



Her Baby Daddy Mix-up

Rosa Mink

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Chapter 1

Brianna skirted around the people trailing out the door of the coffee shop feeling her stomach revolt at the simple idea of the repugnant liquid. She was exhausted and nauseous. All she wanted was to get into her apartment and relax. Tomorrow was going to be a longer, much longer day than today; after all, they were flying across the country to a conference for the next week.

She hated traveling on the weekend, but Carter wanted to be there and get acclimated to the layout of the conference center before everyone else began to arrive on Monday. She wanted nothing more than to stay home, especially with the way she was feeling currently. No one at work knew she was pregnant...hell, no one other than her and her doctor knew about it, and not even her doctor knew the how, and they wouldn't until she could figure out a reasonable lie to tell her parents. They'd be horrified to know the truth, but she didn't care as much about that as she did about the little life growing inside her.

Brianna stopped to get her mail, finding a letter from the clinic in the stack and slid her nail beneath the flap, taking out the sheet in wonder as to what they wanted. She'd returned their Dewar in perfect condition, and she didn't know why they'd be writing to her, unless it was simply to confirm her report that she was pregnant.

The first few sentences had her heart in her throat and the next sent her upstairs, straight to the toilet. This was not happening...she'd purposely chosen someone who wanted to remain anonymous because she didn't want to deal with a man in her business.

She'd given in and made her fondest wish come true only to discover the world had played a trick on her. Mistakes like this weren't possible, were they? How could a mix-up like this happen? How did her anonymous donor suddenly become a live person? One that wasn't even supposed to be a donor, anonymous or open ended.

She headed to the bedroom, lying in the semi-darkness, and shut her eyes wanting to forget ever reading that letter. She couldn't dwell on it now anyway. She wasn't going to be in town to deal with it for the next week so until she got back she was going to ignore it and everything else that might come from it.

She woke to darkness, nausea, and a need to use the bathroom. She was trying to make herself look half-human when she heard the knock on her door and groaned. Of course, Carter would be early the one time she wasn't ready to go. She ran her fingers through her hair as she double-checked her outfit, then moved to let him into the living room to stop him from waking anyone else with his incessant knocking.

"Morning Brianna," he said more pleasantly than she expected from the length of time she'd made him wait. "Coffee, two sugar, one creamer," he offered holding out the cup to her and she felt her stomach roll.

She shook her head no as she fought against the nausea, but as he closed the space between them, extending the cup further, the aroma overwhelmed her and there was no stopping the bile coming up this time. She made a dash to the half-bath off the kitchen, barely making it in time.

Well hell, Carter thought seeing the pamphlet on her coffee table and moved to the kitchen, dumping out the offending beverage. He felt like a heel now. How had he not known his assistant was pregnant? Had he really been in his own funk since getting the notice from the clinic that someone had messed up and given out his private vials to a woman as an anonymous donor? Probably. He'd been livid, especially with the clinic refusing to tell him who the woman was due to privacy issues. Some woman out there was pregnant with his child...the potential only child he'd ever have, and they wouldn't allow him to know who or even where she was.

He'd give them this week then bring his attorney into the mess, force them to inform him who was carrying his child. For now, it looked like he needed to refocus on the trip at hand, especially with Brianna's little surprise.

He moved down the hallway and wetted a washcloth, handing it to her as she began to get up from her spot. He noticed a slight hollowness to her normally rosy cheeks and debated about bringing someone else with him for the trip. The only problem with that was no one else complimented him the way Brianna did. She knew his cues well, anticipated his needs long before he ever spoke them, but he didn't want to put any strain on her.

"How far along are you?" he asked after she rinsed her mouth then her face using the washcloth.

"What? I don't know what you're talking about," she said looking over his shoulder, a sure sign that she wasn't being truthful with him.

"Brianna, I've known you for five years. You're never sick and there's a 'What to Expect' pamphlet on your coffee table. Don't insult my intelligence or yours by trying to hide it now."

She sighed rubbing her temples and answered him honestly, "Eight weeks..."

"Do you want to cancel going with me? I can call and have Ella come out tomorrow if you'd rather stay home," he offered but she shook her head no knowing that would only increase her worry about the letter and whose child she was carrying.

"I'll be fine..."

"Are you sure? You look a little pale," he said watching his words carefully.

"It usually passes after a couple hours being up," she stated, and he didn't argue telling her he'd rather not have Ella there and deal with the woman's obvious crush on him. "For now...can you not say anything to anyone? I haven't told my family yet."

"I won't tell a soul," Carter reassured her as he grabbed the bags waiting inside the front door.

She took her jacket from the hook and slipped into it knowing it was chilly outside, despite the seventy-six it was

supposed to reach that day. She checked her bag for her keys, finding the letter from the clinic stuffed into the bottom of it and decided to leave it there. It was better than letting Carter see it and have more questions.

