



# DAD'S LAWYER BEST FRIEND

AMAZON BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
LENA LITTLE

# **DAD'S LAWYER BEST FRIEND**

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DAD'S BEST FRIEND: BOOK 16

LENA LITTLE



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## PREVIEW

My best friend and partner in my law firm has a client out to get him. The main problem? His daughter, Raina, is in the line of fire. Someone needs to protect her. Who is better than me for the job?

I show up for Raina whenever she needs me and even when she believes she doesn't. I may take my protective nature over her a bit far, but sometimes a guy has to climb through her window to make sure she's safe.

The tension between us is undeniable. It's so palpable that her father enlists me to protect her while he dodges a maniac of a client who put him in the hospital. I won't let that happen to her.

I'll stand in front of a bullet for Raina because that's the kind of man I am for her. That's the kind of man she needs in her life. A man to take care of her. A man she actually wants to call *Daddy*.

It takes some convincing for her to let me keep her safe, but once she's onboard, I need her to know she's mine. Nothing or no one is going to get in the way of me protecting her. She belongs to me ... now and forever.

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## REX

Sleep is the only thing I want when my phone rings ten minutes to midnight. The darkness of my bedroom shatters with every flash of the screen, forcing me to roll over to grab the obnoxious device off the nightstand.

“Yeah?” I answer, my voice rough, and sleep desperately wants me to go back to bed.

“Rex.” Owen strains just saying my name, which gets me to sit all the way up. I’m wide awake as I wait for my law partner and best friend to tell me what’s going on.

“Hey, I’m up. What’s happening? Where are you?” I ask him. The bed creaks quietly under my weight while I swing my legs over the side. The dark gray carpet is warm as I pad my way into the bathroom. The lights force me to squint, waiting for my eyes to adjust to being open at this hour.

“Saint Salvatore’s,” he grunts out. I’m already doing the math of how long it will take for me to get dressed and drive over there.

I tell him, “I’ll be there in like twenty minutes.”

“No, don’t.” He strains and grunts from the obvious pain he’s in. “Listen, Lorenzo lost his shit on me earlier today.”

“I can’t believe you still work with that maniac. Are you alright?”

My movements around the bathroom are habitual, with my first being to turn

on the shower. After setting my phone in its dock, it connects wirelessly to the speakers nestled beside the lights in the ceiling. It leaves my hands free to shave and brush my teeth. I know he said don't come, but he has to know that I'm not going to sit at home while this is going down.

Owen groans. "No. A few cracked ribs, broken leg, and my eye's swollen shut. Lorenzo got confused about some money I was moving for him. He thought it was stolen and tried to beat it out of me. The Feds are here."

"You're cooperating, I hope."

"Yeah, I am. They want me out of town until they can figure out how much information they need from me."

"Fuck. Lorenzo is going to try to finish the job once he finds out you're cooperating." I huff and run my fingers through my hair.

My dark brown strands have a few streaks of gray growing in, undoubtedly from the stress of being a partner with one of the most popular criminal defense lawyers around. If he has to get protection, that means I'm going to need to shuffle some people into different roles at the firm. He's in danger the longer he stays at that hospital.

"What about Raina?" I ask him.

"She doesn't want to come with me. I gotta get out of here, but I need her safe. She's being so fucking stubborn, just like her mother." Owen's muttering and cursing under his breath. The relationship with his daughter is not a traditional one, and I try to keep my nose out of it.

"Does she understand the danger she's in? Why won't she go with you?"

The strain in his voice sounds painful. He pushes through, saying, "She thinks because Lorenzo didn't stick around to make sure I was dead that he's okay with me being alive, so no danger on her part. I don't have the energy to argue with her, Rex. She'll listen to you."

"What makes you think she'll do that?"

"I'm not stupid, Rex. We've both seen the way she looks at you."

"A harmless crush doesn't equal compliance."

Frustration fills his voice. “She thinks she knows everything, and you’ve always been the one who could get through to her. She’s more likely to listen to you because of that crush, and I know you’d keep her safe. Just watch over her until the dust settles. Can you do that for me?”

“Of course I can. You need anything else?”

“No. I’ll call as soon as I can.”

We end the call, and even though he told me not to go to the hospital, there’s too much energy coursing through my body. Going back to sleep isn’t an option, so I decide to head out for the night.

The least I can do is check on Raina, a 20-year-old with a harmless crush. However, it’s not harmless. I feel the tension between us every time I get around her, every time she calls and I show up for her. Every time we’re near, it takes every ounce of willpower not to give in to my own desires. I want Raina, but she’s a good girl. Perhaps too good for the likes of me.

This isn’t the first time Owen’s in the line of fire with his clients. He’s always taking on clients who are guilty until proven innocent, which they rarely are. But this is the first time he’s admitted to having illegal dealings with them. It’s my first time hearing about it too.

I’ll have to settle that with him after this blows over. For now, I’m heading over to Raina’s apartment. It doesn’t take long for me to drive across town to her place. The building she lives in is four stories tall, and her apartment is on the first floor.

There’s no lock on the lobby door, which I don’t like under the current circumstances. The dim lights cast an ugly yellow hue across its ordinary light beige floors and dark beige walls. The grid of silver mailboxes is directly across from a hallway holding three apartments. There’s another hallway in front of me beside the elevator.

A glance over my shoulder at the mailbox shows the names of the tenants on each. It’s convenient, but I don’t like it. After ripping Raina Olsen’s name off her mailbox, I head toward her apartment. I don’t want to wake her, and instead of ringing the bell, I test the doorknob to make sure the lock is still intact.

The door doesn't budge, which makes me feel slightly better. I want to get my eyes on her. The windows to her apartment are around the back of the building from what I remember. It only takes me a few minutes to make my way around the side of the building.

My eyes continue to drift to the fence line separating the building's property from the houses behind it and beside it. Street lamps towering nearly a hundred feet above the ground cast shadows, but I don't see any movement.

By the time I circle to the back of the building and stop in front of Raina's window, my heart is racing. The idea of catching a glimpse of her asleep has my mouth watering, forgetting that the reason I'm here is to make sure she's safe. I can't let my own urges get in my way.

This isn't the first time I'm letting myself into her apartment. Raina has a knack for locking herself out, and I'm always around for her. It's a chink in Owen's armor that he's more of a financier than a father to Raina. As his friend, I can count the number of times I've encouraged him to try harder, but some things are out of my control.

Instead of beating a dead horse, I show up whenever he can't, which is far more often than I like. Yet, in those moments where I come through for Raina, it makes me see that I care about her as a woman who needs me, who wants me.

The window to her living room is open about two inches, with the curtains swaying from the night's breeze. There aren't any bars on the window, and I test it like the doorknob. It's easy to push up and gives me enough space to crawl inside. There isn't anything in front of the window either.

There's carpet covering the floor but stops at the edge of the hallway and before the small open kitchen. The boards creak under my steps, but the rug muffles the noise. Every step around her home feels like I'm too big to be in the space.

There's the scent of something sweet—vanilla and cinnamon—luring me down the hallway. The soft light of flames flickering brings me toward Raina's bedroom, stopping just outside the doorway. I watch her, losing myself in a fantasy where I belong here in the middle of the night.

The bed takes up a good portion of the back wall of the room. There's a dresser and TV stand in front of it. I can picture us in bed together watching a scary movie where she moves against me after something frightens her.

The closet, directly across from me, has a door that looks slightly off its hinge. I move into the room to check it out. The only things inside are clothes and shoes. Fixing the door is now on my list of things to do.

The flame of a candle dancing on her dresser makes the subtle golden glow soothing and comforting. A breeze sneaks in through another window with no bars. There aren't any deterrents to stop people from coming inside.

Raina sleeps heavily, her bare chest rising and falling with every breath. The blanket slips down to reveal her nipple. Jesus. Blood rushes directly to my cock when I have to adjust the tightening around my crotch. Fuck me, she's beautiful.

Silky blonde strands come together in a braid that falls over her shoulder. I want to wrap that braid around my hand while I pump into her sweet cunt mercilessly. My fantasies about this little girl are getting out of hand and in the way of why I'm here.

"Rex?" Raina murmurs and my heart stops.

How does she know I'm here? A closer look shows she's still asleep, and I let out a sigh of relief. I take a few steps toward her, trying to keep my steps light. I want to pull the blanket over her and make sure the windows are locked.

I wait a moment to see if she's still talking in her sleep. When she doesn't say anything else, I walk over to the windows, draw the curtains shut, and make sure the locks are in place. A part of me wants motion detectors on these things too.

Raina moans and turns onto her side, facing away from me, and thankfully so. There's a side of me that's not sure how I can stay away. I want her to sleep and don't want her to worry about the danger of Owen's situation. I need to get out of here before she wakes up.

As soon as that thought crosses my mind, three heavy thuds on the front door crash through the quietness of the night. Raina stirs and groans with

frustration.

“No,” she mumbles and buries her head under her pillow.

The person at her front door isn't giving up. As a matter of fact, they're knocking even harder. Raina snarls as she snatches the blanket from off her body. She's about a foot shorter than me at 5 feet tall. Her tight little ass looks like it will sit perfectly in my hand. When she turns around, I get a glimpse of that delicate pussy, covered in a trim triangle of light brown hair.

“Holy shit!” She shrieks once she lays eyes on me, clutching herself across her tits and over her the apex between her thighs.

“RAINA!” The voice at the front door yells from the other side.

“Rex?” Confusion comes through first before relief washes over her. She drops her hands and storms out of the room and into the bathroom. She comes back with a robe on.

The guy at the front door knocks frantically again, still shouting. “Raina, open up. There's a weird man in your apartment. Raina!”

“Stay here. I'm going to get that,” I tell her and make my way out of her room.

She doesn't stay, deciding to follow me and turning on the living room lights. “Rex, what the hell are you doing here? Do you have any idea what time it is?”

However, before I can answer her, a key is put into her door, and turns.





## RAINA

**S**age and leather are the scents that hit me first any time Rex is nearby.

I'm not sure if it's his soap or cologne, or if his skin just pushes the scent out like a pheromone. It's not a shock that I'd dream about him. He smells so close and I call out to him, but sleep still holds me close.

The banging on my door forces my eyes open before I can have my way with the Rex of my dreams. Only when I get up to stop the incessant noisemaker do I turn around to see him standing by my bed.

Fear hits me before I realize it's Rex, and the banging on the door isn't stopping. After I throw on a robe to answer the door, I want to know what he's doing here. However, the sound of keys unlocking my front door makes my heart stop. Rex points for me to get back and sit on my couch. I obey him this time.

I sit down and the door swings open with Drew, my building super, rushing inside and crashing into Rex's broad chest. Drew's about an inch taller than Rex, but they're around the same build. It becomes clear quickly who's the strongest of the two.

Rex wraps his massive hands around Drew's shoulders, whipping him around to slam him against the back of the door he just came through.

"What have you done with Raina?" Drew asks.

"Why did you let yourself into her apartment?" Rex answers his question

with one of his own.

Drew tries to shake himself loose to no avail. “Let go of me. I’ve already called the police.”

“That’s a lie. They would be here with you if you did that. Why did you let yourself inside of this young woman’s apartment in the middle of the night?”

“You came in here first,” Drew spits with nervous energy running through every syllable.

“Everything is fine, Drew,” I tell him, getting up from the couch once I see it’s just the super. “Rex is a friend.”

“Just a friend?” Rex quips with a raised eyebrow. His dark brown eyes are looking at me as if he can see through my robe. I clutch it tighter and turn to look at Drew. The corner of Rex’s mouth turns up in a cocky grin as he also faces Drew, telling him, “Raina is fine. I was invited, and you were not.”

“Raina?” Drew asks, hoping for me to say something to the contrary.

I nod. “I’m okay, Drew. You’re not supposed to use that key if there isn’t an emergency.”

“I know, but I saw the security camera. It showed him climbing through the window,” Drew says in his own defense.

It bothers me. I shake my head. “So instead of calling my phone or the police, you decide to use the master key to let yourself inside my apartment?”

Drew stutters. “I’m sorry, Raina. It’s just that I know you don’t see anybody and—”

“You need to leave. I’m fine, and Rex is actually more than a friend. He’s my...uh...man.” My words are clunky and I barely believe them.

Rex sets Drew on his feet as my super’s gaze shifts between the two of us, waiting for further explanation.

More lies spill from my mouth. “I told Rex to stop by and I wasn’t answering my phone or the door. He’s helped me get in here when I’ve locked myself out, so he knows I don’t mind if he pops in through that window.”

“You can call me anytime, Raina, if you get locked out,” Drew says.

“I can see why she doesn’t.” Rex grimaces. “You just help yourself to come in here whenever you feel like it. She’s never going to call you because I show up for her. I’m here now.”

Rex takes a step away from Drew and wraps his massive arm around my back. It forces me to let go of my robe, which falls open slightly. Rex moves me effortlessly, turning me to face him as he dips his head to kiss me. The gesture cements my lies as truth.

His kiss is possessive. Husky breathing mixes with low groans as I lean into the moment, letting his tongue invade my mouth, claiming, capturing, and savoring the taste of our lips together. Rex pulls away from the kiss, leaving me wanting more and forgetting that Drew is still here.

Rex keeps my body against him as he speaks to Drew. “You should remember that the next time you decide to use that key for personal reasons, I’m going to be standing on the other side of this door. Raina belongs to me.”

Rex affirms his statement by palming my ass through the back of my robe. I can feel his fingers teasing the split between my legs, forcing my eyes to widen with the sensation.

Drew’s voice is timid as he speaks. “You both have my apologies. It won’t happen again. Goodnight, Raina.”

The sound of the door opening and closing lets me breathe and attempt to step away from Rex. Now that we’re alone, there’s no reason for us to keep up the facade, but I want to pick up where that kiss left off. However, the lust building inside of me has to wait because there’s a very important question Rex has to answer.

I pull away from Rex, his hand lingering on my ass longer than necessary as I go to lock the door.

