She woke up and held onto him. "I really have to get things done today so we can't spend all day in bed, Jax." He laughed and got out of bed to go to the kitchen.

Tara left the bedroom to take a shower. She felt euphoric after last night but knew not to trust that this was the beginning of any kind of rekindling of what they had before everything went to hell. She walked out into her bedroom and saw Jax holding her phone. She wasn't thinking anything until he looked at her and said, "What the hell does 'The Russians are coming' mean, Tara?"



Tara finished dressing in a black satin maternity nightgown and was absolutely beautiful. She was staring off into space, then sat on the bed and looked up at Jax. “Those new Russians you told me about aren’t here for you, Jax. They’re here for me and we need to get to the safe room. Now.”

“What? What are you talking about, Tara? This makes no sense.” Jax grabbed her arm. Just then a loud sound like wood splintering came from the front room. Jax reached for the gun in his waist band.

”We have to get in there now. Story time can happen later.”

Chapter End Notes

“This Masquerade”; Main Artist: The Carpenters; Songwriter: Leon Russell

Chapter 30: Dark Days

Chapter Summary

Spy Girl Meets World

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Skyfall

"A thousand miles and poles apart. Where worlds collide and days are dark. You may have my number, you can take my name, but you'll never have my heart."

As the door closed, Tara made sure all the layers were secure. Jax could not believe his eyes as she was opened the closet door and revealed a weapons depot.

"Jesus Christ, Tara. What the fuck is going on here?! One minute we're making love and the next you're standing here looking a beautiful fairy tale princess and the next you're a Bond girl. I don't know if I should make love to you, capture you, or both."

Tara pinched the bridge of her nose trying sort out how she was going to drop this bomb. "Jax, we are safe here for now until the Irish get here so I can tell you exactly what's going on."

"THE IRISH? ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?"

Jax sat down on the bed in the room which he finally realized was decorated like some kind of Eastern European palace bedroom.

"CALM DOWN. The Irish that took Abel are not the Irish that are coming here. The ones that coming are Fenian Irish and have come to protect me from the Russians."

Jax looked at her like she had three heads and at that point she felt like she did too.

"Here is the story. Since the Russians are here, we will start with their reasons for wanting me."

Tara pulled an album out of the trunk at the foot of the bed. It had Cyrillic gold leaf script on it and she opened it.

This story involves pictures that can be seen in the Ao3 version.

“The first picture is my grandmother in Ukraine in 1917 when she was fourteen years old.”



Jax interrupted, ”Holy shit that is YOU.”

Tara looked at him, “Yes, but no. That’s part of the story, now pay attention.”

“My grandmother was a peasant from a village outside of Kiev. When WWI broke out, Russia was also involved in their own civil war. The Bolshevik Reds versus the White Russians, supporters of the Czar.” She paused to make sure he was following.

“So in the middle of all of this, she left her village to study ballet on a scholarship in Kiev. While she was there she joined up with the Ukrainian dissidents opposed to the Bolsheviks. They aligned themselves with the White Russians hoping that the monarchy would prevail.

Plot twist: It didn’t.

They had to get the hell out of Dodge, so to speak. She was in love with another dissident who eventually became my grandfather, but not before she was rounded up by the Reds at a meeting they thought was secret.

It wasn’t. They were betrayed by another dissident who was obsessed with her. He stalked her and was hell bent on keeping her and my great-grandfather apart. If he couldn’t have her, there was no way in hell my grandfather could; so he literally sold her out to the Reds.

Sound familiar?

Of course, the higher ups saw how beautiful she was and one of their leaders fell in love with her. She refused all of his advances but he was determined and forced her into marriage. The Communists hated religion but knew that the Church was still entrenched in the culture so they had a Russian Orthodox Christian priest marry them.

Plot Twist II: She was not Russian Orthodox Christian, she was Ukrainian Orthodox Christian, so by her rights the marriage wasn’t valid.”

Tara took a breather. This was all so much to process growing up but to finally tell the story was a whole other level of bonkers.