He didn't speak much until they were in the suite at the hotel and looking at the presentation he was giving about their newest software offerings. He had scheduled a two-hour block that evening for the main room where the presentation would run, and she ensured everything was set up the way he liked before they went to have dinner.

Typically, if they were out on business, he'd buy a bottle of wine to share, and it was easier that he knew ahead of time rather than pester her with questions as to why she wasn't drinking. She chose something light that wouldn't sit heavily on her stomach, avoiding anything with grease as it made her nausea worse, and carefully sipped on her water.

"I'll admit I'm surprised Brianna," Carter stated when their food arrived. He watched her slowly take a bite as though testing her stomach and wondered if her nausea wasn't worse than she was letting onto. "I fully expected you to be married before finding out you were expecting."

"Doesn't always work out that way though does it?" she said giving him a light smile.

"I suppose not," he agreed. "Is the father in the picture or know?"

"Carter..." she paused letting out a sigh as she rubbed her temple. "For right now, can we just forget that I'm pregnant as best as possible?"

"Sure," he stated seeing the front she had slipped slightly.

He kept a close eye on her as the week started, seeing that her tension increased almost daily, as did her nausea. Wednesday evening, he called the clinic to see if they'd heard from the woman carrying his child, getting into a near shouting match with the clinic's attorney when they refused to tell him anything.

“Should she call...tell her how to get in touch directly with me,” Carter stated before hanging up, his hand tightening on the glass of whiskey he’d poured from the mini-bar. He wasn’t about to lose this opportunity.

He hadn’t lived through cancer at twenty-one, froze his sperm in hopes of having a family someday in case the chemo left him impotent to have three of the twenty vials he had given out in error. He hadn’t met a woman who he could see living with, let alone one who he would be comfortable sharing his past with, explain things to. No, the only person he’d ever had as a constant was Brianna and now she’d thrown him entirely.

He would figure this out as well as figuring out why Brianna was so hesitant to talk about her pregnancy. He always knew when she was seeing someone. There was a look that settled about her, a frustration the man in her life created, but he hadn’t seen it in the last few months. It made him wonder about the truth...and if the hesitation didn’t come from something painful that’d happened to her. If it had, he wanted to know. She had a special place in his life, and he wouldn’t allow someone to hurt her without doing something about it. No, he would figure out what was going on and see how he could help.

He downed the rest of his drink then headed to change for dinner, he didn’t want to eat with the rest of the attendees, but it was a special session, by invitation only and he’d gotten two, one for him and one for Brianna. He hoped the meal wouldn’t make her ill. Then again if it did, he’d have an excuse to leave early with her.



Brianna felt her heart pound with worry, her head rolling far more than her stomach at the argument she’d just overheard Carter have with someone. At first, it hadn’t surprised her too much, Carter had a quick temper but when he’d thrown out the clinic’s name, her entire body seized with panic.

Her hand shook as she dialed the number of the clinic, speaking with the attorney to learn, whether or not, her fears were warranted. The man's answers did little to settle her stomach and she changed for dinner trying to decide what to do, how to tell Carter that the mystery woman having his baby—was her. She didn't want to deal with attorneys in her business. It was one thing for the clinic's attorney to know, he was sworn to secrecy about the event after all. It would be another to deal with someone who didn't have the clinic's reputation to deal with and simply was in it for money.

She was quiet during dinner, quieter than normal and when they returned to the suite, she saw the questions in Carter's eyes as he watched her. She slipped her heels off and sat down in the overstuffed recliner, pulling her legs up underneath her as she fingered the embroidery on the pillow that went with it.

"Brianna, is everything alright?" Carter asked sitting down on the edge of the couch closest to her. "You've been quiet all night...far more than normal. If you're not feeling well enough to continue attending the conference, I'll manage on my own."

"I'm fine...mostly at least," she stated opening her bag, taking out the letter. She looked it over again before handing it to him, watching his face pale as he read it. "I..."

"You're the woman having my child?" Carter asked after sitting there gaping like a fish for a good minute.

"I heard you yelling in here earlier when I came up to get dressed. I called the clinic, and the attorney confirmed it..."

"*This* is why you've been so stressed this week?" he asked, and she nodded. "You...you were going to have a baby alone? Why?"

"I'm tired of playing games with men," she admitted rubbing her temples as the headache pounded inside them. "If the only thing I was interested in was sex it'd be fine, but I wanted more than that. I want kids...whether there's a man in my life or not, and nothing's changed in the last five years."

“Brianna, you’re only twenty-nine. You have plenty of time still.”

“Not really...my grandmother went into early menopause at thirty-six, my mother at thirty-three...my doctor said my levels were getting elevated so it’s likely I’ll follow suit too.”