“What are you doing here, Rex?” I ask him, going into the kitchen. I’m desperate to distract myself from the way he makes me feel. There’s an anticipation of what can happen. He’s a man in my apartment in the middle of the night.

He follows me to the kitchen, his size swallowing me in the open space. There's barely enough space between my slim dining table that only seats two and the counter where I sit an empty glass I've pulled from the cabinet. Rex approaches me, his presence dominating and strong. I want him to kiss me. Forget answering questions.

He takes the lapels of my robe, holding it open for a moment, dragging his gaze up and down my body before sliding the robe back in place to cover me.

"You shouldn't answer the door like that," he says.

I shrug. "I wasn't. I was going to yell from this side of it that I was fine and go back to bed."

Rex hooks a finger under my chin, tilting my face to look into his eyes. "Well, let's get you back to bed."

He steps back for me to head to my bedroom. I can feel him following me. If it was anyone else, I'd be worried, frightened even, but Rex is always there for me. I know he has a good reason for breaking into my apartment.

Inside my room, I flick the light on and toss my robe onto the closet door. Rex Remington is standing in my bedroom like a damn supermodel. I want him to take me, kiss me, put me to bed in more ways than one.

His round shoulders and chiseled chest can't hide under the thin black shirt he's wearing. Denim and leather boots round out his look where he's a lawyer by day and this fine specimen of manliness by night. Manliness that affects me as I watch a noticeable shift near the crotch of his jeans. I wonder what he must look like under the clothes, as I've never seen a man's body so up close and personal.

"Are you going to tell me why you're sneaking around my house at nearly one in the morning?" I ask him, slipping into the bed. I don't lie down, but I use the blanket to cover the lower half of my body, bringing my knees up to my chest for me to rest my hands and chin on them.

"Owen's in a bad spot."

I shrug at the sound of my sperm donor's name. "Owen's always in a bad spot. It's a shame he can't just pay for his problems to go away. That's his

go-to method for problem-solving.”

Rex chuckles. “I know. There’s never been a problem Owen couldn’t solve by emptying a bank account. He just wanted to be sure you were safe. The guy that put him in the hospital is still on the loose and he can come here to try and intimidate you once he realizes Owen’s going into witness protection.”

“Wait a minute.” I hold my hands up. “When did this happen? Last I spoke to him, he was going to the hospital and thinking about taking some time off work.”

“Tonight, I’m guessing. I got off the phone with him around midnight and told him I’d look after you, keep you safe. Speaking of which, you were supposed to move the couch or chair in front of the living room window.”

I’m not in any mood for another one of Rex’s lectures on staying safe while living alone. “I was going to, but I didn’t like the way any of it looked. I’m fine, Rex. Really. Thank you for coming by to check on me. You should probably go. It’s not like Drew believes you’re my boyfriend or anything.”

Rex’s face takes on a serious expression, almost like what I’m saying is insulting to him. The bass in his voice is deep enough to make me want to press my ear against his chest to hear and feel the vibrations of his words.

“Why doesn’t he believe I’m your man?” Rex asks.

“Drew is 80% decent guy, 20% awkward, and 100% friendzoned. It makes it easy to call on him for things I need around this apartment—”

“Like fixing this closet door?” Rex asks, taking a step closer to the closet door with a loose hinge. The way his eyebrow raises tells me he’s already trying to determine what he needs to fix it.

He’s constantly coming to my rescue. I don’t want it to be any other way.

“Yes, especially like fixing the door. He came to see what he needed to sort that hinge out and ended up asking me about my dating life. In full friendzone mode, I told him I wasn’t interested in dating because I’m a virgin. Yet, here you are, barely a week after that conversation. I’m making up crazy lies about a sex life I don’t have. Spilling secret sex fantasies to my

super and Owen's best friend."



REX

“Secret sex fantasies of a virgin,” I say the words low, but Raina hears me and I swear she blushes. But now, curiosity has me by the balls. I pull off my shirt and set it on the dresser beside the TV.

“What do you think you’re doing?” she asks.

“I’m staying the night, just in case. Between the guy that’s after Owen and your super abusing his power with that key, I’m going to stay so he can see me leave in the morning. I need him and everyone else in this building to know that there’s a man they have to contend with behind that front door.”

Raina leans back, propping herself on her elbows. Her tits are staring at me, soft milky skin with nipples a few shades darker than her supple pink lips. Those lips call to me, but I’m not here to fulfill my fantasy.

“This is stupid.” She grunts and lets her elbows drop from underneath her. Raina leans back and uses a pillow to cover her face as she says, “I’m so sorry, Rex.”

I sit on the edge of her bed. “Don’t apologize.”

“I have to,” she insists and moves the pillow beside her. “Owen has you here in the middle of the night, and I told him he was overreacting. Are you sure there’s an actual threat? What am I saying? Of course, you think there’s a threat. You wouldn’t be here if you didn’t. You wouldn’t climb through my window—”



“Like in your secret sex fantasy? What happens in your version?”

Raina bites her lower lip, her eyes desperately avoiding mine. “It’s stupid and silly.”

“Why don’t you let me be the judge of that? Tell me. I won’t laugh.”

“Fine.” She huffs. “You remember a few weeks ago when I locked myself out and you climbed through the window to get me inside?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I thought it’s like Sleeping Beauty. You climb into the window and give me a kiss.”

“Is that all that happens?”

“Well, I don’t know what’s supposed to happen after people kiss. I mean, I know about sex and the mechanics, but the transition just seems awkward for me. Like how do we get from a kiss like that to—”

My body tenses with this fire igniting inside of me. Pure and innocent, Raina’s comfort with me is a given, but I don’t want to take advantage of her curiosity. I’d rather capture her heart, claim her body, and make sure she understands that once I do, she’ll belong to me forever.

“I can show you,” I tell her.

Raina sits up instantly, the blanket dropping for me to notice the lines of her body, from her neck to between her cleavage and dipping toward the indent of her belly button. Her bright grey eyes are full of anticipation, and nervous energy pours into this moment between us.

“Um, yes, I want to do that. I mean, I want you to show me. Teach me everything.” She leans in closer to me, her breasts brushing up against the back of my arm and making me turn to face her.

“Little girl, you need to know something. If we go down this road, there’s no turning back. I’m not some task to check off your virginal bucket list,” I tell her, leaning in to steal a kiss.

It’s delicate as I let my mouth linger over hers. I have to calm myself. I can’t

take things too far before she's ready. When I pull away, she sulks because it's over too soon.

"When do we start?" She tips her head to the side.

"We'll talk more tomorrow. For now, it's late. You should get some sleep, Raina." Her braid is looser, letting the shorter strands of hair fall into her face. I take the moment to sweep her locks behind her ear, and it's too much for me to hold back. I go in for another kiss.

My lips crash against hers. When Raina moans against me, my mind reels with excitement. The kiss pushes her to lie back where my hand continues to cradle the back of her head and the other slides up the contours of her body over the blanket until I reach the softness of her skin.

I want to be rough with her. I want to hold her tight. I want to do so many things to her, my imagination is flying, and my cock is getting harder with every pass of my tongue over hers. When she reaches up to run her fingers through my hair, her short nails drag against my scalp. I'm ready to slam my dick inside of her walls, pounding that sweet pussy until she comes all over me.

I resist the urge. Instead, I break the kiss once more. Raina's chest rises and falls as she catches her breath while I hover over her face.

The corner of my mouth turns up as I tell her, "See how easy that transition was?"

She nods slowly with a moan, licking her top lip. "What happens next?"

"What happens next is you get some rest. We'll talk tomorrow." I begrudgingly pull the blanket over her nakedness.

"Aren't you going to sleep with me?"

"I'm on the couch. If I sleep in the bed with you, there's no way you're going to wake up with your virginity."

"What if that's what I want?"

"What you want comes with a bond to me that's not easily severed. Little girl, giving me that gift means it belongs to me forever. Get some sleep."

She doesn't question or push back, trying to encourage me to finish what we've started. Instead, she takes a deep breath and closes her eyes. I leave her to go to sleep, blowing out her candle and turning out the light before I make my way into the living room. I slide the coffee table in front of the open window.

If Lorenzo shows up here, a table isn't going to stop him. It's just to give me enough time to react. We shouldn't stay. I hope Raina's reasonable in the morning because we're leaving.

Sleep finds me quickly, and by the time the morning sun peeks through the curtains, I'm up and so is my cock. Morning wood at its finest forces me to head into the bathroom. My normal routine is out of whack with the bathroom feeling like a cage. There's barely enough room for me to turn around in here.

There's only a shower stall, a toilet, and a pedestal sink. My eyes track the white subway tiles that are chipping and cracking. I can fix those, but a part of me just wants to take her out of here and never come back. If she's going to be in my care, she should at least stay at my house. Convincing Raina that's the best choice is going to be the hard part.

The sound of the door opening snags my attention, only for Raina to realize I'm inside. She jumps back and slams the door back shut.

"Sorry, Rex," she calls from the other side.

"It's fine." I open the door to step out once I'm finished. "I'm going to grab some coffee and breakfast. You should grab some of your things and come stay with me."

"That's a bit much, Rex. I have to work."

"You can still go to work. I'll drop you off and pick you up."

She shakes her head. "That's insane. You can't just give up your life to play Secret Service to me."

"I'm not giving up my life. I'm making sure that you're taken care of. Until I hear from Owen, I don't want his fuck-up with Lorenzo coming back on you."

An inaudible sigh of frustration pushes through her pouty lips. “Owen’s always doing something he’s not supposed to. Did you know my stepmother left him? She lives halfway across the country because he got into something with a client and they came after her for the money or whatever they wanted. Either way, I’m not going to let him just blow a hole in the middle of my life.”

“I’m not saying that you have to, but aside from Owen’s careless behavior, there’s a very dangerous man out there looking to hurt him. Any man knows that the people he cares about are the easiest way to get to him. If Lorenzo gets his hands on you, Owen’s going to do whatever he’s told even if that means losing his life.”

“He’s not going to lose his life,” Raina says defiantly. “He’s going to do what he always does. He’ll figure this out on his own and then things will get back to normal. I shouldn’t have to stop everything.”

“Get some clothes together, Raina. You don’t have to stop. You just have to not stay here for a few days. I don’t live far from the shop you work at, so let me do what I’m supposed to do here.”

“What if I don’t?” The outright obstinance in her voice is grating, but I understand where she’s coming from.

“I’m not going to pretend that Owen’s the picture-perfect father—”

“He’s not. He’s an ATM whose sperm helped create me—a problem he couldn’t simply buy away. He’s never here for me, Rex. You’re friends with him and even you see that, or else why climb through my window? You show up for me any time I call because you know he won’t.”

“Fine, Raina. Fuck doing it for Owen. I need you to come with me for me. For my peace of mind. Just come with me.”

“I wanted to come with you last night, but you told me to go to sleep.”



RAINA

**T**he words come out fast along with my frustration.

I know Rex isn't at fault, but the way my body craves him, the way his face never leaves my mind, the way I want to feel his mouth kiss every part of me... I want to go with him, but I don't want it to be out of this sense of danger. I want to go with Rex because he wants me—just me.

He takes a few steps toward me until I press against the wall beside my dresser. His arms cage me in.

“Be careful, little girl. We don't have time to open those floodgates. Get a bag together while I run out to grab a few things. We can head up to my cabin for a few days until we hear from Owen or the officers he's working with.”

Rex means business and won't take no for an answer. I have to take this seriously, but there's a part of me that knows Owen will take care of this and everything will be back to normal in a day or two. At least, that's what I'm hoping for.

“Okay. I'll get my stuff together.”

Rex nods with approval, dipping his head to kiss me. “Good girl. I'll be back soon. If anything seems off, get the hell out of here. Text me, and then head to the diner on Summit. Okay?”

“Yeah, okay.” My nerves tingle with anxiety, my fingers twitch and play with

the edges of my robe.

Rex lets his hands drop to hold on to mine, bringing them up to kiss the back of my knuckles. “This is just a precaution, okay? I’m sure you’re right and Owen will get this taken care of before anything serious happens. I’m not going to let anyone hurt you.”

He kisses me on the lips this time. It’s soft and quick as he rests his forehead against mine.

“Be careful,” he whispers and takes a step away from me. I can see the fire in his eyes like he’s staring into my soul, and I want to give him all of me.

When Rex leaves, I shuffle around my room, unsure of what to pack. How am I supposed to know what to take with me to get out of town for a few days? How does one pack for ‘There’s a potential psycho looking to hurt my father’ kind of trip? I grab my phone and make sure it’s close to me in case I need to leave in a hurry. After getting a shirt and jeans on, I continue to toss clothes out of my closet and dresser onto the bed.

I’m in my head, fantasizing about Rex to stop myself from worrying about the mess Owen is into. I can’t believe that man is my father. He’s the absolute worst and by far the most inconsiderate person I know. He’s not supposed to put me in danger and then send his friend to take care of me.

Rex, on the other hand, always takes care of me. I can’t help but laugh to myself as I think he’s the one who should be called Daddy. The sound of someone knocking on the door makes me dash toward it, but I stop with my hand hovering over the doorknob. What if it’s the guy who hurt Owen?

I chuckle to myself. People looking to hurt people don’t knock on the door. It’s probably Rex, so I open it to see Drew instead.

Drew’s blonde hair is cut close to his scalp with a five o’clock shadow growing that gives him a bit of an edgier look than his typical boy-next-door appearance. He gives off ‘Come study with me’ vibes but actually wants to study. His light brown eyes are bloodshot, showing that he’s in desperate need of sleep.

“Yeah, Drew?” I ask with a mild hint of annoyance. My foot is behind the door to stop me from opening it up wider. I don’t want him to see that Rex

isn't here.

"I just wanted to apologize to you again for last night. The guy who was here, he just looked like a creep, you know?" He's speaking like he already knows Rex left. That makes sense after last night. Why would he come back with him here?