“This next part is going to sound real familiar.”

“She escaped on the wedding night so the marriage was never consummated. She headed home but it took a few months because she was on foot and had to hide when they sent out search parties. Sympathizers helped her make the trip with food, clothes, and shelter. She finally made it back to Kiev and found my grandfather. Right after that, the traitor found her and tried to rape her. She was able to stab him. My grandfather had just been to her apartment for some supplies for the dissidents that weren’t rounded up with her.

She made it out of the apartment and was able to catch my grandfather. He went back with her and shot the traitor on sight. Unfortunately, after delivering my grandmother to the leaders, the traitor made it big in the regional Soviet council and they knew they wouldn’t be believed. My

grandfather would be executed or sent to a gulag and my grandmother would be sent right back to Moscow to her “husband.”

They were then married by a Ukrainian Orthodox Christian priest and went into hiding. They had my mom and uncle. He’s important too. They managed to get out of Ukraine after the Holodomor was implemented by the Soviets. Millions were dying from starvation but they managed to make it to Warsaw, then Vilnius in Lithuania. After that, they were booked passage to America.

It took them twenty years through all of this, but they eventually made it Sacramento and settled there into what they thought was going to be their happily ever after.

What they didn’t know was that a bounty had been issued by the Soviets for my grandparents.

Kill him. Bring her back alive.

Now onto my mom. She had also studied ballet in Kiev while they were hiding but when they had to leave, it was cut short. When she got to America they settled in Sacramento. They Americanized their names, became Catholic, and only spoke Ukrainian at home because my grandparents had a pretty good idea that this wasn’t over by a long shot.

My mom grew up in Sacramento. She grew up quietly in Post-WWII suburban America with the picket fence and all that. She was even the cutest Nancy Drew Bobby sockser you’ve ever seen.



Then she found out about the bounty after my grandparents were killed in a car “accident.” The Soviets found them after all of those years and came to collect my grandmother and kill my grandfather. My grandparents managed to kill both of the bounty hunters but not before they were run off the road and were killed too.

The bounty then passed onto my mom because while the Russians were Soviets, they were still Russians who liked to collect beautiful women.

They were also Russians that didn’t take kindly to their women running away on the wedding night. They might be Soviets but they were still Russians that believed in curses. This was a big

NYET when it came to Slavic curses. An unconsummated marriage is all kinds of bad luck.

My mom was now running from them. They knew there was a daughter so the bounty passed to her since they failed to collect my grandma alive. They were also instructed to kill any males, so my uncle changed his name and was drafted into the Army. She only held onto Taisia because she couldn't bear to lose that last part of her parents.

My mom then went bohemian and was anti-Vietnam because of this and traveled around protesting. This also gave her the perfect way to hide. She was anti-war, not anti-soldier though. She knew that most were forced into service like her brother by the American draft. It reminded her of the stories her parents told them about the Soviets doing the same in all the countries behind the Iron Curtain in the Eastern bloc.

After the war ended, she went to school and became a social worker who helped soldiers transition back to civilian life after Vietnam. She was one of the first people that pushed for recognition that PTSD was real and soldiers needed help to deal with all of the anti-war sentiment on top of the horrific things they saw in combat.



That’s how she met my dad. Her brother came back from Vietnam and they started a local support group at UC San Fran. He brought Dave Knowles from his platoon for the first group meeting. He fell truly, madly, deeply in love at first sight with my mom. She loved to say that he was just traumatized and should have gone out and bought a puppy dog but she was just as in love with him and they got married.

She was scared but told him about the bounty and he promised to keep her safe. My dad grew up in Charming so they moved here. It was perfect for my mom. Semi-rural and somewhere no one would expect her to be.Then a funny thing happened on the way to the Forum. When he got back to

Charming, his platoon buddies, John Teller and Piney Winston, had rolled into town with their newly formed MC brought by Gemma Madock. She's hitched to JT with a bouncing baby boy named Jackson to boot. Everyone knows your story. MC Prince of Charming. Man Slut. Yada Yada Yada.