“So, you decided to have a baby on your own, but the clinic messed up and instead of there not being a father...” Carter said breaking off as he tried to figure out what to do now, where to go with this.

“There’s not only one but it’s you...I just...don’t know what to do now,” she admitted closing her eyes as she leaned her head back against the chair.

“I do,” Carter said seeing the stress he’d caused her with his demand to have answers quickly. “We’ll get married.”

“What?” Brianna gasped her eyes flashing open to stare at him in shock.

“I won’t have everyone whispering about us, Brianna. You wouldn’t have told me that you’re having my child if you weren’t well aware that I’d insist on being part of its life. We get married and then the gossip will die down after the initial peak.”

“I...answer me one question before I even begin to contemplate this,” Brianna said resting her hand over her stomach as it rolled again.

“Shoot,” he said giving her a nod.

“Why did you have sperm frozen at the clinic? It just doesn’t fit with what I know of you Carter.”

“I was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma at twenty-one. The doctors said there was a chance of not being able to have children due to chemo afterwards, so I decided to give myself a better chance of making it happen. You know my father was never in my life...”

“And you wanted to do and be better than that,” she said understanding his desire to know who was carrying his child.

“Yes, I only had my mother and I know how much a child needs a father. I was cleared about eighteen months after starting treatment, but it did reduce my sperm count significantly. So, when I heard that the clinic made a mistake, and three vials were gone...”

“It’s actually only one,” she admitted making his brow lift in confusion. “I ordered and had three arrive but after the first time I changed my mind—at least about the timing. I contacted the clinic and asked them to store the other two for later use. I guess that’s how they discovered the error occurred but by then...”

“You were already pregnant. So, you changed your mind about having a baby on your own?”

“No, just about trying it right now, when I looked to see when I’d be due I realized it’d be about the end of May... we’re always busy with year-end stuff and didn’t want to create an issue with being out, but I guess someone had other plans,” she stated, and he shook his head slightly.

“It’s possible if you hadn’t sent the vials back they never would have realized, not until or if I ever requested them...and by then...”

“It would have been impossible to regain the lost time. I’ve been avoiding telling my family and friends because I knew they’d ask who the father was, and they’d think I was crazy wanting to do this on my own. I didn’t know how to explain it to them so when I realized I was late I panicked a bit.”

“Brianna, I’m sure it’s nowhere near how you were expecting this to go but under the circumstances...if you marry me then it makes both of our lives easier. We work well together, can share the same space easily, I don’t doubt that we can do just as well under the same roof all the time. You won’t have to figure out what to tell your parents and friends. No one other than my doctor knows about the vials being at the clinic. We’ll ensure the clinic doesn’t say a word and no one will have to know this didn’t come about in the normal way.”

“My parents will want to come visit, be here for when the baby’s born...”

“As my mother will likely want also, she’s desperate for a grandchild. So, we’ll have to put on a slight front for them... no one at the office will find anything strangely amiss between us. Plus, I guarantee I’ll never forget your birthday,” he added making her grin.

“You haven’t in five years of working together so I know I can believe you on that front,” she said knowing there wasn’t another choice. “I suppose if I have to share a baby with anyone, at least it’s you.”

“I feel the same way Brianna,” he stated squeezing her hand. “Now, you should get some rest, and I’m serious about taking it easy the rest of the week. You don’t need to overdo it and stress.”

“I’m fine Carter, please stop worrying,” she said lifting a brow at him.

“Impossible, it was before I knew you were carrying my child and now...well it’ll be easier if you just indulge me Brianna. Take care of yourself first. I can manage me perfectly well for the next several months.”

“I’ll believe that when I see it,” she joked giving him a full grin before heading to bed, thinking over what she’d just agreed to do. Her parents would likely still flip, but at least she wouldn’t have to admit the rest to them.

Chapter 2

“Where are we going?” Brianna asked as he turned opposite of her apartment from the highway.

“The sooner we get a marriage license the sooner we can get married. We’ll let the clinic know we came to a private agreement and that’ll be it,” Carter stated as they stopped at a light. “Unless you want a big wedding or your parents will be upset if we don’t have it, I figured we’d just do something private at the house and then announce it later.”

“After my older sisters’ wedding fiascos, I told my parents if or when I ever got married I’d likely elope. My father simply smiled at the idea knowing it’d save him twenty grand. My mother might grumble but the idea of a grandbaby will quickly tide her over,” Brianna admitted, and Carter breathed a bit easier glad for that answer. He despised large functions, and his wedding would require a massive guest list, but if it were kept private then no one would feel left out of it.

“Twenty grand? That’s budget conscious anymore, isn’t it?” he asked making her laugh.