"Rex isn't a creep, and you apologized last night."

"Listen." Drew flashes me a grin. "It's okay. You can be honest with me. I know he's not your boyfriend or anything like that. The guy's old enough to be your father."

"What does it matter, Drew? I'm not interested in your opinion about my dating life."

Drew pinches the bridge of his nose before smoothing his fingers over his brows. "Listen, I'm the super and your friend. I'm just trying to look out for you as well as the rest of the people living in this building. Imagine if it got around that some Peeping Tom is climbing in through bedroom windows."

"Rex isn't a criminal or a danger to the people in this building or to me. Despite your judgment, Rex and I *are* in a relationship. I don't need to prove it to you or anyone else. Please leave, Drew, and if you ever use that key to get into my apartment again without my permission—"

"I know. You'll get me fired."

"No, you're going to wish I got you fired. Rex is going to deal with you—"

Drew scoffs, running his hand over his head. "What do you think Gramps is really going to do? You don't need to be with someone like him. You should be with someone closer to your own age, you know?"

I roll my eyes and let out a sigh of exhaustion. This conversation is over. I move to close the door when Drew stops me, sliding his foot in the space to stop it from shutting completely.

"Don't do that, Raina. I've been trying to be a friend to you ever since you moved in here. I just want the chance to see where this friendship can go."

"Get your foot out of my door, and this friendship is officially over."



“Raina—” The pitch in his voice stinks of desperation, but there’s something else behind it—anger. The whiteness of his knuckles as they grip the frame of the door tells me he’s trying to restrain himself, but I’m not sure how long that’s going to last.

“Drew, just leave before you do something you’ll regret.”

“Raina, I just want a chance, one fucking chance.”

“And you think this is the way to get that chance? Only after you broke into my apartment?” I ask him, trying to understand why he’s going this hard for a date.

“I was trying to protect you, to protect your innocence, your purity. It shouldn’t go to anyone else but me,” he reveals. However, the wideness of Drew’s eyes let me know he didn’t mean to say as much. His desires are speaking louder than logic.

Anxiety ignites, and now I really want him to leave. “It’s not going to happen, Drew.”

“Raina, Raina, Raina,” he says over and over again, barely above a whisper. “Please.”

“Leave Drew. Now,” I tell him again, trying to make my voice deeper than it is. Drew needs to take me seriously.

“I think the lady asked you to leave,” Rex’s voice booms from somewhere in the lobby.

The color drains from Drew’s face as he takes a step back from my door. Rex walks toward me with a tray of coffee in his hand and a bag of food in the other. He hands it to me before turning to face Drew, who’s trying to slink away.

Rex grabs him by the shoulder and yanks him back to the doorway. “I need you to promise Raina that you’ll never speak to her again right after you apologize.”

“Apologize?” Drew’s confusion doesn’t make sense to me. It makes me wonder about his mental stability. Rex tightens his grip on Drew, which

causes him to flinch and dip down, leaning into Rex's grasp. Sweat glistens between his prickly blonde strands.

"Call the police, Raina," Rex says. "And after you do that, call the owners of the building to file a complaint about this guy."

Drew tries to shrug free, but Rex shakes him a bit, convincing him to do what he's been told. Drew looks at me for sympathy, probably wanting me to tell Rex to let him go, but I won't.

Drew seems to understand that this isn't going to work for him as he finally says, "Wait, I don't want to lose my job. Look, I'm sorry, Raina. I swear it. I'm not going to bother you anymore."

"I'm having cameras put in this afternoon," Rex tells him. "And motion sensors on the windows and doors. If you step foot in here without *my* permission, you'll deal with me. Is that clear?"

"Yeah," Drew mumbles.

Rex gives him one last shake for good measure before pushing him away from us, forcing Drew to stumble into the wall across from my apartment before scurrying away. He steps into the apartment and closes the door behind him. I'm not sure if he's upset or not, but when he looks into my eyes, his expression softens.

"Are you okay?" Rex asks, taking the coffee and bag of food from my hand. I don't realize how hungry I am until I smell the savory aroma of home fries and eggs.

"Yeah, I'm almost finished putting a bag together. Are you really going to put in cameras and motion sensors?" I look over my shoulder at him with so many more questions running around my head.

"Yes. I have a buddy who does locks and security. I can stop by his place and grab some stuff from him. We can get that done and then head to my house real quick before we go to the cabin. I'm going to try to get ahold of Owen at some point. Maybe we can get an update. You need to call out of work for the next few days."

"Ah, crap." I huff. "I've been trying to get an apprenticeship at the shop. I

usually have some lessons after my shift. I don't want to fall behind."

"Raina, I'm not here to sabotage your life. Baby girl, I promise I'm only here to take care of you. If it makes things easier, we can swing by the shop today. I'm sure that once I explain the situation, it's not going to be an issue."

"Okay. I'm following your lead, Rex. Thank you."

"No need to thank me. Just let Daddy take care of you."



## REX

**T**here's an ease that washes over me when I'm with Raina. I can't deny it. We're in a rhythm every time we get around one another. She doesn't flinch or turn away when I tell her to let me take care of her, when I hint at her calling me Daddy.

"Is that what you want to do, Daddy?" she asks with a shy grin. Her voice is low and I want to kiss her until she understands that's all I want to do. We fall into that familiar rhythm, but now it's far more intimate than it used to be.

I reinforce what I need her to know. "That's what I'm *going* to do. Once you've finished your breakfast, we can make a few stops before we get out of town."

I pull out my phone and send out a few messages to make sure everyone at the firm knows I'll be out for a few days. My next call is to my locksmith friend. We haven't spoken in a while, but I know he hasn't moved. He picks up on the first ring and tells me he can have everything I need delivered to Raina's address within the hour.

With that in place, I head into the bedroom where Raina's visibly deciphering between things to wear.

"It gets cold at night in the mountains, but there's heat in the cabin and a fireplace. It just might take a few minutes to warm up. So pack something warm. Worst-case scenario, if you get too hot, you can always take your

clothes off,” I tell her with a quick glance down to her denim-clad ass.

I want it in my hands again. I want her in my arms. I want this getaway to be something more than us getting out of town for her safety. She tosses a glance over her shoulder as she grabs a few sweaters and some extra pairs of socks.

Once Raina’s ready, we head over to the tattoo shop where she manages the front desk. Our little town of Colwood County is about an hour away from my cabin in the mountains. This shop is on the edge of town where it will add at least an additional twenty minutes to our travels.

I don’t want to be out in the open too long, as I’m not sure where Lorenzo is, but I know Raina has to come back to her life at some point.

A guitar riff plays at a barely audible level when I hold the door open for Raina to walk inside. There are several pieces of hand-drawn artwork in frames on one wall of exposed brick and a huge mural on the wall across from it. A glass counter stands at about waist high with merchandise for the shop. The buff guy behind the counter has tattoos wrapped around his neck that disappear under his shirt and continue down both arms. He peeks up from his phone at the sound of us coming inside and immediately smiles as Raina approaches him.

“It’s your day off, Raina,” he says. “Go do something fun.”

He looks at me with the word fun lingering, like he’s unsure to include me in that command.

Raina introduces us. “Rex, this is Angel. He owns and runs the shop. That’s his wife, Avery, there. Angel, this is Rex.”

“Nice to meet you, man,” I tell him while shaking his hand.

The sound of tattoo guns buzzing fills the air but does nothing to tamp down the whimpers and shrieks of pain coming from someone getting work done. The woman Raina pointed out has a bald head with a snowflake tattooed over her entire scalp. She shifts in her seat as she continues to etch a design into some poor guy’s skin.

Raina looks at Angel and tells him what’s going on. “Owen got into some

shit, and I need to leave town for a few days.”

Angel raises an eyebrow before glancing over his shoulder at the woman working on the piece. “How bad is it?”

I take over the conversation this time. “Lorenzo's looking for him. I have a place for Raina to hide out until we hear back from Owen. We're hoping I'm just being overprotective—”

“When you say Lorenzo,” he interjects, “you mean Lorenzo Carlyle? The lunatic who runs most of the shady businesses out of Colwood?”

I nod slowly.

“Fuck.” He huffs and looks over his shoulder again. “Last time Ren went on a rampage, he set somebody's restaurant on fire. You think he'll come here?”

I shrug. “The only reason he has to come here is to look for Raina. That's only if he's not finished with Owen. We're hoping Lorenzo keeps Owen in his sights, but we're playing it safe. If anyone comes around here looking for her, just tell them we left town. I'll have Raina call to check in and let you know when she'll be back.”

“And you're going to be with her the whole time, right?” Angel asks.

“Yeah.”

“Okay. Take care of yourself, Raina. As soon as everything settles down, you can pick up your lessons with Avery to get your apprenticeship started.”

I thank her boss as we leave to grab a few supplies before heading back to her apartment to install the security items that I hope are there already. Unfortunately, when we get there, Drew's standing in the lobby sorting through packages.

The minute he sees me, his face falls and he takes a step away from the pile of boxes.

“There's only one delivery here for Raina,” he says with his eyes darting from me to the floor. The tremble in his voice and hands as he reaches for the package tells me that I don't need to have another conversation about respecting Raina's boundaries.

“Thank you,” I tell him as he hands me the box.

Raina walks directly to her apartment, ignoring Drew to his disappointment. After one last look at him, I follow Raina inside. There isn't much time to lose as I open the package from the locksmith and get the equipment out. There are six cameras and nearly a dozen motion sensors.

The instructions are simple as I tell Raina where to place the motion sensors while I install the cameras. It doesn't take long for us to set everything up and link it to an app on her phone.

“We have to stop at my place before we head to the cabin. I'll try to get a hold of Owen while we're there and see if there's an update from last night.”

Raina moves her living room window up and down, testing the motion sensors in the security app with a smile.

“Thank you, Daddy. You've done so much to keep me safe.”

I wink at her. “Don't worry about it. I'm always going to do that. Let's go so we can keep it that way.”

We get out of her apartment building without running into Drew, and it makes me wonder how much I have to convince Raina to never come back here. She belongs to me, with me, and shouldn't be living on her own. Tasting her lips against mine is a feeling I never want to forget. We can't go back to whatever our relationship was before last night.

My mind can barely focus on the tasks because I can't get the memory of her touch out of my head. The movement of someone standing in front of my door quickly brings me back to the reality of our situation.

“Get down,” I tell Raina. “Out of sight, baby girl.”

She slides down into the front seat as I pull up to my house and stop alongside the curb. I won't pull into the driveway just in case I need to get her out of here. The stranger doesn't look like he's here to sell me anything or question my relationship with a religious deity.

I get out of the car and stand at the edge of my property. The orange haze scattering across the late afternoon sky tells me night will come shortly.



Every line separating my property from my neighbors draws my attention to make sure there isn't a breach in the fencing or gates.

The grass needs mowing as it grows between the grid of the wide slate path leading to a short staircase of large stones I picked as steps. The dark gray and blue stones complement the light cream wooden panels that cover the front of the house. The trim is navy blue to tie in with the path, and it's a home I've worked too hard to afford for a stranger to make me uncomfortable being there.

"Can I help you?" I ask the man who turns to square his stance as if he's ready to charge at me. He'll have to get a running head start to reach me from nearly 30 feet away. At least anything he does isn't going to take me by surprise.

"Call me Chuck. I need to talk to you about your partner, Owen Olsen," he replies. His black hair looks like ink. The handlebar mustache doesn't give off an air of hospitality, and the leather vest with metal spikes around the bottom emphasizes his menacing gaze.

"Last time I spoke to Owen was last night. He's in the hospital, and I don't have much else to say other than that," I tell Chuck, who I'm not sure is giving me his actual name.

He looks around and narrows his gaze over my shoulder. I move to block his line of sight. I don't want him to see Raina unless I know exactly who he is and what he wants.

He grunts a bit. Clearly, having to talk to me is irritating to him. "Is Owen here? Has he stopped by or contacted you this morning?"

"No."

"Are you sure?" Chuck asks again. His insistence is starting to piss me off.

"Of course, I am. What do you want with him?"

Chuck digs through his pockets and pulls out a badge, showing he's a federal agent. "Owen walked out of the hospital at some time between last night and this morning."

I stifle a laugh. “How do you lose track of a man with a broken leg and ribs?”

“That’s not important. We need to get to him before he has a run-in with Lorenzo.”

An exhale of exhaustion pushes out of me. “He’s not here, and I haven’t heard from him. You’re going to have to find him the old-fashioned way—by looking for him. I can’t help you, Chuck. Thanks for stopping by. Please see yourself off my property.”

He hands me a business card and takes a step away from me. “If you hear from him, let him know that the deal offered to him is contingent upon his cooperation.”

“You don’t look like an agent. I don’t want to call you, and you set him up to turn him over to Lorenzo or something.”

“You don’t have to worry about what I look like. Just worry about Owen if he doesn’t find his way back to the hospital. We don’t know how much Lorenzo knows about his cooperation, and we’d rather have him safely tucked away. If you run into him or talk to him, tell him to come back in.”



## RAINA

The murmurings of Rex speaking to someone on his doorstep have my nerves firing on all cylinders. I can hear bits and pieces of the discussion until the sound of heavy footsteps comes close to the car. My heart races, wondering if the stranger is about to find me.

It's only after Rex opens the passenger door that I can get out of the car. His hand wraps around mine, easing the anxiety racing through my body. He helps steady me as I stand up with his gaze scouring up and down the street. The stranger standing on his doorstep is nowhere in sight. I stare at Rex, hoping he doesn't see the fear and worry in my eyes.

"You're safe with me, Raina," he says. Apparently, I'm easier to read than I realize. It doesn't make sense to keep on a brave face as the severity of what Owen's gotten us into weighs on me. Rex grips me by the chin, forcing me to look into his eyes as he tells me, "What did I say?"

A ripple of lust courses through me as his gaze burrows into the depths of my eyes so I can feel every word he says. I have to answer him. "I'm safe with you."