Then along came me. My mom didn't want to scare me with talk of curses, but when she was dying, she had to tell me. We also spoke Ukrainian and Gaelic at home. I never took any of it to school with me because honestly, who would believe that shit?

So I was the good girl gone bad boy with Jax Teller. I knew the Russians would show sooner than later so I worked my ass off to get into a college far enough from Charming but where I could still see my dad. I couldn't completely let go because he was all I had left.

I didn't count on falling in love with you. I mean our first encounter since childhood wasn't exactly a Hallmark romance movie. Pushing up on me by the smoking area was every girl's dream.





“Oh shit, I remember you in that get up. . Do you still have that uniform?” He smirked while she swatted his arm.

“Maybe. But anyways, I fell for your special brand of bullshit hard. Hell, you took me to prom with your leather jacket on.



Jax laughed, “Hey I was best looking guy there. All the girls wanted me.”

Tara shot him a look that shut him up quick.

“Yeah, that was the problem then and it’s still the problem now. I tried talking you into leaving with me. I hated fighting random girls and grown-ass Croweaters. Now it’s porn sluts and more Croweaters. They’re probably the spawn of the Croweaters from back then. Oh god, you better not be banging your own kid.

So, I grew up and you didn’t. I thought our love was strong enough, but it wasn’t then, and it’s still not now.”

Jax reached for her but she pulled away.

“Remember how you told me you slept with hundreds of women? Well, I was miserable the whole first year of college. I cried every night. My cousin talked me into going on ONE date and I could barely look at him, let alone kiss him.”

Tara couldn’t look at Jax in that moment because the pain was still so real.

“I came back to the apartment and cried. I called Donna crying. I told her I was coming home. Donna stopped me, she never told me anything before but she didn’t want me making a huge mistake, or a fool of myself. She told me all about how you were living the MC life. Fucking your way through the west coast. Prison time, running guns, fucking strippers, and burning through

Croweaters at all the charters. She didn’t tell me the details but the Cliff Notes version was gross enough. I knew then that you had moved on, so I made the decision to do so too.”



Boulder to Birmingham

“And I don't want to hear a sad story full of heartbreak and desire. The last time I felt like this. It was in the wilderness and the canyon was on fire. And I stood on the mountain in the night and I watched it burn. I watched it burn, I watched it burn.”

“I started helping my dad with the Fenian stuff on the side. Learning the business, so to speak because I was all he had left. They have political power. The IRA and the RIRA are the soldiers, the Fenians are the generals. My dad was the last male Knowles of the original members way back in the 1800’s. It’s patrilineal but because I am now the last of any original Fenians, I’m the legacy. They are basically sworn to protect me.

I learned Russian in college just for this moment. Because if I’m going to break a curse, I at least should be able to function in a world I’m trapped in like a folk tale princess locked away in a tower.

Now we’re full circle and back to the very beginning.

Genetics played a fun joke on me as evidenced by this picture.



I recreated this picture for a college project about heritage. It was safely tucked away because I knew it would trigger digital tracking that the Russians have plenty of. I was careful about any pictures of me being published for anything with my career and especially friends posting stuff on MySpace and now Facebook. I literally run away from cameras.

It was safe until Kohn came to Charming. Before I knew he was in town, he broke into my house while I was in San Francisco for a medical conference. He found this, scanned it with some ATF software and found out all about MY history.

When he was finally discovered and we thought sent packing, he sent this to the Russians looking for me as the final fuck you to all of us. He told me before trying to rape me that he could never let us be together just like the traitor did to my grandmother. Talk about a fucking curse. That shit curse really knows how to pack a generational punch.

The man that my grandmother was forced to marry was in Lenin and Stalin's inner circle. The ones coming for me are his grandsons and I have the luck of becoming the blushing bride to one of them to break the curse. I'm guessing they'll roll the dice for me.

They are oligarchs and old money. They might have been spouting Communism for all that time but it was bread lines for everyone pure black market capitalism for them. All kinds of Monopoly money for them since they won their civil war and wiped out the White Russians, well all except me.

