

CHAPTER 1

IT WAS A late night when the bar was open. The neon-lighted sign above had a few flickering letters, which would indicate to a normal bystander that this particular place wasn't for the normal type. Even the name of the bar itself caused the best of them to steer clear as they walked down the busy, dark street.

"Welcome to the Seven Deadly Sins!" the bartender shouted as the entrance door opened. The customer who came in just smirked as she then scanned the bar for an empty seat. Even though she'd been here many times before, she never got sick of hearing that greeting. Finally, however, after walking through a decent group of people, she took a seat at a stool at the bar. She nervously rubbed her hands on her jeans, trying to release the remaining adrenaline she was experiencing from a few moments before. That was when John, the bartender, approached her, and she finally snapped out of her thoughts and rested her elbows on the bar.

"Hey there, Mel," he greeted warmly. She looked back at him with a smirk and a flip of the long bangs that covered one of her eyes.

"Hey, John," she spoke back, eyeing his usual messy brown hair and a scruffy short beard that, in her opinion, complemented his slightly long face, strong chin, and serious brown eyes. He also put his arms on the bar, leaning in closer to her, his arm sleeve of tattoos exposed and popping out against the dark mahogany of the wood he rested on.

"You staying out of trouble?" he teased. Mel rolled her eyes and looked away, slightly ashamed but also trying to hide it.

"I am, of course," she replied, sounding slightly ominous.

John chuckled and then stood up. "So...the usual?" he then asked, changing the subject, of which Mel was glad as she looked back at him and just nodded. John then disappeared momentarily as he mixed her drink. While he did, Mel took a moment to glance around the bar at the tough and seedy characters around her. She knew, as far as appearance was concerned, that she stood out amongst them; however, she also knew deep down she was among comrades.

"One Salty Devil," John now said, causing Mel to turn back to the bar and look down at the small glass of whiskey in front of her.

"Thanks," she appreciated as she took a sip, and John, with only a nod, then turned to help the next customer.

After a few minutes of sipping her drink, Mel appreciated the silence and solitude she was feeling. She didn't get moments like this often, and even though the sounds of

ruckus did fill the bar around her, to her, it was muted. She heard nothing right now but her own thoughts, and she loved it.

However, it didn't last long because the loud sound of John yelling broke her out of it. She looked up from staring down at her glass and saw her bartender friend shouting at three men for fighting. However, they didn't seem to be listening to his constant commands for them to take it outside, as they just continued on with their skirmishing. It was then that Mel also noticed several other people around her gathering and shouting "Fight, fight, fight, fight!" and pumping their fists, egging the three burly men on. John continued yelling at them, but he was just being lost in all of the chanting. Mel, however, decided to take this moment to slip off to the bathroom. She realized that no one was paying attention to her and knew this was the perfect moment.

Once she burst through the swinging restroom door, she immediately went to the sink. She looked down at it for a moment before then forcing herself to look up into the mirror. She immediately noticed her wavy black hair was a bit frizzy from the humid post-rain weather outside as its ends rested slightly above her collarbone. She reached up to brush her long bangs away from her face again, only to then notice her bloodshot, big, almond-shaped eyes that were framed by a thick, but smudged, outline of black eyeliner. She looked exhausted, but of course, why would she look any different? She'd had a rough day and she only got about an hour of sleep before then and now.

"Satan, you look like shit..."

Mel then scoffed at the voice in her head as she kept looking at her reflection—the bags under her eyes, the slight bruise on the side of her thin nose which stood out due to her fair skin, and the bit of dried blood left on her full pink lips, which she quickly wiped away with the sleeve of her dark green army jacket. She then spoke to the voice as if it were a different person, "Yeah, well, if you recall, we only got an hour of sleep. You couldn't have made me look a little better?"

"You only got an hour of sleep. I don't sleep, remember? And I can heal you or make you indestructible, but I can't make you sleep better. That's on you, babe."

Mel rolled her eyes. She then abruptly turned her head towards the door as she suddenly heard the sound of smashing glass on the other side.

"Shit, you wanna do something about it, don't you?"

Mel turned back to her reflection and only smirked.

"Fuck, you know I hate you using me for this goodie-goodie bullshit."

"Are you saying you don't want to kill them?" Mel teased as her smirk turned to a smile.

"I always want to kill, babe, you know that. But can't we kill a saint for once instead of a sinner?"

“We owe John. At least, I do. I can’t let them destroy his bar.”

“Shit! Fuck, fine! You win like always, you slut. Let’s go.”

Mel then took one giant breath and let it out before finally exiting the bathroom. Once she was back in the bar, it was obvious the fight was still going on. She attempted to push her way through the group of people until she instantly stopped as something on the floor was in her footpath. She looked down and saw it was John, lying on the floor only slightly conscious, with a bloody lip and a puffy black eye.