"Good," he says. "Let's go inside before anyone else shows up looking for Owen."

I can't get over how amazing Rex's house looks with its sleek design. The sun setting behind the house gives it a majestic appeal. It matches his silent ruggedness. The way his clean-cut appearance fades whenever he's

protecting me is like watching a switch flip.

Inside the home is even better than the exterior. There's dark gray carpeting throughout except for the kitchen, which mirrors the dark gray stones outside with a matte finish. I don't want to track dirt inside so I take off my shoes.

"I think we should hang out here instead of heading to the cabin," Rex says.

"Is the cabin a bad idea?" I ask him. "Was it because of that man who was waiting here for you? Was he here for you? Or Owen?"

Rex turns to face me. "He said he was a federal agent, but he could have been anyone. Said his name was Chuck."

"Chuck doesn't sound like the name of an agent," I mumble to myself.

"I agree. If he is or if he's one of Lorenzo's patsies, I'd rather be here. I have buddies nearby I can call if things get crazy, and my favorite guns are in the chest by the back door. Chuck said Owen left the hospital last night."

"They let someone with broken ribs and a broken leg hobble their way out of a hospital?"

Rex shrugs. "Knowing Owen, he probably has some help."

"You're right. One of the many things he's great at is getting some poor woman to feel bad for him. Some nurse is helping him right now and has no idea the mess he's getting her into."

"I think we should hang around until he resurfaces. Hang out, look around, make yourself at home, baby girl. I'm going to pull my car into the garage and bring our stuff inside."

Rex takes a moment to walk outside of the house, and I find myself exploring the first floor. The front door opens directly into an open living room and kitchen. The entire left wall is covered in the same colored stone as the kitchen floor and pathway outside. There's a black iron staircase on the right wall with a door under the stairs leading to the garage.

The kitchen is gorgeous and I can see myself cooking—well, learning how to cook in it. The amount of recipes I know is less than impressive. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are a steady rotation of the ten or so meals I remember my

mother cooking for me as a young girl.

Thoughts of my mom cross my mind and while I'd lost her when I was 8, one of the things Owen got right was marrying my stepmother, Laura. One of the things Laura got right was divorcing Owen. We still keep in touch, and she's been a motherly voice of reason throughout my life.

The white cabinets line the back wall with the matching fridge at one end and a door leading into the backyard at the other. The amount of work that's gone into this home makes me wonder about Rex's career as a lawyer. It makes me wonder if becoming a tattoo artist is worth it.

I'm lost in thought, wondering where my life goes after this passes. Will we have to leave Colwood if Owen doesn't resolve this issue with Lorenzo? What am I going to do if that has to happen?

Will Rex leave if it comes down to that and will he take me with him?

My head begins to buzz with the onset of a migraine. There's too much going on and I don't know what to do or what to think.

"Raina?" Rex's voice brings me out of my thoughts. I'm standing at the bottom of the steps as if something's waiting for me at the top. Rex's gaze shifts from me to the second-floor landing, undoubtedly wondering what's keeping me in place. "Everything okay?"

"Yeah." I huff and nod. "Just stuck in my head a bit. I think all of this stuff with Owen is just making me second-guess what I want."

He's carrying my bags and motions for me to head upstairs. The carpet continues on the second floor where I see three doors.

"There's a spare bedroom that way and that door is a bathroom you can use. I have my own bathroom in the master. If you need to lie down and get some rest, feel free to make yourself at home."

His home is beautiful and I want to call it mine. "Thanks, Daddy. I think I'll take you up on that."

He groans, biting his lower lip to let me know how much he enjoys it when I call him that. I only want to call him Daddy since he does an excellent job

taking care of me, in all ways except one.

My mind flashes back to the kisses, the way his hands feel on my body, the way I want to give every bit of my virginity to him.

“I’m going to make us something to eat and check my security system. I don’t like people walking up to my door without an invitation. I must have forgotten to arm the motion sensors before I left last night.”

“Is dealing with guys like Lorenzo normal for you and Owen?” What happens if this isn’t the only hiccup? The only psycho criminal with an ax to grind against their lawyer?

Rex shakes his head. “Not for me. I like my life to be simple. I’ve told him more than a few times about taking on clients who aren’t worth the risk. When he told me about Lorenzo, he swore it was simple business deals he was helping Lorenzo negotiate. Owen’s logic flies out the window when there’s a lot of money involved. I’m not going to pretend it hasn’t been essential to my firm’s success, but this time, it’s gone too far.”

“So Lorenzo’s the only client with an issue worthy of hurting Owen like that? What did he do?”

“Owen said he mismanaged some money, which is practically a death sentence when it comes to people like that. I don’t want you to worry, baby girl. I’m going to make sure that Owen gets this straightened out and keep you safe.”

He closes the distance between us, wrapping me in a hug. His strong arms make me feel safe, and I don’t want him to ever let me go.

“When’s the last time you took a bath?” he asks.

My eyes widen in horror. Do I smell?

Rex chuckles before pinching the bridge of his nose. “I’m sorry, baby girl. I didn’t mean like you need one. I meant like you need to relax, and I have a large tub if you want to soak. I noticed your apartment only has a shower.”

Damn. He’s being sweet, and I’m not going to turn down his gesture of kindness.

“That sounds great, actually. I don’t know the last time I’ve been able to just soak in a tub.”

“Perfect,” he says, tipping his head to kiss me. The way he easily parts my lips with the slightest prod of his tongue turns me on in ways I didn’t know were possible. Every pass of our lips over each other makes me lose every sense of reality. When his hands reach behind me to grab my ass, I melt against his body.

He moans as he kisses me, scooping me into his arms so I wrap my legs around his waist. Rex carries me into his bedroom and sets me down on the bed, breaking our kiss.

“Mmm, Daddy. Don’t stop,” I plead with him, grabbing his shirt along the sides to keep him between my legs but standing in front of the bed.

He grips my chin, holding it firmly before leaning down to suck on my lip. “Be patient, little girl. Go on and relax. I’ll be back up here when I’m done to finish this. You need to be sure that’s what you want. I’m not here just to keep you safe or to take that gift between those legs. If I give you this cock, it’s yours...forever.”

“I don’t want it any other way, Daddy.”





REX

The words off Raina's lips make me want to stay in the house with her, but there's a lot to do if we're going to stay in Colwood. I give her one more kiss. It's quick and leaves us wanting more, but I leave her alone in the bedroom.

It only takes about 15 minutes for me to make my way around the house and property lines. There are few homes on this side of town since it leads away from the town's center. A ranch is located across the street but the house is at least five minutes away from the main road.

The property next to mine has at least half an acre of grass between our houses. The open space is one of the reasons I put in the motion detectors. Criminals, animals, and vagabonds just passing through are the types I'd like to know are on my property before seeing them.

After checking the security system, I head to the garage where there's a cabinet for my guns—well, the larger ones. There are a few others in a gun safe near my bed. I like to be prepared.

My phone rings with a number I don't know flashing across the screen. I answer it, hoping it's Owen.

"Where are you?" I ask, assuming it's him.

"Mr. Remington?" a soft voice asks from the other end of the line.

"Yes?"

“This is Detective Mercedes Petrov. I’m with the security guards at the Lloyd & Williams compound. Your firm’s office has been broken into. We’d like for you to come down to take a look at the damage.”

Fuck.

“How bad is it?” I ask her.

“Sir, that’s not really for me to say. I can tell you that the intruders ran off before they could do any damage to the furniture. It looks like some of the desks were pried open and there are a bunch of papers scattered.”

“I’ll be down as soon as possible.”

After ending the call, I head upstairs to see Raina still lying on my bed. It’s exactly where I want her to be at all times. Selfish, I know.

“Baby girl, there’s been a break-in at my office.”

She sits up immediately and that worry in her eyes is one I want to wash away. “What are you going to do?”

“I need to go down there and talk to the police. Maybe Owen tried to get something out of his office and Lorenzo followed him.”

“Shit. Do you think he’s alright?”

“I want to say yes, but the truth is, I don’t know what’s going on. I hope I can get a hold of him, but until then, we need to sit tight and pay attention. I want to head into the office in case Owen left a message for me there. How good are you with guns?”

A shade of red drips down her face as her eyes look at the floor. “It’s been such a long time since I’ve learned to shoot. I don’t like them if I’m being honest.”

“That’s okay, baby girl. I don’t need you to be a cowboy or anything. I just wanted to know if you stayed here, would you be willing to use a firearm if push came to shove? Until Owen is back in federal custody and Lorenzo is no longer a threat, I don’t want you by yourself unless you’re packing heat.”

“I understand that. How long do you think you’ll be gone? I really wanted to

take you up on that offer to soak in the tub.”

“Well, stay here and relax. The security system is armed, and I’ll make sure all the gates are closed. I’ll be back as soon as I can, baby girl.”

“Okay, Daddy.”

I show her the gun safe in the nightstand beside my bed, and while I doubt Lorenzo will come here looking for her or Owen, I need her to be able to defend herself. I tell her to keep her phone near her, even in the bath, so I can give her a heads up in case someone or something trips the alarms.

It’s only a ten-minute drive to the office complex where we run our law firm out of the top floor in one of the main buildings. There’s four buildings on the property in total, and I have no idea what goes on in any of them.

There are three police cars in the parking lot with officers meandering around the lobby and in front of the building. The minute I stroll up to the door, someone tells me that I’m not allowed to enter. One of the building’s security guards let the officer know that I was asked to come down, and they let me beyond the crime scene tape.

I take the elevator up to the seventh floor where a woman in a uniform and badge is standing with another security guard taking notes. She turns to me the moment I step off and holds out her hand, introducing herself. “Detective Petrov, Mr. Remington. Thanks for coming down so quickly. Follow me.”

There’s an array of cubicles set up for the paralegals, staff, and other administrative positions that help our firm run as smoothly as possible. Most of those cubicles are still in the same condition they’re always in. There are two, closest to the desk outside of my office, that have the contents from their desks and drawers scattered about.

The door to my office is wide open, which isn’t how I left it. When I walk inside, there are only a few dozen sheets of paper on my desk.

“I think that whoever broke into the office was looking for something your partner is in possession of. Having realized this wasn’t Mr. Olsen’s office, they left things mostly intact.”

I let out a sigh, staring around the room I usually spend about 60 hours a

week working in. These past two days with Raina make me reevaluate how much time I spend here. I don't want to be slaving over client documents while she's at home washing that naked body of hers and I'm not there to lick her dry.

"Mr. Remington?" Detective Petrov calls my name to snag my attention.

"Yes?"

"Did you want to see Mr. Olsen's office?"

I nod and she takes me next door where the desk is on its side instead of standing upright. There are gashes through the carpet like someone tore it up looking for a hidden safe, but there's not enough space between us and the office on the floor below to have a safe in the floor.

"It's going to take us forever to sort through what was taken and what wasn't. There are dozens of client files here and all of it's compromised." I groan with frustration as I kneel on the floor and thumb across a few pages splayed in front of the desk.

"Try not to touch," the detective warns from the doorway.

I stand up and shove my hands into my pockets.

"Do you have security footage, Mr. Remington?" she asks.

"Only at the elevator bank. We pride ourselves on keeping things confidential with the caliber of clients we work with. They enjoy the privilege of privacy with our firm."

"Your firm is a crime scene and you're throwing attorney-client privilege in my face? I thought you'd be more helpful."

"I am being helpful," I tell her. "There aren't any cameras inside the offices beyond the ones pointing at the elevators. Have you checked the footage?"

Her frustration is audible as she jots down something in a notebook. "No one arrived or left through the elevators."

I chuckle to myself.

"Something funny, Mr. Remington?"

“None of this is funny, but I can see the humor in you thinking your job would be as easy as checking the security cameras for the intruders. Even if they took the elevator into the office, you’re assuming they’d be stupid enough to not have masks on. Your best bet is to talk to the guards and see if there were any deliveries.”

“Thanks for your input on how to do my job, Mr. Remington.”

“Just a suggestion, Detective. If you’re done with me, I’m not sure if there’s anything else I can do for you here.”

“Stay in Colwood, Mr. Remington. I may need you for additional questioning.”

I shrug and nod. “I’ll be around.”

I leave the office and immediately pull out my phone to send out an email. The office is closed and folks will have to work from home for the next few weeks. I just want to be sure they stay out of the way and out of danger.

The moon is high in the night sky by now, and I don’t have time to put my phone away before it starts ringing as I walk toward my car. It’s another number I don’t recognize. Still, I answer it, wondering who’s trying to get a hold of me now.

“Hey, partner,” Owen says. I can still hear the pain in his voice, but he’s trying to mask it with a lightness that’s not serious enough for everything that’s happening.

“What the fuck, Owen?” I practically hiss, glancing over my shoulder to see the detective standing with the other officers in front of the building. “Some biker-looking guy was waiting for me at my house looking for you. Said he was an agent. Where are you?”

“A nurse helped me leave the hospital last night. The feds need my books, my ledgers where I kept track of everything I’ve done for Lorenzo and his friends.”

“You know the office was broken into?”

He lets out a low growl. “Fuck. I’m sorry, Rex. Is it bad?”

“Other than your office looking like someone set a bomb off in it, everything else seems to be in working order.”

“I had my nurse friend go in there last night to help me, but I think we may have been followed. I’m really sorry, Rex. I didn’t mean to bring all of this to you or Raina. How is she, by the way?”

“She’s coping, but I’m taking care of her. I’ll keep her safe. I’m going to keep her at my place for the time being. I doubt she’ll be going back to her apartment.”

There’s a pause on his end. It makes me wonder if this is going to be the moment where he wants to do his fatherly duty to question my intentions with his daughter. However, Owen doesn’t say anything of the sort.

“As soon as I get my deal with the feds in order, I’ll probably be in witness protection. The ledgers are my only leverage for them to uphold their end and to keep me out of prison. In case I don’t see her, or either of you for a while, just tell her I’m sorry. I really am, Rex. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry, Owen. Be safe and stay alive long enough to see Raina happy...with me.”

