

CHAPTER ONE

Two steel-edged Anvil cases and one microphone stand propped open the hulking metal door as rain bounced like pebbles on the loading ramp. A team of young roadies in t-shirts and skinny jeans hefted drum cases, keyboards, amplifiers, and guitars from the Ryder truck backed into the dock, rushing to keep all from getting soaked as they slip-slided in and out of Studio 3. A din of voices and muffled rock music pumped from somewhere inside the cavernous space, as instructions were bellowed, and some kind of order was found in the mayhem.

Inside the large, dimly lit studio, a catering team bustled about setting up a bar and hors d'oeuvres table on one side of the room; chairs were being assembled in various key spots in front of the stage. Huddled in another corner, drying off boots, belts, and leather jackets, fluffing coiffed and sprayed hairdos, was the band.

The six members of Liberty were paying varying degrees of attention to a set list being cobbled together by Nick Jackson, lead guitarist, band leader, and perfectly assembled '80s rock god, and Libby Conlin, the beautiful, sartorially resplendent lead singer. Debate about mood, tone, and flow abounded; arguments about what to save for the encore and who should say what between songs were interrupted by the breathless arrival of Damon, their besuited manager, who rushed up with horror and elation bursting from his face in equal measure.

“Fucking hell... can you believe this mess? It's goddamn chaos on the freeway, no one can drive in this stuff. We may have to hold off at the top, you know everyone will be late. Jesus Christ, I hate rain.” He shook off his raincoat, threw it over a chair, then took a deep breath. “Okay, kids, now the good news. I got the call just before I left. He's definitely coming.”

Libby, cheeks flushed in the generalized excitement of the evening, turned with a blank expression. “Who?”