“Shit, they beat him up good!”

“Shut up!” Mel chastised under her breath as she then looked up at the three men, still in a brawl. Mel then decided to move to the right to the bar, grab her drink from earlier, and instantly throw the glass so that it smashed at the three men’s feet. It took a moment for them to realize what had happened as they stopped their scuffle and looked around the crowd of people trying to find out who had thrown the glass. One of the men, the biggest one with the longest beard, opened his mouth, obviously about to ask what lowlife had the guts to interrupt them; however, he didn’t get to because Mel cut him off.

“Over here, asshole,” she said with confidence. All three of the men now turned to look down at her, as they were much bigger and taller, and the people around her began to spread out and away.

The biggest man now laughed as he took two steps toward her. “Who do you think you are, bitch?” he then demanded.

“Melinda Shaw. You heard of me?” Mel answered without hesitation.

“Can’t say I have,” the man replied, “But they call me Mammoth. And I have about three homicides to my name. So are you sure you wanna mess with me and my boys here, little girly?”

Mel then heard laughing inside her head. *“Haha...three homicides?! Lightweight! I can’t wait to shit on this cocky asshat!”*

“First of all,” Mel then angrily responded as she rolled her shoulders stressfully, “Don’t call me ‘girly’, I’m twenty-three years old. Second, if you think three homicides are supposed to scare me, you’ve got another thing coming. And thirdly, I think you should be asking yourself whether or not *you* should mess with *me*...because I’m the one you should be afraid of. Not the other way around.”

Mammoth only laughed loudly in response as he then pulled out a small switchblade from his jeans pocket and quickly flipped it open with a small click.

Mel only heaved a sigh as she watched his masculine display and then instantly shut her eyes as if she were meditating. It only took another second before she then opened them, exposing her now, completely white eyes. Not only that, but it seemed that red veins had popped up, branching from around them and gracing her cheeks, making her look

almost ill. Her lips also turned a bluish-black hue, but even despite all the changes to her appearance, it didn't cause as much of a stir as the motion of her slowly floating off the floor had. Mammoth's confident demeanor faltered for a moment as he stared at her, hovering in the air, her black hair unnaturally floating around her, looking as if someone had filmed it flowing in the wind but then rewound it.

"Scared yet, douchebag?!" Mel now spoke in a dual-toned voice as she assumedly stared down at Mammoth in front of her.

Mammoth only stood in silence for a second before he then shook his head, trying to break the fear that was obviously starting to fill him, as he then let out an animalistic yell and charged for Mel, knife in hand. However, he only got a few inches from her before she quickly opened her mouth, spewed a horrible green liquid from her lips, and projected it right into the thug's face. It lasted for what seemed like several minutes; the liquid just flowed from Mel's opened mouth and onto Mammoth. The crowd around them at this point began backing up even further so as not to be hit by the bile. Most of the people in the bar even decided to turn heels and run out, obviously terrified. Mel even thought she heard someone shout, "It's Hell Mel!! Get out! She'll kill us all!"

Finally, however, the flow of muck stopped, and Mel closed her mouth. She continued floating and looking down at the drenched Mammoth as he gagged and tried to wipe the sewage from his face and eyes. However, while she reveled in the mess she'd made, one of Mammoth's guys had snuck up behind her and was hastening her way.

"*Hey, dumb fuck at six o'clock!*" Mel heard from inside as she then turned her head all the way around to face the new oncoming attacker. The man, who was covered in tattoos, stopped suddenly at the sight of her head facing him while the rest of her was still turned toward his gang leader.

It was then that Mel decided to kick backward, and her foot instantly made contact with the tattooed man's chest, forcefully cracking a few bones and causing him to fall to the floor hard on his back. Mel watched him choke and cough up blood as the broken ribs inside him punctured his lungs. However, it was then that a sharp pain in her leg caused her to turn her head back around and face Mammoth once again. The green mess that was over him had now been wiped from his face as he grinned triumphantly up at her, the few gold teeth in his smile gleaming. Mel looked down at her leg and saw his switchblade now penetrating her thigh.

"*That fucker!*" the voice in Mel's head shouted. Mel then casually reached down, wrapped her fingers around the handle of the blade, and forcefully pulled it out. She and Mammoth both looked down at the wound left from it and watched as it instantly began to close up, only a drop of blood escaping before it was then gone, leaving only a rip in her jeans.