Owen lets another pause linger between us before he says, “I know she’s in good hands with you, Rex. Take good care of her.”





## RAINA

The lyrics to a song repeat over and over in my head as I sink into the heat of the warm tub. Comfort soothes me as the tune plays from my phone. There's a brief interruption when Rex sends me a message that he's on his way back home.

Home.

This is home for me and I don't want that feeling to change. This day has been long and relaxing in this deep tub, water up to my shoulders is exactly what I need.

I wonder what it will be like to give myself to him. The more I think about it, the more my fantasies feel real. My hands travel up my torso until they reach my breasts. I can picture Rex showering me with kisses, touching me everywhere, and rubbing my nipples.

My fingers brush over my hardening nipples, squeezing them before they travel down to the center between my legs. I'm hesitant to touch myself, unsure of what to do, and when I hear Rex come into the house, taking his time to walk up the stairs, I put my hand along the edge of the tub. It feels wrong to touch myself without him here to see me, to guide me.

"Any room for me, baby girl?" Rex asks with a seductive grin.

I move to stand up when he holds his hand out to stop me. "Stay put. I'll come to you, and this time, I'll make sure you come to me."

My heart races and my pussy twitches with lustful anticipation. How is he going to make me come? What am I going to do once I know what that feeling courses through my body?

“Don’t overthink it, baby girl. Just let Daddy take care of you. Sit tight.”

Rex takes his clothes off, and the minute I see his massive cock, I want him and it. I need him inside of me. I want him any way he’ll give himself to me. He slides into the tub, sloshing water around as he sits down with a stoic expression.

He grabs my calves, lifting my legs to lay over his and moving me so close I can feel his cock between us. My pulse is racing as he moves his hand to my thighs, pressing his fingers into the insides of my legs, inching closer and closer to my center.

He moans with a grin, biting his lower lip just as the tip of his finger slides between my folds, gently brushing against my clit. I can feel how hard my nipples are getting when he plays with me. The water around us doesn’t mask the wetness I feel the moment he slips a finger inside my walls.

A gasp pushes out of me, and I let my head tip back for pleasure to wash over me.

“This is what you wanted, baby girl. You want Daddy to make you come all over me, right?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

His fingers pick up their pace, thrusting in and out of me until my entire core tenses. I need the release, but the build-up has me riding a high I never knew I was capable of experiencing.

“Oh god,” I pant out. “This feels too good.”

“I know it does. Now, come for Daddy.”

The command is like a trigger for my climax that shoots through my entire body. It radiates from my toes up to my tightened core and down to my pulsing pussy that releases my passion all over Rex’s fingers. His erection is stiff between us and my hand can’t help but reach for it, but he grabs my

hand through the water.

“Patience, little girl. Let’s finish washing up.”

My body is craving the high of another orgasm, but Rex is taking his time washing me with a large sponge. Once he’s finished, he stands in the tub, letting one foot step outside and leaving the other in. His cock is full, heady, and throbbing, making me salivate because I want to taste him.

“Do you want me to?” I start asking the question, but Rex hooks a finger under my chin. He helps me to my feet and then out of the water.

“I want you to be patient. Don’t rush this. We have a lifetime, baby girl. You belong to me and I’m going to make sure we take our time this first go around. Now…” He pauses to step fully out of the tub and lets the water out. “Go dry off and keep those hands off your pussy until I say different.”

Rex doesn’t wait for me to answer as he pulls me in close for the most possessive kiss I’ve ever felt. It’s more than the one from last night when he had a point to prove to Drew. This is for no one else but me. Rex is staking his claim with every dart of his tongue into my mouth that has me chasing the high of another orgasm. I don’t want to wait, but I know that my patience will be rewarded.

Rex pulls away from the kiss abruptly. After wrapping me in a towel, he swats me on the ass and sends me out of the bathroom as he turns the shower on. I take my time drying off, and he isn’t in the shower long.

I’m standing in front of the bed when the water shuts off, but I don’t hear him since the carpet silences his footsteps. My heart races the minute his energy looms over me. His arms wrap around me from behind.

Rex slides my hair to one side, kissing my neck while his arm reaches around the front to play with my clit. His tongue dances along my neck, and his other hand works my nipples. I’m yearning to finish what we’ve started.

“You ready to come again for Daddy?” he whispers against my ear.

“Yes, Daddy.”

The words come out with short breaths as my body rises to the cliff of

another climax. Rex moves me from in front of the bed to on top of it. I scoot away from the edge as he crawls between my legs, twisting his neck from side to side before looping his arms under my thighs. He spreads them apart and the first swipe of his tongue over my clit makes me close my eyes and whimper.

Rex is kissing my pussy with the same passion he does me. My waist and hips move, gyrating and thrusting to feel his tongue lap over every inch of my sex. My whimpers echo around the room alongside the giddy groans of Rex eating me out.

When I open my eyes to watch him dine on me, my lust builds, taking my pleasure to new heights. Rex is enjoying himself, enjoying himself as he makes me come on his lips. The sounds he brings out of me are unstoppable.

“Fuck.” The word comes out of me barely above a whisper. It comes out in a stutter next. “Fuck, fuck, fuck me, Daddy.”

“Oh, I will, baby girl. I will.” His grin is devilish as he begins planting a trail of kisses from my pussy up my stomach until he reaches my tits, taking his time to show both some affection. His mouth sends sensations of unbridled passion rippling over every nerve ending.

The sharpness of his head pushing at my entrance makes my body tense as I dig my nails into the blankets beside me.

“Hold onto me, baby girl,” Rex commands and I let go of the bedspread to grab onto him.

The muscles in his back flex, even as I dig my nails into him while Rex anchors his girth inside of my walls. I cry out as my body molds around him and he plunges his tongue inside of my mouth. The kiss keeps my mind off the way I have to stretch for him to feel comfortable inside of me.

The first dip of his dick is slow and steady. Rex pulls out and pushes himself back in. There’s a moment where we just breathe together before he continues to kiss me. My walls moisten, and he begins to thrust inside of me with ease.

Every stroke is better than the last. The way his body reacts to me sets me on fire because I can’t imagine anyone else making me feel this way. Each roll

of his hips makes his member slide against the roof of my walls. The vibration of my pleasure sending another orgasmic wave through my body makes my leg tremble.

Rex takes short breaths that mimic my own as he continues to pump in and out of me at a steady pace. I want this to last forever, but I know it can't.

He pushes himself to hover above me, stopping this moment to switch positions. He spreads my legs, pushing them back toward my head and anchoring his hands on my thighs. He pushes into me to the point it feels like his cock is trying to reach inside my stomach.

I shudder and shake with my climax. One more climax racks my body before Rex pulls me up to sit on his lap. With my body pressing against his, he thrusts up while I wrap my arms around his neck and hold on tight.

Rex locks eyes with me. "I'm about to come, baby girl."

"Please come inside me, Daddy."

My words are the trigger for him this time as he latches onto my shoulders from underneath my arms, holding me down when he releases his climax inside of me. We come together for the final time.

Rex lets me off of him gently, pulling his deflating erection out of me and grabbing the towel to clean up. We lie in his bed for a while, touching, teasing, and enjoying each other until sleep finds us.

I want to know what happened at his office, but good sex is a perfect distraction from the chaos waiting to be addressed. I have no idea what's going to happen, but I'm thankful to have Rex by my side through it.

The warmth of his body next to mine lets me sleep soundly through the night. It's nearly six in the morning when I finally stir from the sex coma Rex put me in. My phone is vibrating from somewhere in the room, and I'm lying in the bed next to no one.



## REX

**W**hen Raina nuzzles against me, there's no other place I want to be.

She's by my side and that's where I want to keep her. Sex for the first time with her makes me insatiable. Sensations ricochet around my body that make me anxious for another round in that sweet cunt, but I let her sleep.

The way both of our stomachs growl lets me know I need to make something to eat. After covering her gorgeous body with the blanket, I head downstairs into the kitchen. The sun is shining bright as I put on some coffee in search of what to make Raina for breakfast. It only takes a second to see what I'm going to put together. There's nothing wrong with a good steak or two cooked in a cast iron skillet. Eggs and home fries make for a solid breakfast.

When her phone starts to ring, I head out of the kitchen while the food cooks to see if she's awake. I'm sure she'll want to answer the call. Her blonde hair falls lazily to the side of her face as I enter the room where she's sitting up in the bed.

Her eyes scan everything around her like she's trying to remember where she is. Her phone buzzes on top of my dresser. After I toss it to her, I tell her to come down for breakfast and give her some space to get herself together.

Raina's smile makes me want to climb back into bed, but there's still food on the stove. By the time she comes downstairs, the smile is gone and she's swiping back and forth across her phone's screen. The sexual tension that's usually between us is missing, and it worries me as she scrunches her face to

look through her phone.

“What’s wrong, baby girl?” I ask, setting a plate of food in front of her.

“That fancy security system you put in is sending me notifications that I was in my apartment, but the police weren’t called or anything.”

“The alarm only alerts the police if the key isn’t used. But the cameras should have picked up anyone walking inside. Did any of the motion sensors go off?”

“No. I’m trying to find the recording from earlier, but this app isn’t exactly user-friendly.”

“I’ll mention that to my buddy the next time I speak to him. Let me see. I’ve been using the same system here for years.”

She hands me the phone, and I swipe through a few pages in the app to get to the camera footage. My heart races as I see Owen letting himself into her apartment.

“Fuck,” I mumble under my breath.

“What is it? Or who?”

“Owen was there.”

She lets out a sigh of relief. “For a minute, I thought Drew was up to something again.”

“Don’t worry about Drew. I don’t think he’d test me again.”

My words appear to have a soothing effect on her. “Probably not. What was Owen doing there?”

“I think he let himself inside and left his ledgers there,” I tell her. The look of confusion riding her face propels me to keep talking. “I spoke to him yesterday after someone broke into the office. I think they were looking for his ledgers since that’s what he’s using to corroborate his story with the feds. I want to go check it out.”

“Is that safe? What if someone saw him go there? What if they’re waiting for him to come back or even worse, me?”



“Baby girl, I’m not going to let anything happen to you. You don’t have to go back to that apartment ever again if you don’t want to. You can stay here as long as you like.”

That puts a smile back on her face. I nudge the plate closer to her.

“This smells good, Daddy,” she says with a grin.

“I hope it tastes good too. Eat up. I still think I should go see what Owen left in your apartment.”

“I don’t want to go back to my apartment, and I don’t want to stay here without you. What if someone comes while you’re gone? Or worse, what if Owen comes here and leads whoever’s looking for him right to your doorstep?”

I shake my head. “I don’t think Owen would do that. He most likely went to your place because I told him you were staying with me from now on. Your place is perfect if he wants to hide something and thinks Lorenzo doesn’t know about you. But I understand and don’t want you to go anywhere you don’t feel safe. How about the shop?”

“The tattoo shop?” she asks between bites.

“Yeah. Angel knows what we’re up against, and I’m sure he and his wife won’t mind you hanging out for a few hours. I know it seems like we’re going in circles, but I think we should stay local and keep a low profile. You can hide out in the shop, get some work done or something.”

“You think I should get a tattoo?”

“I meant work as in what your job entails, but you should get a tattoo if you really want one.”

She giggles. “How about if I get your hands tattooed on my ass?”

I shake my head with a slight laugh. “Baby girl, that sounds horrific. Your body is perfect to me. Somehow my hands permanently etched into your skin doesn’t scream sexy to me.”

“Definitely not. You know there are people who come in to get work like that done. One guy came in and asked for his dick to be inked. He wanted the

slogan 'Melts in your mouth' wrapped around it like a Christmas tree garland."

"Ouch." Laughter erupts between us, and I know there's no way in hell I'm letting another man or woman touch my cock to tattoo it. "I wonder how painful it is."

"Have you ever wanted to get some work done?"

"Not really. I've seen some amazing pieces done. A client of mine runs a gym and has his entire back done of Muhammad Ali versus Joe Frazier. It's one of the most iconic moments in boxing and sports history. He loves it and loves talking about it. I like that aspect of tattoos in that it's art. It evokes emotion."

Raina nods. "You mean if it's good, it evokes emotion."

"No, even if you think it's bad. A buddy's daughter has triple sevens tattooed across her neck. She tells everyone that her throat is like hitting the jackpot, but no one has the heart to tell her that they look like unfinished triangles. She doesn't seem to mind, but they get a reaction out just from anyone who sees it. Is that why you want to be an artist? To see how your art makes other people react?"

"I don't know. I thought it would just be cool to say like hey, I'm a tattoo artist. Kind of like running across a chick who can repair cars. Like I know the steps to change a flat tire, but am I actually going to?"

"Not while I'm around," I tell her with a swift kiss. "You've got time to figure life out. If you like working at the shop, then keep working there. Maybe you'll find your calling or maybe you'll lock into becoming a phenomenal artist."

"Will you let me practice on you?" she asks with a devilish grin.

"Practice what exactly?" I ask, with my mind drowning in a sea of fantasies where I'm teaching her how to suck my cock and ride it into sexual oblivion.

"Drawing, Daddy. Your mind is on sex this early in the morning?"

"Sharing breakfast while talking about tattoos doesn't stop my mind from

putting you on the menu. But if you want to draw on me, baby girl, I'm not against it."

Our conversation drifts between topics until breakfast is done, the kitchen is clean, and we're on our way to the tattoo shop. It doesn't take any convincing Angel to have her in the shop while I go check out her apartment. They opt to keep her in the back of the studio so no one can see her at the desk as they normally would.

When I get to her apartment, I walk inside the building as if I've always lived there. There aren't any signs of Drew, and the door to her place is unmarred. Owen let himself in and let himself out. As soon as I walk inside, her scent takes over, making me wish I was still buried inside of her warm walls.

Instead of daydreaming about my next time with my girl, I pull out my phone to review the footage from the night before. It's hard to see as Owen makes his way around the apartment in the dark. I notice his limp and casted leg. It knocks and drags with every step he takes.