They run the Russians that run the Russian strippers you were burning through after bailing on me. Most of them aren't dancing for fun and exercise. They are trafficked from all parts of Russia because everyone, you included, loves an exotic Eastern European girl. And don't give me any shit line about how you saw my face.

Apparently, this is a hundred year cycle and we are getting close to that mark.I always planned on ending this miserable cycle by leaving with them if I had to. Then the fickle finger of fate got me pregnant and that changed everything because this baby boy is now the Knowles heir and my Irish will start WWIII to protect us from this ending like some fucking cosmic karma soap opera brought you by Hades himself.

Your type of protection by 'fucking porn sluts to protect me' won't get me out of this alive. So you can do what you want when the Russians either get into this room or my Irish wipe them out.

Choose wisely."

Chapter End Notes

"Skyfall"; Main Artist: Adele; Songwriters: Adele Adkins, Paul Epworth

Boulder to Birmingham; Main Artist: Emmylou Harris; Songwriters: Emmylou Harris, Bill Danoff

Chapter 31: A Lovely Flame

Chapter Summary

The long and winding road forks here.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Smoke Gets In Your Eyes

"They, said some day you'll find all who love are blind. When your heart's on fire you must realize smoke gets in your eyes"

1979

John Teller knew his time was up. He had survived two tours of duty in Vietnam only to come home to a country that was either indifferent or outright hostile to him. So he wandered around the country with his platoon buddy Piney Winston. He met Gemma Maddock and started a family.

Jackson was born and life was good.

As much as he hated the war, he missed the brotherhood of his platoon, especially Dave Knowles. That crazy Irish bastard, along with Piney Winston and him, were like the Three Musketeers, but jokingly called themselves the Sons of Anarchy. Dave saved him and Piney on more than one occasion. He needed to find him so they could get the Sons of Anarchy back together and off the ground. Make it real and not just an idea they dreamed up trying to stay alive in the jungle. Once they got their band of brothers back together, the MC they talked about forming would be real, off the ground, and running.

Last he heard, Dave had fallen head over heels in love with Nick Manolis' sister. Apparently, she was absolutely beautiful. She had to be to get Dave to settle down. According to Piney, she caught

your eye and kept you with her mind. She either had to be a witch or a fairy tale princess to tame Dave. That guy was an absolute legend in their platoon for having his pick of the pussy whenever they got leave.

Gemma was from a town called Charming in North central California. She was a wild sweet butt he met in Oregon. He saw her across the lot at a MC party. She was what he thought he was looking for. Young, wild, and free. She helped him forget all the shit he still saw in his mind at night as a tunnel rat during the war. She loved caring for him and he loved being taken care of.

She knew the life and they got hitched when she was ready to pop pregnant. They then headed to Charming with Piney, Otto, and Clay, fellow Army brothers from a different platoon. They were able to get an auto repair shop going and settled in.

One balmy summer night they went to the local carnival, Fun Town, and were wandering around when John caught sight of the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. All almond green eyes, porcelain skin, and long, silky black hair. Piney clocked her too, and they went in for the smooth move when she went and kissed none other than Dave Fucking Knowles.

John practically ran up to him and Dave was shocked too. They went in for their bear hug and Dave introduced them to Taisia Manolis, his fiancé. Her brother, and their platoon buddy, Nick wandered up too; John and Piney dragged them all back to the auto shop and their newly built clubhouse.

Gemma and Otto’s old lady, Luann, hit it right off the bat with Taisia and they all partied for a week straight. John had a strange sense of serendipity tinged with the sadness of the reality that the world they lived in had marginalized them. They would forge their own fiefdom and a sense of hope for endless possibilities they had now that the brotherhood was back together.

Dave and Taisia were married soon after and the party that took place was epic by any standard. It was akin to a two week medieval feast right out of a Brothers Grimm tale. She was the most beautiful bride anyone had ever seen.



Dave’s handsome mug in his uniform had all the women swooning, but it was beyond a shadow of a doubt that he only had eyes for Taisia. Hell, all the guys were jealous and some of the women too.