“Twenty grand over what’s already set aside. My parents had a hole-in-the-wall ceremony and my mother insisted that when each of us was born she wasn’t going to let her daughters regret not having their ‘dream’ wedding. Both of my sisters had about thirty grand in the accounts and spent another twenty on theirs. Grace is thirty-eight and Ashley is thirty-four. They were both twenty-seven when they got married and neither wanted kids, their husbands don’t want kids, so the possibility of going into early menopause didn’t bother them.”

“But you as the youngest wanted something different I take it?” he asked watching her as he pulled into a parking spot.

“My dad really wanted a son, I was a bit of a letdown and then when Mom went into menopause, ceasing that possibility

for them, I told myself I'd give him a grandson, make it up to him a bit."

"Ah, yet having a baby, even that possible grandson without a father for him might not do quite what you anticipated?" he guessed.

"I was trying to come up with some possible, plausible story that they'd buy but I then wondered what they'd do or say if it turned out to be a girl. Would my father be even more disappointed in me for failing?"

"Brianna, you're not a failure. I'm sure your dad doesn't look at you that way."

"Sometimes compared to what my sisters have done I wonder though; my father loves my brothers-in-law. He takes them to football, baseball, basketball games...they go fishing, and hunting, and practically anything else with an '-ing' in it. Holidays are tiresome, my mother asking if I've met anyone nice like Tyler and Jacob. My father simply sits there looking between me and my sisters silently evaluating us it seems, and I always come out on the short side."

"Families can drive you crazy, can't they?" Carter asked and she nodded letting him come around and get the door for her.

"Oh, do they," she agreed. "Grace is a bank manager. Ashley is an ADA. Then there's me, and they scoff when they say I'm an Executive Assistant. I'd like to see them handle my workload for one day."

"Then they must leave out the fact that you're my executive assistant," Carter said giving her a smile. "I'd be lost without you. You're my right hand, my left brain..."

"I know; you barely function while I'm out on vacation. I'd hate to see what the company looked like without me around."

"In the red," he assured her before going inside to arrange their license. On the way out he suggested, "We could pick up the license on Thursday afternoon or Friday morning. I have a

friend who can perform the wedding ceremony Friday night. All we need is two witnesses.”

“Sounds fine to me, I’ll see if my friend Emily wants to come, she’ll likely kill me if I don’t invite at least her.”

“I’ll have John be the second witness and we’ll announce the marriage later.”

“Sounds good,” she said with a glance at the date once they were in the car. She let out a laugh seeing what it was.

“What?” he said, and she turned the calendar around to show him. “Right...would you rather wait until Saturday morning then?”

“No, Friday’s fine, plus it’ll be one way to avoid Halloween invites, won’t it?”

“Make our little one’s Halloween a special event for sure,” he mused.

“I think I’d prefer All-Hallows Eve to the Day of the Dead,” she said and by the time Friday night rolled around, she knew the sooner they made everything official, the easier she’d start to breathe again.

Emily showed up at her place at six, giving her a full once over seeing her outfit. “Okay, want to tell me where we’re going, why you told me to dress nicely—not Halloweenie, and why you’re wearing that?”

Brianna smiled as she glanced down at her outfit. It was a blush dress, strapless with a light sweetheart neckline that pleated down to the waist, surrounded by a studded belt, before flaring over her hips with a just above knee-length bubble skirt. She’d found the dress on clearance a few years ago but always thought it was too bridal. Now, it seemed perfect for the wedding that wasn’t real beyond the legality it would provide both her and Carter.

“You’ll see,” Brianna stated hurrying her down to the waiting car. They pulled into the drive at Carter’s house, and she felt her breath tighten slightly.

“Isn’t this your boss’ place?” Emily asked glancing around the foyer after Carter’s housekeeper let them inside, giving Brianna a full smile.

“Yes, this is Carter’s place, soon to be mine too,” she said ducking into a side room as Emily’s eyes bugged out. She grabbed the bouquet there and handed it over to her friend, taking her own as Emily spluttered questions left and right at her.

“What the heck? You’re marrying Carter? No way...”

“Yes way...we’re pregnant,” she told her friend and gave her a smile as her mouth sucked like a fish at the air.

“Okay now I totally get the quietness,” Emily said coming around as she gave her a hug. “Oh sweetie, I’m so happy for you...”

“Me too,” she replied as Nora came back to them letting her know Carter, John, and Mark, their officiant, were ready whenever they were. She looped her arm through her best friend’s and walked towards the back door sending Nora out to watch. “Come on...walk me down the aisle or the two steps into the garden at least.”

“Always, you know I’ll gladly give you away,” Emily teased putting a grin on her face.

It stayed there despite the traditional kiss she knew was coming as Mark finished the short ceremony. She wasn’t afraid of Carter touching her. She’d kissed plenty of men before, several of them total duds, but with Emily watching, her friend would likely be able to tell they weren’t as proficient at it together.