“You fuck!” Mel’s double voice shouted at him, “You ruined my favorite jeans!” It was then that Mammoth decided to look back up at her face to see her hand up in the air, the knife resting in her open palm. Slowly, the knife began to lift itself, floating above her hand, and then slowly turned so that the blade was now pointing in his direction. He only got to see a quick grin grow across Mel’s face before the knife then shot through the air on its own and instantly found its way into the flesh of his throat. Blood gushed at the wound as Mammoth’s eyes bulged and he gurgled a bit before finally falling backward and landing dead on the floor.

Mel looked down at him in a very satisfying manner until she then heard the noise of the last of Mammoth’s men scrambling to leave the bar. She looked up as he had just made it to the door and tugged on the handle.

“Sorry...” Mel’s demonic voice informed, “It’s locked.”

The man now turned around and looked about him, noticing that there was no longer anyone else in the bar but him, Mel, his two dead comrades, and the unconscious John who still lay on the floor. His face was filled with panic as he now looked back up at Mel, who was still floating above.

“Please...please...” he began to beg with a shaky voice.

“Oh, *what a pussy.*” Mel smiled at the voice as she only glanced at the cowering man, causing him to swiftly lift, with an unseen force, until his head collided with the hanging lamp above him. As it rammed into the socket of the light bulb, a short scream was heard from him as his body went rigid and sparked as electricity pulsed through him. Finally, however, the light went out, and his limp and lifeless body then fell onto the floor in a heap.

It was now that the bar was quiet for the first time in the whole night, and Mel began to descend until she finally touched the floor. She wasted no time in taking the few steps toward John as she heard the familiar voice in her head speak up again, “Woo! *That was good! I love the smell of blood, don’t you?!*”

Mel didn’t respond but knelt beside John, touching his face gently. He still looked pretty beat up, but she could tell he’d be alright. He’s been through worse before, she knew. Suddenly, however, John’s eyes fluttered, and after quickly looking around the room, he finally rested his gaze on her. He saw her white eyes, red veins, and blue lips, and after clearing his throat a bit, he croaked out, “Hey there, Morfran.”

A smile appeared on Mel’s face, and then a voice came out of her mouth that wasn’t hers. It wasn’t the dual voice from before either. It was a man’s throaty voice that spoke now as it said, “Hey there, John the Baptist.”

“Don’t call me that,” John instantly and angrily shot back as he now attempted to sit up.

“Whatever. You’re welcome, by the way, you fuck.”

“Oh, you’re waiting for me to say thank you to *you*?” John smugly stated as he looked into Mel’s white eyes. “I’d rather say thank you to Mel. I know she’s the one who got you to come out and do this. You wouldn’t have done it on your own accord.” John finally found the strength to get to his feet as he then used the back of his hand to wipe the blood he could feel trickling down his chin.

“Yeah, well, I guess you can keep that fuckin’ thanks and also keep that black eye and busted lip. Like I’m going to let her fix it for you now, you ungrateful shit.”

“Just get out of her, already! Leave her be!” John now shouted.

The male voice coming from Mel laughed in response. “I’m not going anywhere. Besides, she doesn’t want me to leave anyway.”

“You don’t know what she wants. You don’t even bother to know! You only care about yourself, you demon!”

“Ooooh, the d-word,” the voice mocked, “I think I know what she wants more than you. More than anyone fuckin’ does! I’m the one who’s been here the longest! I’m the one who’s looked after her for all these years! Seventeen to be exact! Can you say that, you dickwad?! No, you can’t!”

John just stared at Mel angrily as he then noticed her face scrunched up in discomfort. She then lowered her head and grabbed at her hair with her hands. A few grunts escaped her until finally she looked back up, and her face was back to normal. Her eyes were blue again, and her lips pink. A few pained tears escaped her eyes as they fell down her cheek and caused her eyeliner to run with them.

“I’m sorry...” Mel then spoke in her normal voice as she looked at John’s concerned face.

“Thank you for your help,” was all he said back. He said it in a very robotic and cold tone, however.

“I couldn’t just let those guys—”

“I know, Mel. Just next time keep that fucker Morfran under control.”

“You know I’m trying!” Mel now yelled, her voice slightly cracking, “I didn’t mean for him to come all the way out. I’m sorry for what he said to you...”

John then turned around and stepped over the body of Mammoth as he headed to the phone behind the bar.

“John...” Mel begged again. John slightly turned to her and said, “You’d better go. I gotta call the cops and get this place cleaned up again. You don’t want to be anywhere near.”

Mel wiped the tears from her cheeks as she just watched him walk away again.

“*Forget that ungrateful fuck,*” Morfran now spoke inside her, “*It’s you and me, babe. It’s always just been you and me.*”

Mel then nodded as she turned toward the exit doors. "I know. I guess it just really is..." She took one last look over her shoulder at John, who was on the phone with the police, before she then pushed open the doors and went out into the night again.