Real life set in and they had to make a living. The auto repair business was good but they needed more when that slowed down. That’s when John went to Dave to discuss what he had told him about his history during their deployment.

Dave used his Fenian connections and got them in with the the Cause. It was a good time for gun running. The Troubles had everyone looking for ways to keep the money flowing. That meant guns

going out and the money coming in was almost too good to be true for the Sons.

Dave kept his role in all of this quiet. Taisia was expecting and she was always on high alert because of her history with the Russians. He would storm the gates of Hades to protect her and the money helped keep her tucked safely away at home.

Their baby girl, Tara, came soon after and life was good.

Chapter End Notes

“Smoke Gets in Your Eyes”; Main Artist: The Platters; Composer: Jerome Kern; Lyricist: Otto Harbach

Chapter 32: Somewhere, Out There

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Somewhere, My Love

"You'll come to me out of the long ago, warm as the wind, soft as the kiss of snow."

As Tara finished the story of the Slavic curse, Jax had no clue what to say. The only thing he could think was what the actual fuck. Just carrying the burden of one of the legacies was overwhelming; she had to live in fear for all of those years, lose both of her parents, deal with that psycho Kohn, and now all of the bullshit he had put her through.

He didn't have time to dwell on it, when they heard a song. What the hell? They both looked at each other. Tara realized it was, "Somewhere, My Love" from Doctor Zhivago. All Tara could think was what is it with all of her psycho stalkers and Andy Williams songs? First Josh with that creepy song when he was getting ready to rape her and now these Russian nut jobs.

The safe room was soundproofed and encased in several layers of steel, lead, and hidden behind a fake panel. The Fenians spared no expense. There were cameras feeding to monitors in the safe room and they could see the men moving through the house.

She grabbed her Beretta and Jax had his gun. A man's voice speaking in Russian could be heard. Tara understood everything he said and mouthed it to Jax. "Find her and bring her to us alive. Kill Teller on sight."

Jax grabbed his gun and a rifle. Tara recognized the men as the bounty hunters that the Fenians spotted in Stockton. They started calling out her name in the creepiest way possible. "Tara, come out, come out wherever you are. It's time for you to come home."

These people really thought of her as her grandmother. The fact that she literally looks just like her, they really are under the delusion that she's some kind of folk tale princess that's going to break a ridiculous curse. She thought of her grandmother and what it must have been like trapped with these kinds of men. Just hearing these assholes made her skin crawl.

Just then, Tara received a text from her cousin. The Fenians were coming for them through one of the panels with an escape route. She looked at Jax, "It could be a ruse but it's our only way out of here without risking the baby if I'm shot or injured. The baby is more important than me.

He couldn't let either the Russians or the Fenians take her and their baby away from him. He barely survived the eleven years they were apart and something this bonkers would destroy him. All he thought about when she came back was throwing her over his shoulder and marrying her immediately.

The Russians weren't going to stop that from happening. If he had to go to Russia with her, he had an idea based off of one of the details she told him about the curse. That tiny detail might just break

the curse and give her the happily ever after she deserved.

“Tara don’t say that. I’m here and we are getting out of this together. I will die protecting you and our baby if I have to.” Jax then kissed her deeply. She felt that small bloom of love that always lured her back into his web. She then thought for a hot second that going with the Russians might be a better deal than falling back down into his rabbit hole.

”If the Russians are on the other side of this, we need to be dressed to go there and it’s really fucking cold there right now.” Tara put on a white robe with a fur-trimmed hood and threw an ushanka hat at Jax with a dark coat. Jax laughed, “What in the Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy is this mess?” Tara gave him that look that always shut him up.



“Come on Doctor Zhivago, it’s show time.”

Chapter End Notes

“Somewhere, My Love”; Main Artist: Andy Williams; Composer: Maurice Jarre; Lyricist: Paul Webster

End Notes

“Heartbreaker” lyrics Writer(s): Robin Hugh Gibb, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb.

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