It was a relief to realize she needn’t worry as Carter lifted a hand to her cheek, shielding them from the largest gaze of their friends and gave her a slow kiss. It was gentle, barely opening her lips with its pressure and she heard Emily’s light squeal of glee as he pulled back dropping a quick kiss onto her forehead.

“Congrats buddy, Brianna,” John said after they signed the license. “If anyone was going to get this guy married I

knew it'd be you."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Carter asked his friend as Mark laughed moving into the open gallery of the house he used for entertaining.

"I didn't even have to ask Carter who the bride was when he called me on Monday," Mark told John making Emily smile further. "Out of every woman that's come and gone through his life the only one I've ever heard him talk differently about was Brianna. I mean this guy forgets our birthdays, but he has this internal reminder when it comes to hers," he added to Emily.

"She's special, always has been," Carter stated as Nora brought out glasses of champagne.

"Mhmm, so why'd it take five years to get here?" Emily asked him.

"Em, hush," Brianna said giving her a long glance.

"Well, here's to you two," John said lifting his glass at them in toast. "May you be blessed with everything you wish, and everything Carter's mother is chomping at the bit for."

"To a productive honeymoon period," Mark added, and Brianna felt her cheeks grow red.

"You boys be nice," Nora stated giving her a smile. "I'm very happy for you Miss Brianna and if you need anything just ask."

Carter shared a look with Brianna and glanced at her glass letting his arm rest around her waist.

"Well, perhaps some sparkling cider rather than the champagne?" she suggested making the woman gasp lightly as John and Mark both choked on their glasses.

"Hold on..." John said around a cough. "You're pregnant?"

"Almost ten weeks," she answered as Carter kissed her temple. "We found out just before the conference but didn't want to get married in New York."

“Well, well, well...congrats buddy,” John said giving Carter a hug before turning to her with one. “You make sure he treats you right, if not call us and we’ll straighten him out.”

“Oh, I think I’ll have that handled long before you all would get there,” Emily stated pointing a finger at Carter. “You hurt her, and you’ll have me to deal with...and don’t even think about trying to kick me out of the delivery room. We haven’t done anything big in our lives without the other around.”

“Oh, I’d say there are a few things that you’ve done without the other there,” Carter joked putting another blush into Brianna’s cheeks. “But whatever Brianna wants is fine with me...”

“Good, keep that thought in mind, especially when you meet her parents,” Emily said on a warning. “They don’t know anything yet, do they?”

“No, though they won’t be too shocked that they weren’t invited. I told Dad at Ashely’s wedding that it would be the last one for his girls he’d attend,” Brianna assured her.

“You didn’t think you’d get married?” Mark asked in surprise.

“No, I knew if I got married I’d elope or do like this. I’ve spent two years of my life having to help plan my sisters’ weddings. I wasn’t going to begin to let them butt their noses into mine,” she answered easily. “My parents live a little over an hour outside of town now that they’re both retired. So, while it’s possible to have invited them then I’d be forced to listen to my mother complain that I didn’t give her enough time to arrange things properly. This way it’s done, and we don’t have to drag it out or listen to their input. The important part’s the marriage not the wedding after all, right Carter?”

“Absolutely honey,” he agreed kiss the top of her head. They lingered over a light dinner, and she was relieved when the group decided to give them the rest of the night for themselves.

“Let me know if you need help packing your apartment,” Emily said giving her a hug as the car waited on her.

“I will, thank you for coming without questions, well without too many at least,” Brianna said hugging her back, “we’re not sure when we’re going to get around to it. I have until the end of November now.”

“Slow and easy, no over doing it,” Emily said, and she nodded waiting in the doorway with Carter until the car was gone.

“Nora went home, said if we needed her to call and she’d be right over but I thought we’d use the weekend to settle in, get used to sharing this space versus a hotel suite,” Carter explained as they moved into the living room.

“Sounds fine to me, I’m exhausted after this little bit, can you imagine what it’d be like to have a huge wedding?” she sighed sitting down next to him as she slipped off her heels.

“I now know why they had couples wait until after marriage to be together, it’s so they could push to get things done and over with for sure,” he agreed running his hand up and down her arm leaning her into him a bit more. “But you look amazing, when did you have time to find a dress with everything else we’ve been up to this week?”

“This old thing?” she said with a grin making him laugh. “No really it is old. It’s been in my closet for the last two years. I saw it, fell in love with it, it was on clearance, and I bought it for the company’s New Year’s Eve party. I took it out the Monday before and changed my mind on it. It suddenly looked too bridal to me, which isn’t too crazy since my mother reminded me that I was the same age as my sisters were when they got married back then. So, it’s been in the closet since then. I figured it’d do well for our non-traditional wedding.”