Owen says that he's running around to protect himself, but I can't help but think back to the many times when protecting his own ass backfired on everyone else. Owen has a weakness where he's unable to see the consequences beyond what's immediately happening to him. It's hard to be his friend when he can't see past the hand in front of him.

It takes me a while to squint through the dark videos from the night before to see where Owen hid his ledgers. They're in a tin box under the kitchen sink. I hate that it's in this apartment and on the off-chance that Raina is here when someone other than Owen comes here searching for it, I grab the box.

The metal is cold against the side of my stomach as I tuck it under my arm and walk out of her apartment. I happen to see Drew on my way through the lobby. There's an arrogant grin on his face as I walk by. It's like he can't help but put himself in a situation he can't get out of.

"What, man?" I ask him. It's obvious he has something to say with his shit-eating grin. I want him to spit it out.

"Seems like you're not the only older guy she likes letting into her apartment at all hours of the night. Sorry, buddy." He chuckles as if it's some sort of

relationship-ending revelation.

I want to slam him against the wall, but I have other things to worry about. “The older guy was her father, dipshit. Mind your business when it comes to Raina, Drew. My last warning to you, asshole.”

I leave without laying a hand on the guy even though there’s an arrogance about him that makes me want to put him through a window. Fuck him.

Like telling me about Owen is going to magically make him the runner-up in Raina’s life. Guys like him never get it. It doesn’t matter if she’s single or taken, he’s never next. I’m her first, and if she’ll have me, I’m going to be her only and last.



RAINA

**T**here's an air of rebellion I feel every time I step inside Tattoo Heaven.

Come in and get inked by an angel or a demon. Angel always brags that his wife, Avery, must have sold her soul to be such a damned good artist. The way he looks at her with love in his eyes reminds me of the way I feel when Rex can't keep his eyes or hands off me.

Angel's not as tall as Rex, but he's stocky and covered in ink. Avery has two sleeves of artwork that she displays regularly. The glass display case that separates the waiting area from the rest of the shop is now sitting in front of a temporary partition. The accordion-looking paper wall typically goes up whenever someone has an appointment to get a sensitive body part worked on.

"Hey, honey. What are you doing here?" Avery asks, her snowflake tattoo beaming in the morning sunlight shining through the window. "I thought you were getting out of town for a few days."

"Owen had other plans that made us rethink that. Rex is running around a bit, but he wanted me to stay here so I wouldn't be alone. Got something cool coming in?" I ask, nudging my chin at the partition.

"That's okay with me. Angel will be here by ten. I have a client coming in a few to get her areolas worked on. If you want to get paid while you wait, clock in and help prep my station?"

"I might as well work since I'm here. Rex doesn't want me out front, just in

case.”

“I got you, Raina, baby,” she says with a smile. “Those Lorenzo types ain’t nothing new. Just keep your head down and this will all blow over. If it’s not about you or nothing you did, you should be good.”

I like how she’s always positive, but I don’t think she fully understands the depths of shit Owen’s gotten me into. Although, I can’t complain since I’m bringing it to their shop. I have to get my mind off things as I clean up her chair and the table where she’ll set up her ink and the tattoo gun.

“You’re probably right,” I tell her but shift the conversation immediately to work. “Did you and Angel talk about my idea?”

Avery’s sitting on a stool with her sketchbook in hand, drawing for the client scheduled to come in. She peers up from the page. “I think that busting some tattoo myths can be fun and doing those snappy transitions from pig skin to real skin will bring in some new clients. Do you have any other ideas?”

“A few. I was thinking about maybe once a month, if you set up that subscriber account stuff I was telling you, you can run a raffle or a contest. Subscribers get to submit fan drawings or any drawings within reason, you know? Nothing that’s going to take two hours or longer.”

“All your followers get to vote on the best tattoo and subscribers get to enter the raffle to win it?” Avery asks, finishing my idea.

“Yeah, exactly.”

“How about you? How’s your drawing coming along?”

I let out a sigh of exhaustion. “Not very far since last week. It’s like, on paper everything is fine, but once I get to an orange or the pig skin, my fuckin hand won’t stop shaking.”

“Yeah, that’s no good for tattooing. Maybe think about what you’re eating.”

“What?”

Avery stops drawing to look at me. “You need your strength to sit for hours between drawing and tattooing. Food is fuel. Don’t tell me that huge hunk of handsome body guarding you isn’t trying to fatten you up.”

“He says I’m perfect, but he made me a full breakfast this morning. Better than the Pop-Tarts and protein shake I normally choke down.”

“Ah, breakfast this morning means you spent the night. So is that mister *your* mister now?”

I can’t stop myself from blushing at the memory of Rex. I answer her with a shyness I shouldn’t have, but Rex brings it out of me. “Yes, he’s taking care of me in every way I can possibly think of.”

“Good for you, girl,” she replies with a smile. “I fell in love with Angel the same way. Don’t tell him I said this, but I was floundering about until he came into my life. If it weren’t for him, I don’t think we would have gotten this shop off the ground. Business isn’t my strong suit.”

“You two make an amazing team. I think me and Rex will be the same way.”

She smiles. “I can say that’s something you can look forward to. If you can see the way he looks at you when you’re not looking, that man has it bad for you. Hold onto him tight. Real men aren’t as common as one would think.”

I know she’s right because my father is a prime example of a man with so much promise to be great. But he gets in his own way, which leaves me in the line of fire too many times to count.

“Avery?”

“Yeah?” She stops drawing again to look at me.

“How soon is too soon to know?”

“To know what, hun?”

“To know if you’re in love or something like that?”

She giggles, crossing her princess-tattooed arms over her sketchbook. “Or something like that? Love is love, honey. There’s something about the way a man behaves around you that will tell you if he loves you or not. Even when he knows you’re fully capable of taking care of things yourself, he goes above and beyond to take care of certain things for you. It’s not always the case, but when it matters, that man will come through for you.”



“And if he doesn’t? Like, take Owen for example. The last few times I’ve locked myself out of my apartment and didn’t feel like dealing with my building manager, I’d call him because he has a spare key. He’d promised to show up but never did. Rex always shows up for me. No matter what.”

“There’s a stark difference between a man who loves you and a parent who loves you. Parents come with baggage from their own childhood. They either repeat their bullshit with you or try to do things differently. Either way, all that happens is their kids still need therapy as an adult.” She chuckles to herself.

It makes me think she’s talking more about her own experiences. However, she presses on. “A man who cares about you, who loves you, he’s going to show up for you even after he already has you, even after there’s no other benefit to him than knowing he’s made your life a little bit easier.”

“Angel shows up for you every time, doesn’t he?” I ask her with an appreciation for her insights.

“Don’t get me wrong, we’ve gotten to know each other over the years. We were friends for a bit before he became my boyfriend and then husband. So there are days where he wants to show up for me and he can’t. That’s just life. Some days you give 100 but only get 20 in return. You can’t expect anyone to give you all of them every day. Now, like I said before, when it matters, Angel is there for me. He won’t let anyone breathe wrong around me or our family. If you know that man will put his life on the line for you, for his principles, that’s a man in my opinion worth growing to love.”

“So love at first sight isn’t a thing?” Curiosity surges through me. Avery has to be in her late 30s or so, possibly older. I know she and Angel are celebrating their 10th wedding anniversary in a few months. Her insights into love have me wondering about my future with Rex.

“It’s not a thing for me, but I don’t know everything so I won’t say it’s not a thing. When it comes to matters of the heart, Raina, sometimes you have to be smart, and other times you have to feel your way through it. When you figure out which times call for which, write a book and let the rest of us know,” she says with a wink before returning to her sketchbook.

The bell over the door rings, forcing us both to look at who’s coming inside

the shop. My heart races, uncertain if it's Rex, Angel, Owen, or whoever's looking for him. That's why I like working here. It gives me moments to block out whatever is happening in the world outside of those doors.

Fortunately, it's Angel. He walks behind the partition that separates the studio from the waiting areas and sits a cup of coffee with a to-go bag of food beside Avery. He leans down to kiss her before turning to me. "Morning, Raina."

"Mornin, bossman," I reply.

Even as Avery draws, she turns away from the book just enough to thank Angel with another kiss before he retreats into the back office. The love they have in their eyes for one another is something I see for me and Rex.

My mind wanders about everything I'll get to do with him, everything I'll get to be. When the bell above the door chimes again, I hope it's him. I want to love him more than anything and to know that he loves me. I have a feeling it's that deep for Rex—from the way he holds me while we sleep at night to the way he continues to be the man for me.

However, there's something ominous in the steps walking into the shop. Avery looks toward the person coming inside and then at me.

"Doll, why don't you head inside the office and file those invoices I told you about?" she tells me with a nod.

I don't ask questions. I get up to move toward the office, and Angel comes out. The fierce look in his eyes along with the strength of his walk tell me I need to get out of sight.

"Mr. Carlyle, good morning," Angel greets the stranger in the shop. "Welcome. How can I help you?"

I continue to walk toward the office, but my steps aren't fast enough as I hear the deep voice behind me. "Please, don't leave, dear. Join us. My name is Lorenzo. I'd like a word with you all."

My heart flutters as I turn around, smart enough to know I can't walk away from this. He's tall with ink-black hair slicked back into a low ponytail, with his hairline desperately trying to flee away from his temples. His eyes are

dark, sunken, and menacing against his high cheekbones. The leather jacket he wears reminds me of Rex's scent, but there is nothing sexy about Mr. Carlyle.

Angel stands between me, Avery, and Lorenzo. I can see the gun tucked into the back of Angel's waistband—a reminder of Avery's words to me moments ago.

“Now, Raina Olsen of 382 Newton Drive, apartment 1D, daughter of Owen Olsen. I need you to do something for me,” Lorenzo says, his eyes looking through Angel, piercing into me like a fear I've never known.

“What do you need from me?” I ask him.

He leers at me, his gaze sinister. “Call your Daddy.”



## REX

**T**he tin box sitting in my passenger seat has dents in it from where I had to pull it out from under the sink. What the hell was Owen thinking by leaving it there?

I call him as soon as I get into my car. Luckily for me, he answers right away. “What’s wrong, Rex?”

“For starters, your little stunt last night set off all kinds of alarms at Raina’s place. I have her place wired with cameras and motion sensors,” I tell him with a twinge of annoyance.

“Did you find it?” he asks, with his voice barely above a whisper.

“The box? Yes, I found it. It didn’t take a search party or anything. Pretty fucking obvious hiding spot if you ask me.”

“I wanted it to be obvious to you. Those are the originals in that box. I have copies with me and that’s what I’m using to lay breadcrumbs for the agents I’m working with.”

“Is talking on your phone okay? I feel like you shouldn’t be talking on the phone about this.”

He sighs. “I probably shouldn’t but I just don’t give a fuck anymore, Rex. I’m tired of being a fuck up. I hid those originals hoping you’d find them. Just listen. Lorenzo doesn’t know I’m working with the feds yet. I mean, at least, I hope he doesn’t. I have all the faith in the world that he’s going to

know real soon, if he hasn't figured it out."

"What's your plan, O?"

"Shit, I hate it when you call me that."

"I hate it when you act like it. We're a long ways away from our law school days, but still, you manage to track bullshit up and through our lives. I need you to wipe your fucking feet. You're dirtying up my house, O."

"For fuck's sake, Rex, don't go cold on me. I'm making it right. Keep the originals. That's for if Lorenzo gets his hands on me, you can still make good on my word to the feds. You can read my shorthand. You know me and can decipher it all for them. Some of your clients may pop up as well."

"Are you trying to get me disbarred? What the fuck have you been up to in *our* FUCKING FIRM!" I slam my fists against the steering wheel.

"Okay, listen, just listen. I'll explain it all if I get through this, but we don't have time for that now. I'm still out with the nurse, and I'm making my way east. There's a friend of mine who can run my information through several agencies. I want them all fighting over me so it's in their best interest to keep me alive and protected. If you don't hear from me in the next few days, you take that box and find this guy named Chuck Barrose. He's an agent working between the two counties. Keep Raina safe and I'll check back in—"

He's about to hang up the phone when I see Raina's name and number flash across the screen.

"Yeah, baby girl," I reply after swiping my screen to answer her call.

"Daddy," her voice quivers, and I throw the car into drive, speeding to the tattoo shop.

"What's wrong? Raina, talk to me," I command her as I try my best not to endanger the other drivers on the road. One sharp left, a right, and then a straight shot to the shop where I barely let the car stop moving before I slam it into park.

"I just need you to come, okay?" Raina squeaks out before disconnecting the call.

I'm already here, baby girl.

There's a Ruger and ankle holster in my glove box that I put on before I get out. Each step I take toward the shop has my heart thumping against my chest. But I stop in my tracks when I look through the large front window.

"So she's calling *you*, Daddy? What the fuck, Rex?" Owen says from the phone.

"She's in trouble because of you. Don't pull this territorial shit with me, Owen. I'm taking care of her. I have been and will continue to do so. Right now, I'm looking into the tattoo shop where she works. Guess who's inside?"

He snarls on the other end of the line. "For fuck's sake. How did he find her so quick?"

I try to keep my anger in check. "Do you actually realize that you leaving a hospital with broken bones, a nurse helping you along the way, and trying to duck out of a federal agent detail draws a shitload of attention? Let's not forget that heading straight to our office, only to make your way to Raina's apartment, is probably the reason why I'm staring at Lorenzo Carlyle standing in a tattoo shop where Raina works."

"Listen, Rex—"

I cut him off. "I'm done listening, Owen. I'm calling the police—"

"Wait, shit. Wait, don't. See what he wants and let me work on something. I swear, Rex. I'm going to fix this, and I don't need local police fucking it up."

"You have twenty minutes, Owen. If I don't get some sort of signal from you by then, I'm calling the police and you'd better pray that no one gets hurt because of your bullshit." I end the call without letting him reply.