“It did and if you’d worn that to the party two years ago I might have had to slug some men to keep them away from you,” Carter joked enjoying sitting there with her. Usually, he turned on the news stations, catching up on things or working unless he was out on a date. He’d never had a woman live-in

with him, occasionally they'd be overnight guests, but he typically stayed at their places. He liked his to be private but with Brianna there, it didn't bother him.

It was nearly ten-thirty when he felt her stifle a yawn and squeezed her shoulder getting her attention away from the movie playing softly on the TV. "You're exhausted, come on, let's go to bed."

Brianna held her breath as he pulled her up from the couch turning off the TV. She'd been trying to avoid this as best she could. It was strange to think that in a few minutes they'd be going into the same room and sharing the same bed. They'd agreed for appearances sake to share the master bedroom. They'd each have their own dressing areas and agreed on some preliminary guidelines, but it still put them in a far more intimate situation than she ever imagined sharing with him.

She took her time changing, trying to get comfortable with the new pjs she wore. She hated the things, only used them when she went home for visits. She much preferred to sleep naked, the cool feel of sheets against her skin, but that wasn't going to happen now.

She moved back into the bedroom finding Carter dressed in only a pair of silk sleep-pants and she felt herself flush slightly. The man had the body of a god, and it simply wasn't fair to her right now, not with her heightened emotions and desire flaring high inside her. She'd thought it was a myth that pregnant women found themselves wanting sex more, but it wasn't, especially not when a prime morsel like Carter was in front of her.

"You still like the left side of the bed?" Carter asked surprising her as he turned away from the dresser.

"Yeah but it doesn't matter too much," she said as he gave her a light smile.

"You're the one who's pregnant, I just want you to feel comfortable," he said finding his gaze drawn to the curve of her body under her pjs. "We've shared a bed before...yes it

was under strange circumstances, but this is no different than that.”

“I don’t see a torrential downpour and near hurricane level winds outside right now Carter.”

“No and there are plenty of other available beds but the sooner we get used to this, the easier it’ll be when our parents descend on us, not to mention Nora. The woman likes to coddle so be prepared.”

“I’m sure we’ll manage,” she said slipping into the huge king-sized bed. The sheets were Egyptian cotton, and she knew that in any other circumstance she’d be craving the feel of them against her naked skin. Actually, she was currently but it would be immensely inappropriate in the circumstance, so she tamed down her desire to get rid of her shirt and shut her eyes. She was exhausted but her brain refused to stop turning over the difference in her life in two weeks.

She let out a sigh nearly an hour later as her arm caught in the pj top, moving so she could stop laying on it. She would have to find something that fit a bit better to her body, to heck with keeping herself covered while in Carter’s view. She couldn’t sleep like this. She slid out of the bed and headed over to the dresser where she’d put her things grabbing a tank top and a workout bra top. She turned to go to the bathroom to change and gave a start seeing Carter sit up in the bed.

“Everything okay?” he asked flipping on a light next to the bed.

“I’m just not used to sleeping like this,” she admitted as he came over to her.

“With someone else in the same bed? Come on Brianna, I know you’ve had boyfriends stay over, I ran into one or two leaving your place when I came to pick you up before.”

“Wearing this much,” she stated before moving into the bathroom to stop her blush.

Chapter 3

Carter was waiting in the bed when Brianna moved into the room. He gave her a smile as he slid the covers down and she moved over, laying out knowing he was watching her.

“I’d say we’ve both hit the curve, haven’t we?” he asked turning the light down so it wouldn’t overwhelm her.

“Yeah, so why don’t we just go with honesty?” she suggested turning onto her side to look at him. “Usually at home, I wear nothing for bed...the only time I use pjs are when I’m at my parents’ or on a trip and someone else is sharing the same room.”

“Same here,” he stated enjoying the slight tinge of pink in her cheeks. “Wait...are you saying that while in New York you...”

“The door locked, and I usually leave a robe next to the bed,” she admitted with a slight shrug. “My sisters were surprised to go through my dresser and not find any pjs and nightgowns...but I don’t like feeling restricted while I sleep.”

“Nothing wrong with that,” he stated brushing a piece of hair from her temple. “I generally get a new set of these each year from my mother because when she comes she always insists on doing the laundry and can never find more than one set of them. I usually forego them while on business too.”

“Two peas hmm?” she said with a sigh as he ran his fingers along the side of her hair.

“Three with baby, you should get some rest,” he replied smiling as tension eased from her body and she turned onto her other side.

He continued to run his hand down her hair, then down her arm until he knew she was asleep and turned off the light staring up at the ceiling as his body responded to her nearness. The idea of her sleeping unrestricted shot him through with desire that he shouldn’t be having, not when he’d promised her they’d simply share the bed. She would likely smack him

across the face if she knew how much he wanted to kiss her again, kiss her for real and strip the pieces of clothing from her body, discover how it felt to make love to her while she carried their child.

He finally forced himself asleep, waking only to find himself wrapped around Brianna as she slept on, the sun barely beginning to peek through the windows. He began to ease away from her, but she let out a soft sound of disappointment and he shifted the pillow, moving back up against her backside, his hand resting on the curve of her hip. Her skin peeking out between her shorts and the end of the tank top she wore was too much to resist and he ran his thumb up and down it. She let out a sigh and he slid his hand down to her stomach, holding her back against him while he let himself slip back into sleep with her.

This time when he woke, he knew all hopes of being honorable had flown out the windows. She had turned, her head resting against his chest, her leg over his hip and his body stirred swiftly as his hand pressed against her backside, cupping a firm globe. He tried to force himself to remove his hand but instead his fingers tested the weight and she sighed, running a hand down his chest to rest on his hip, hers lifting against him and he lowered his mouth down to taste her lips. He could burn in hell later, right now he needed this, needed her.

Her lips responded to his, igniting a recklessness inside him that was crazy. He pulled her further against his body, his hands skimming up her sides to feel her skin and she gripped his side lifting herself fully against him.

He let out a low groan and pulled his lips from hers, he wasn't going to do this like this. He wanted her fully conscious, fully agreeable to it, before he went further with her. No matter how much he burned to have her he would wait.

“Brianna, honey,” he said softly, cupping her cheek as her eyes opened.

“Carter? Oh god...” she said lowering her face only to find it buried in his naked chest. She rolled away and covered her eyes with a hand. “I’m sorry Carter.”

“You’re sorry? Brianna, I kissed you,” he said leaning over as he plucked her hand from her eyes. “Why are you sorry for?”

“For invading your space...I think it’d probably be better if we don’t share a bed,” she added glancing away from him as her cheeks went pink.

“Why’s that?” he questioned wanting to know if he’d scared her or what her reaction was regarding.

“Because I’m hormonal and it’s messing with my otherwise staid mind,” she answered confusing him. “We agreed to keep this friendly and right now with the way my hormones are going...it’d probably be easier to maintain that space if we don’t share a bed.”

“Why would your hormones be an issue Brianna?”

“Because right now they’re driving me crazy, making me crazy,” she sighed sitting up against the pillows as her cheeks flared with full color. “The doctor said it was normal, that it’s the body’s response to the increased blood flow, but it’s caused my sex drive to increase, okay? I’ll deal with it...”

“Brianna,” Carter said stalling her words as his body nearly erupted hearing that.

“What?” she said turning her gaze over to him hesitantly.

“We can still share the same bed, be friends, and keep your hormones from driving you crazy,” he stated calmly. “I wouldn’t push you into anything, but I also wouldn’t deny you anything. It may only be because of the hormones but that doesn’t mean it can’t be good. We both agreed to no outside affairs for the sake of our child, but does that mean we should deny ourselves what we both want?”

“You don’t mean that Carter, you’re just trying to ease my...” She stopped when he took her hand, resting it against his fully engorged length.

“Oh, I mean it Brianna. I’ve always found you attractive,” he added letting her move her hand up from his need leaving it resting against his side. “I would never have acted on it because we worked too well together to risk losing you, but this changes things,” he added sliding his hand to rest on her stomach. “We don’t have to live like nuns and priests...not together.”

“And what happens if it fades for both of us, we decide that we don’t want to continue it?” she asked as a fire burnt deep inside her belly for him.

“Then we carry on as friends. Neither of us are sex-starved fiends...we can manage to make this work Brianna, anyway we want,” he stated, and she sighed, lifting her hand to his head to pull his mouth down to hers.

He pressed his body down into hers, letting his tongue mingle against hers as his hands trailed over her. He kissed his way down her jaw, down her neck and towards the top of her tank, skimming it over her head to display her skin beneath. He groaned in blissful agony discovering that she hadn’t put on the sports bra with it and trailed his lips over to capture a hard peak in his mouth. It pulled a gasp from her, and her hips pressed into his, her hands sliding over his shoulders, one up into his hair, her fingers biting into his scalp as he continued to lathe attention on her breasts.

She was beauty in a tiny package, almost too much for him to take it slow but he wanted her to enjoy every bit of this, ensure she wanted more and more, before he let himself find his own bliss. He lifted himself, discarding her shorts with ease and let his hand slide up and down her thigh, her leg lifting to press against him closer. He was quickly losing his mind, his slim control and let his hand slip around, grazing her folds gently. It brought a full cry of pleasure to her lips, and he slid his fingers against her, his mouth finding her breasts again. He sent her over quickly, once then twice before easing his pants from his body, sinking into her moist heat.