I call Raina back. This time, Lorenzo answers her phone, which makes my blood boil.

"Ah, Mr. Olsen. It seems that we have a discussion that needs finishing. I implore you to come down to your daughter's work so we may finish this like men." Lorenzo's voice is calm, and I'm not sure what to say. I don't want to give him the impression that I'm Owen.

“This is Rex Remington, Mr. Carlyle. Owen’s partner at the firm. Is there something I can do for you that will persuade you to let Raina and the owners of that shop walk out of there? Surely, you’re not holding them hostage.”

“That’s a dangerous accusation, Mr. Remington. They’re all fine. Now, as I see things, the shop is open for business. The owners have clients and things to tattoo while Raina is simply keeping me company as a receptionist does. No one’s being held hostage, but they can’t just walk out of the shop during business hours. No, no. They’ll stay put until Owen drags that *broken* fucking leg down here to talk to me.”

He’s smart and I don’t want to play games with this guy. Still, I have to stall on the off-chance that Owen can do something right and figure a way out of this.

“How about I come inside for us to discuss the situation like gentlemen?”

“It’s a free fucking country, Remington.”

He ends the call and hands the phone back to Raina. I’m not going to leave her in there with this lunatic.

The chime above the door grates my nerves because how dare it be so cheerful when this jackal of a human is standing there, reeking of intimidation?

“Ah, Mr. Remington. Thank you for joining us. Can you tell me where *my* lawyer is?” Lorenzo asks.

I shrug. “I have no clue. I’m only concerned about one person, and she’s standing right there. Angel, Avery, you two alright?”

Angel nods slowly, his hand pressing his wife further and further behind him. The minute she gets too close to the office, Lorenzo snaps his neck in their direction.

“Ah, ah, ah,” he says, wagging his finger at them. “You two stay put until your client arrives. What kind of customer service is it where you don’t have someone in the front of the shop at all times?”

“Mr. Carlyle,” Angel speaks up. “Avery and Raina can’t help you here. Why



don't you let them leave? I'll stay here with you fellas to run the shop. Hell, I can even give you some new ink if you like."

"That's very kind and noble of you, Mr. Ramirez, but one, please remove your weapon from behind your waistband. Two, no one is going anywhere until I have Owen fucking Olsen's neck in my meaty hands. He has my money and I want it back now," Lorenzo snarls before pulling out a Desert Eagle handgun.

The shit's big enough to blow a hole through Angel, his wife, and the office door behind them with a single shot. I need Owen to figure out whatever he's planning so this doesn't end with someone getting hurt.

"It has a twin," Lorenzo says with a wink, waving his gun before pulling out an identical one from another holster.

"This isn't a showdown at high noon, Carlyle. That's unnecessary," Angel huffs, pulling out his gun and setting it down on the counter.

"Come on, Remington. Are you packing too?" he asks, turning to stare me down.

I put my hands in the air and turn around in a full circle, no obvious holster he can see. It seems to appease him when my phone rings.

"It's Owen," I tell everyone and answer the call. "Yeah?"

"Put it on speaker," Lorenzo commands and I do it.

"Well, what does he want?" Owen asks.

"He wants his money," I reply.

Owen huffs, and for a moment, I feel like there's something he's not saying. I know he's helping the feds, but what if he actually stole money from this guy? For the sake of our friendship, I hope that's not the case.

"Tell that asshole I'll be there in half an hour with his money and no one had better be hurt."



RAINA

**S**hades of red bloom across Rex's forehead along with a pulsating vein on his temple.

My heart is racing, but Rex is doing everything in his power to keep his anger under control. Lorenzo Carlyle is infuriating and manipulative. Worst of all, Owen is in up to his neck with this guy.

This is the kind of person Owen gets himself tangled up with and then leaves them to barrel their way into my life. He's so fucking selfish. He never thinks about me.

"Baby girl, how are you doing?" Rex asks quietly. His eyes shift from me to Lorenzo to Angel and the gun on the counter.

Lorenzo sucks his teeth, taking Angel's gun to put it in his waistband. "You should not play with guns, Mr. Ramirez. They're dangerous, and someone can get hurt."

Angel pushes a low exhale through his nostrils, making sure to keep Avery behind him. A woman, Kelly if I remember correctly from the appointment book, begins walking toward the door. Her curly hair jostles in a high bun as she reaches for the door and pulls it open.

"Hey, Angel. I have an appointment with Avery. I see you guys got the wall up. Very nice," she says. The smile across her pretty face is bright and unassuming until she looks at Lorenzo holding two of the largest handguns I've ever seen in my life. The way Kelly's entire expression shifts as she

makes her face ready to scream is jarring.

Lorenzo cocks the gun and points it at her while using the other one to tap against his lips for her not to make a noise. “Don’t worry, doll face. I’ll be out of everyone’s hair shortly. As soon as the nitwit she calls a father—”

“I don’t call him a father. I call him Owen,” I say with that rebellious energy running through me.

“That’s right. Because when I said call your Daddy, you picked up,” Lorenzo replies with his gun pointing at Rex. I take a step closer to Rex who moves boldly in front of me. Lorenzo grins. “How fucking sweet of you, Remington. Ready to take a bullet after fucking your partner’s daughter. Isn’t that a partnership made in heaven?”

“Mind your business, Carlyle,” Rex says and ushers Kelly to take a seat in one of the chairs.

“I am. That’s why I’m here. Your partner’s been doing dirty business deals, my friend,” Lorenzo says to Rex.

“I’m not your friend,” Rex snarls. “Friends have this thing where they don’t point guns in their face to try and get them not to leave.”

“You’re right. I’m sorry.” Lorenzo grins maniacally, waving one of his guns around. “It’s not okay for friends to point guns at one another. But tell me this, counselor, are lawyers in the habit of stealing money from their clients?”

“Yes,” Rex says emphatically. “It’s an actual crime, and if that’s what’s happened, you have Owen arrested. You get him disbarred. You don’t break his body into pieces—”

“Don’t tell me what to do, Remington. I have a reputation that gets to places long before I do. If I let some sniveling little weasel steal from me, what do you think that does for my business relationships? Huh? He deserves much more than broken bones, which is exactly what he’s going to get after he gives me my money.”

“This is so stupid,” I huff out.

Lorenzo hears me and tips his head to look around Rex at me. “What was

that, Raina? What's stupid?"

"You, being here, thinking that this is going to end in any other way than with you being arrested," I tell him.

Lorenzo laughs loudly, a little too hard for my tastes. His arrogance borders on cocky as he speaks. "You think I'd be here like this if I didn't have an ace up my sleeve?"

"Let it alone, Raina," Rex murmurs to me.

I nod and take a seat next to Kelly. The sound of my phone ringing is jarring against the silent anticipation of everyone in the shop waiting to see what happens next.

Lorenzo picks it up off the glass display case. "Raina Olsen's phone. Is this the person who has my money?"

"I have your money, Lorenzo," Owen says loud enough for the entire shop to hear. "I'm pulling up to the shop, but you have to come outside to get it. It's too heavy."

"What do you mean too heavy?" Lorenzo asks.

Owen continues to shout. "I mean, that I have a broken leg and three cracked ribs thanks to you. The bag is too fucking heavy. Bring your ass out here and grab it from my car."

Lorenzo hangs up my phone and puts it on the counter before pulling out his own. I can't hear what the other person is saying this time, but I hear Lorenzo speaking with authority to them. "That was too quick to have an ambush waiting. Make sure there aren't plans for the roadways out of Colwood once I get out of here."

He ends the call as a black sedan with heavily tinted windows pulls to a stop in front of the shop. Lorenzo looks at us with a crooked smile as he leaves, waving his guns at us. "Thank you all for your cooperation."

The minute Lorenzo steps outside, dozens of people seem to come out of nowhere. Navy blue jackets with federal agency initials come out of the woodwork, tackling Lorenzo and removing every firearm on his body. Owen

actually gets out of the car and limps his way into the shop as agents haul Lorenzo away.

Rex turns to me, holding my face in his hands as he inspects me for any damage.

“I’m fine, Daddy. I swear.”

He kisses me gently. “Good, baby girl.”

Owen approaches us with his hands up. “You all have my sincerest apologies for this.”

“Explain, Owen. Now,” Rex tells him.

Owen sighs and nods. “I owe you all that much. I was approached months ago after I filed a motion on behalf of one of Lorenzo’s associates. I’ve been working with a friend of mine at the FBI to get a paper trail on Lorenzo’s money laundering businesses. Local cops are on his payroll.”

Rex runs a hand over his head. “That’s why you said you didn’t want me to call the police.”

“Yeah. I’m sorry, Rex. They were using me as bait to lure Lorenzo and the corrupt cops out, but all of this happened. They’re sure they can get Lorenzo to roll over on the cops once they tell him what I have in those ledgers.” Owen huffs out a breath before turning to Angel and Avery. “I really am sorry to you all. I have a bad habit of dragging people into my mess. I’ll be out of your hair soon.”

“Soon?” I ask him.

Owen offers me a timid smile. “Yeah. I was kind of hoping I could stay with you for the night? The nurse I met wants nothing to do with me, and my place is probably in worse shape than the office. I want to give the feds enough time to round up Lorenzo’s crew. They can have a car parked outside until they move me into witness protection tomorrow.”

Rex turns to me. “What do you say, baby girl?”

“I guess that’s okay with me.” I shrug. The adrenaline dies down as exhaustion kicks in. I glance over to Kelly who’s still sitting with wide eyes

at the drama unfolding in front of her.

“Here I just wanted to get my tits tatted,” Kelly quips to lighten the mood.

Owen smiles, pivoting on his good leg to face her as he introduces himself.

I shake my head before walking over to Angel and Avery. “Thank you both for having my back. I’m sorry about your gun.”

Angel waves his hands in front of him. “It’s fine. I’m sure I’ll get it back eventually.”

“If not,” Rex chimes in, “I’ll replace it for you.”

They shake hands, and after a lengthy conversation with federal officers, we’re allowed to go home. Rex pulls out some chicken and an assortment of vegetables to throw together for dinner, and it feels odd with Owen sitting in the same space with us.

My father versus Daddy.

“For what it’s worth,” Owen says after the silence goes on too long for him to stand it, “I’m sorry again. Raina, I know my track record with you is in the shitter, and it’s probably why you’re so attached to this guy.”

“Rex is always there for me even when there wasn’t anything between us. All of those inconsequential times you decided not to show up, Rex did. How can I not fall for a man who shows up for me? He stepped in front of a gun for me today, and that’s more than you’ve ever done, Owen.”

I can see the solemn look glazing over him as he nods. “I didn’t deserve you, Raina. Not you, not your mother. It’s no excuse to not be there, but I didn’t know how to be. I just did what my father did. I paid for what I could—”

I cut him off. “Instead of showing up when you can. I get it, but understand that this is why I call you Owen, and him, Daddy.”

The finality of my words forces him to bite his tongue. We eat our dinner in mostly silence, but the tension is melting away the more affectionate I am with Rex. It’s nothing salacious, just a hand caress here or an adoring look there. I need Owen to know that there’s nothing he can do to stop this or get between us.

When it's all said and done, I clean up the kitchen since Rex did the cooking. By the time I get to his bedroom, he's sitting there with a curious grin on his face.

“That mouth of yours, baby girl, is something else. I want to tell you how proud I am of you. You kept your head with that Lorenzo guy waving a gun around.”

“I trust you, Daddy. You said you'd never let anything happen to me, and you didn't.”

Rex relaxes, his eyes getting heavy with lust as he drags his gaze up and down my body. He licks his lips, beckoning for me to come closer. The kiss starts off soft and slow, his tongue pressing into my mouth, making me moan as his hands grab me to pull me onto his lap.

He pulls away, swiping a few strands of hair out of my face, “You can't be that loud, baby girl.”

“So why don't you put something in my mouth to keep me quiet?”





REX

**F** or fuck's sake.

Raina doesn't waste any time with that devilish smile and sinks to her knees in front of me. Those bold blue eyes staring up at me with the most precious *Fuck Me* face a guy can want. Blood pumps directly to my cock while she watches me slide my pants off and sit back down on the bed.

I know this is her first time putting me in her mouth, but my body is ready to explode with anticipation.

“Tell me how to make you feel good, Daddy.”

“You should lick your lips. Taste it first.”

She puts her tiny hand around my shaft, positions herself above it, and kisses it gently.

“Kiss it the way you'd kiss me. See how it feels and what it tastes like.”

She lowers her mouth onto the head, swiping her tongue across the tip and lighting up every never ending in my dick. I don't have to say much more as she finds a rhythm, moaning with every sultry kiss of my cock.

Fuck me, she's going to make me come before I'm ready.

I need to feel her walls tightening around me as I sink myself inside of her. Patience is a virtue because I hold myself back and let her indulge in this moment.

When she starts moving her mouth down the length of my erection, she gags when I get too close to the back of her throat. It forces her to stop and pull me out with a pop. She's panting, trying to catch her breath and clutching her chest.

"Take it easy, baby girl. Exhale on the way down. Inhale on the way up. Through your nose if you can," I tell her. I don't want her to overthink it, but I can see the gears turning inside her head. She's so eager to please, and I'm happy to be the man on the receiving end of it. More than happy in fact.

She continues to kiss me, suck, and find her rhythm. Every moment is like an exploration for her. She swipes her tongue along the bottom of my shaft, tickling the vein that pulses with every erection, and shifts her eyes to look at me to gauge my reaction. It's enough to make me spill my seed down her throat.

I can barely stand it and don't want to finish in her mouth. I pull her away from me and up to kiss me. My feet anchor to the floor as I push myself off the bed, standing and turning Raina around to put her palms flat on the mattress.

I hike one of her legs up before I push my throbbing manhood into her slit and bury myself to the hilt. There's no space between us, and I sit for a moment, waiting for her tender walls to adjust to me inside of her.

She moans, and it makes me wrap my hand around her mouth. She moans again—this one lower, slower, guttural. She likes this with my hand over her mouth. I can feel her walls tense around me and release. The ripples of her sexual sheath caress my cock like a hot blanket.

The first stroke is slow, melodic, and forces me to remember we're not alone in my house. My pace increases much like the rate of my heart beating against my eardrums. I want to stay inside of her forever. Raina molds around me like we were always meant to be.

Her tight little ass shudders and shakes as I move back and push inside of her over and over again. Every thrust feels intense. My hand moves from covering her mouth to her sucking on my fingers while I fuck her from behind.

I want to slap her ass, but looking down to see her juices coating my cock will have to suffice. It makes me pump into her quicker and quicker until finally, we finish. I want it to go longer, but fuck, she feels so good. It doesn't take long for sleep to find us after we clean up and collapse into my bed.

When I wake up the next morning, the aroma of freshly ground coffee greets me. I'd much rather it be Raina, but the space beside me is empty. That's not how I want to start the day.

After washing up a bit, I head downstairs to see Raina cooking in the kitchen wearing one of my t-shirts. I can't stop my head from tipping to the side, hoping to get a peek under the hem of the shirt. She's not wearing anything underneath.

I don't bother checking to see if Owen's awake, but I also don't want him walking in on us if I start something with Raina in the kitchen. I can't stop myself. She's too gorgeous to simply walk by as if my dick isn't raging to be inside of her warmth merely a few hours after I was last there.

Raina's making pancakes, and I walk up behind her, wrapping my arms around her torso.

"Morning, baby girl," I tell her, nuzzling against her neck.

"Morning, Daddy." She giggles while I trail kisses down her neck. My hands start at her breasts while she's flipping flapjacks and work their way down to move under the shirt. When my fingers reach the beautiful mound that belongs to me, I spread her lips and slide my fingers between her folds.

"Mmm." She moans and spreads her legs a bit wider to give me room.

I slip a finger inside of her, my erection growing harder and harder. I'm ready to sink myself inside of her again.

Raina spins around to face me. "I guess I'm on the menu this morning?"

"Every morning if you let me have my way," I tell her before pulling my cock out to bury it inside of her. It's quick, fast, and over within minutes. I find myself looking over my shoulder wondering if we're going to be caught.

I help Raina clean up after I pull out of her, and she goes back to making

pancakes. The first bite is damn near as orgasmic as fucking her first thing in the morning.

“This is good, baby girl.”

“Thank you, Daddy,” she says with a kiss and sets a mug of coffee beside my plate.

“I want every morning to be like this one,” I admit to her. However, looking at the food, there’s only enough for the two of us. “Listen, baby girl. I know Owen’s not on your list of favorite people, but I don’t think we should let him starve.”

“He left,” she says with a shrug and slides a note over to me. “Look.”

I read it out loud:

*Rex, I know I’ve always made a mess of things. From having you help me get through law school to showing up for Raina every time I couldn’t. I hate admitting that you’re the better man, but you are, in life and with her. Keep looking after her, keep taking care of her, and finally, thank you for always taking care of me.*

*When you go into the office, you’ll find my contracts, liquidating my half of the partnership of the firm. I never wanted to get my life together at your expense, but I’m afraid if you keep my name on the door, you’re going to keep paying for my mistakes.*

*The FBI are passing me around to whichever agency wants to prosecute Lorenzo, along with some of his high-ranking criminal friends. You won’t be hearing from me until this is settled for good. I never want to put the lives of anyone I care about in jeopardy again. I love you both. Take care and take care of each other. P.S. I left something in your glove box with my blessing. Maybe you’ll have a better use for it than I will.*

“That’s one hell of a closing argument,” Raina says with half a grin.

“Yeah, I wish he could have stayed longer to tell me himself, but I guess this is for the best.”

“What do you think is in the glove box?”

I shrug my shoulders and motion for her to come look with me. “Maybe he got Angel’s gun back.”

“I doubt Owen will leave that. You have enough guns, right?” She giggles.

“I do. I can take you to my favorite range or we can head up to the cabin?”

“A cozy cabin with you sounds like just the break we need from Colwood. We can shoot things and who knows?”

Her voice trails off as we head into the garage, and I open the car door. It doesn’t take long for me to see what Owen left for me. It leaves Raina speechless with tears welling in her eyes.

I pull out a small leather black ring box with flaps that open from the middle. Inside is a velvet ring holder with a stunning ring inside of it. The diamond is beautiful, egg-shaped on a platinum band. There’s a matching wedding band with it.

“It’s my mother’s rings,” Raina says quietly.

“I’ve loved you for a long time, Raina,” I tell her. “But with everything that we’ve gone through these past few days, it’s made things crystal clear to me. I’m in love with you and can’t see my life going back to the way it was before. I want to show up for you always. I want to take care of you always. I want you to be my wife always. Will you do me the greatest honor and let me prove how much I love you? Will you marry me, Raina?”

I drop to one knee right there in the middle of my garage and slip the newly gifted engagement ring onto her finger, hoping she never takes it off.

“Yes, Rex, I will. Of course, I will. I love you so much, Daddy.”

“I love you too, baby girl.”

# **EPILOGUE**

## RAINA

### One Year Later

**T**he sound of Rebecca Remington's newborn wails piercing through the late-night hours has me on edge.

She's only a few weeks old, the most beautiful thing in this world, and is in full control over me and my body for the foreseeable future.

Sleep isn't ready to let me go check on our daughter who's my steepest competition for her father's attention. It brings a smile to my face to see how in love he is with her, with us. Even now, as I flip the blanket off me, the space beside me is empty.

I groan because I know that Rebecca wants Mommy to feed her. We've been trying to give her a bottle, with every attempt ending in failure. My feet drag across the carpet from our bedroom into the spare room that we've transformed into her nursery.

The closer I get, the quieter it seems. I can't imagine she's put herself back to sleep. It's time for her morning feeding. When I poke my head inside the room, I see the sweetest sight.

Rex is sitting in the chair with Rebecca swaddled in his arms as he feeds her from a bottle.

"How did you do that?" I ask him, sure that sleep coats every inch of my voice.



“Come here, Momma,” he whispers with a wink, patting his thigh for me to sit with them.

I find myself in my husband’s lap as he cradles our daughter in one arm while I rest my head on his shoulder. Once I’m nuzzling against him, I see what he’s doing.

“I wrapped the bottle in your shirt. Until she gets the hang of me feeding her, we can do this so you can actually get some sleep,” he says with a soft kiss on my lips.

“Sleep is definitely necessary. I feel like a walking zombie. I haven’t even been able to take care of you how I like.”

“Don’t start that again, Raina. I love you, baby girl. I’m the luckiest man alive to have such a beautiful wife and daughter. You take care of me just fine by being an outstanding mother to our daughter.”

“Daddy—”

“What did I say?” he asks with such dominance it turns me on.

“That you’re the luckiest man in the world to be loved by me,” I tell him with a soft kiss on his lips.

“That’s right. Avery tells you all the time. You can’t give me 100% of you every day. I don’t expect you to either. I want you to be happy.”

“Happy wife, happy life. Right?” I say with a giggle.

“No, baby girl. I just want you to be happy. It has nothing to do with me. Well, wait. I do get the benefits of you being happy, but I love you. I just want you to take care of yourself before you take care of me. Rebecca is not going to be okay if her mom is not. Trust me when I tell you I will figure some things out with you.” He turns to look at our daughter, slumbering as she finishes her bottle. “And some things I can handle without you. Get your gorgeous ass back in bed. Daddy will be right there to tuck you in.”

I lean in for one more kiss, losing myself in the way he loves me. The way pleasure explodes all over my body every time he kisses me reminds me why I love being loved by him and in love with him. Rex and Rebecca—my entire

world fits in his lap.

“I love you so much, Daddy.”

“I love you too. So lucky to be loved by you. Go on now. I’m going to burp her and change her before I put her down. I have an early day tomorrow.”

“Owen’s finally getting out of witness protection, right?” I push myself off his lap and he stands up right behind me, holding Rebecca against his chest.

Rex gently rocks our daughter up and down, tapping her bottom lightly until she gets rid of her gas. What a sexy thing to see. This hulking man of muscle and conviction is standing in the middle of a nursery, holding our daughter until she burps.

Rex continues to whisper, “He’s supposed to, but from everything I know now, he’s been running from one courtroom to another. I’m glad I sold the firm when I had the chance. No one wants a criminal defense attorney who turns their clients in for crimes they’ve committed.”

That makes me laugh unexpectedly. He shoos me out of the room, and I leave him with Rebecca cooing and out like a light in his arms.

# **EXTENDED EPILOGUE**

REX

Ten Years Later

“Pst. Daddy.” A tiny voice beckons me out of my sleep. The shaking from the tiny hand that belongs to that tiny voice is a lot stronger than I remember.

One eye cracks open to see college football playing on the TV. I turn over to look at the play area just outside the den to see an insane amount of toys on the floor, but most importantly, Raina’s markers are scattered about.

Fuck.

“What did you do, Rock?” I ask, Raquel, our seven-year-old who’s hellbent on getting me off the sofa.

“Nothing, Daddy. Swear it. But the babies—” Her voice trails off while I sit up and wish for my wife to come home so I can get a decent nap.

My feet swing over the edge of the couch, anchoring me to the light hardwood floors that cover the entire first floor of our sprawling home just outside of Colwood. I hated to give up my old house, but after Raina got pregnant with Riley, our five-year-old, it was time to get something bigger.

We’re still on the same property but further back from the road, and we rent out the old house for events from time to time. Mostly, it’s for whenever one of our friends needs a break from their kids or either of us needs some peace and quiet.

I can take some peace and quiet right now as I follow my little narc. Raquel has me by the hand and is leading me into the kitchen where Rebecca is making sandwiches for the little ones and chastising them.

“Mom’s going to be so mad at you two for playing with her markers. *Again,*” Rebecca says, shaking her head. It feels like yesterday I was holding her with a bottle wrapped in her mother’s shirt to feed her. Now, look at her in full big sister mode. She nearly drops the sandwich when she spots me. “Sheesh! Dad, you scared me. Good, you’re awake. You can help clean them up before Mom gets back.”

I turn to see the three-year-old Reagan. My little man is the baby of our brood and still has the evidence of his crime in his hand. I look at his sister, Riley, with evidence of doodles up and down her arms.

I wrap my hand around my mouth to stop myself from cursing and laughing all at the same time. Raina doesn’t do tattoos, but she loves drawing them, especially for the marketing campaigns she puts together for tattoo shops across the tri-state area. She’s become a marketing guru and loves it.

I let out a sigh, scooping down to pick Reagan up from his chair. “Hey bud, it’s not nice to use Mommy’s things without asking, right?”

“But, Dadda, Ryeee says she want a tattoo. Look I make it pretty like Mommy,” he says pointing to his sister’s doodles. It looks like a Picasso painting crawling up her arm.

“Okay, who’s in the bath first?” I ask them. Every sibling points to a different one.

“I can’t, Dad,” Rebecca states. “I just took a shower and Maria’s mom is coming to get me for softball.”

“I have ballet. Jane and her mom are coming to pick me up at two,” Raquel says, folding her arms across her chest.

“So you two older ones let the little ones get into Mom’s markers and now you’re bailing on me?” I ask them.

Raquel and Rebecca share a sisterly look before they shrug their shoulders and laugh at me with Rebecca stating the obvious. “Well, Dad, Mom told *you*

to watch them. You're the one who took a nap. You're in more trouble than any of us because you're the grown-up."

I can't help but laugh. "Point well-argued, counselor. I will throw myself on the mercy of the court."

They giggle and point behind me. My beautiful wife, mother of my children, and love of my life is standing in an impeccably made suit as she's coming in from a meeting with a client. I turn around to face our children.

"Alright. Rebecca, get your equipment out of the garage. Rock, do me a favor and just run the bath water for me. I'll be right up to bathe them both." I turn to Raina, walking over to her slowly to help her out of her coat.

"Don't you dare." She cracks a smile. "You promised you'd keep them out of trouble."

"We're not in trouble, Mommy. Dad is because he's the grown-up," Riley says to her.

I shrug and eye my children like the traitors they are before turning to my wife. "Babe, I dozed off for like a second."

"More like the entire second half of the Buckeyes," Rebecca tosses in.

"Hey." I glance at her over my shoulder. "I'm going to remember you throwing me under the bus when you're 16 and trying to sneak in but can't and need my help with Mom."

Rebecca tosses her head back with obnoxious laughter. "I'm never going to sneak out, Dad. There's motion sensors on everything."

That makes Raina laugh, and it's the perfect sound. I rally the kids, getting Rebecca off to softball, Raquel to ballet, and the tattoo twins in the tub and down for a nap. By the time I finish, Raina's sitting on the couch in her robe watching TV. A few streaks of gray twinkle like tinsel hiding in her blonde strands. I love her more than anything.

"Hey, baby girl. You want to see if Owen can come by and sit with the kids for a few days next week? I want to take you to the cabin. Let's get away from the chaos a bit."

“Don’t you have meetings scheduled next week? You’re consulting with those law firms on how to grow their clientele, right?”

I pull her close to me, and she shrinks away. “What’s the matter, baby girl?”

“I’ve been putting on weight like crazy. I’m just not feeling like myself lately, Daddy.”

I hook a finger under her chin. “I love every *extra* pound you put on. You’re perfect to me, always have and always will be. You’re allowed to put on weight after pushing babies out. I love you and I just want you to be happy. Whatever you need me to do to make that happen, I’ll do it.”

“I know you will, Daddy. I love the way you love me and our family. I wouldn’t want to do life with anyone else.”

“You’d better not. Now, bring that delicious ass over here. I’m going to make you come all over my tongue to make sure you know how much I mean every word that comes off it.” I grip her under her thighs, making her robe fall open, and lick my lips.

“Oh, Daddy. What about dinner?”

“Baby girl, I’ll take care of it as soon as I take care of you.”

*The End.*

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