“Oh god,” she gasped, her hands holding onto his muscles tightly as her body quivered. His lips took hers in a

long slow kiss as he discovered every hidden depth within her.

Her shuddering breaths took him over the edge with her and he held her against his chest as they both came down. He was going to ensure they didn't lose this, hell it was better than any woman he'd known before, and he certainly wouldn't argue if it meant he could kiss her whenever he wanted. Her lips were soft, full, luscious, and so tempting. He'd make sure she was happy, anyway possible.



Brianna sighed as Carter's hand trailed down her chest, the warm washcloth teasing her hardened nipples, while his free hand teased between her legs. She'd never been overtly sexual, but this felt so good that she couldn't deny it. She didn't want to deny it or him.

"So sensitive," he whispered as her breath stalled when his fingers grazed over her clit. "All this from our baby, hmm?"

"Mostly...fully self-inflicted I suppose," she said leaning back into him further as he lifted her onto his legs, opening hers further for him to touch and tease.

"I've never been happier for your crazy decision and the clinic's mistake. If any woman were to have my child, I'm glad it's you."

"Right now, so am I," she sighed as he made her crash over the edge and kept going.

He heard a light mewling coming from her throat and lifted her higher, guiding his erratically throbbing need into her body and felt her instantly tighten around him. She rocked against his body, and he kissed the pulse point in her neck, her hands reaching backwards to hold onto him. He lifted a single hand, teasing her breasts until she let out another cry, and he turned her around to face him, wrapping her legs around his waist as he stood. He grabbed a towel wrapping it around her

before carrying her into the bedroom, laying her out over the bed.

She reached for him, but he kept his hips from her grasp, lifting her legs as he kissed his way up their lengths, stopping at her hot intimate core to lay the attention on her. She responded so completely, so effortlessly and it drove his need, his desire higher.

She crumbled in his arms, and he slid back into her welcoming sheath, sending them spiraling hotly towards the end. Her fingernails dug into his shoulder as he fused their mouths together, and he lifted her hips, sliding deeper into her, stroking in and out quickly as their tongues met in harmonious desire. Her inner walls clutched at him tightly, forcing him over and he let out a moan that she swallowed, as he collapsed onto her.

He turned slightly, pulling her fully against his chest and soothed his hand up and down her back until she slid into a peaceful sleep. He sighed pressing a kiss against the top of her head well aware it'd been a long day. They'd spent the better part of the morning in bed, getting up for food in the afternoon and went to her apartment, packing some more of her things before coming home for a light dinner.

He'd sent her up here to take a bath, rest after their moving and activities today, and hadn't been able to resist from checking on her. She'd been lying in the tub, letting his eyes roam over her, and gave him a smile telling him there was room for two in there. He'd quickly shed his clothes, making her smile more and him steal her lips in a full kiss telling her she was a temptress.

She hadn't believed him, but he'd shown her over and over, just how much she was when it came to him. His orgasms had been stronger, his recovery faster, and his body harder than anything he'd known before, and it had ignited something inside him he knew only she could now appease. He would ensure that they stayed like this long after the baby was here and if they were lucky, perhaps they could talk about having another baby together.

He'd frozen so many vials in hopes that there would be more than one, he'd grown up that way and he'd missed having someone to share things with, but it would be up to Brianna, and her body. If, like her mother and grandmother, she went into early menopause, then he'd be content with the one child they shared, and he would do his best to tempt her into being wicked with him every night he possibly could.

The ideas let him swiftly follow her to sleep and Sunday morning he woke Brianna with a long, sensuous kiss that kept them in bed long into the afternoon. They spent the rest of it being lazy, him reading through some work contracts while she read a book, a thriller he'd picked up on a layover that had gone long over its allotted time. He'd finished his work and hated sitting idly, making small talk with people he didn't know.

She stretched out on the couch, her head resting against his thigh, and he didn't even notice when he began to run his fingers through her hair until she let out a soft sigh. She turned slightly, letting him have better access to her head and let her hand rest on her stomach, her eyes shut and a smile on her lips.

Her breathing evened out, but he continued to run his hand through her hair, wondering about the feelings running through him. He couldn't place them. They were similar to what he'd always felt when near her and set aside the contracts, unable to concentrate on them while Brianna napped, her sweet face just inches from him.

He turned on the TV, leaving the sounds low, and flipped through the channels, stopping on the movie they were watching the other night, to see how it ended. He couldn't stop his fingers from tracing through her soft, silky locks of hair, and let them linger against her supple skin. She was beautiful, from her full, bowing pink lips to her soulful blue-grey eyes, her pert little nose in between. Everything about her called out to him, always had, even from the moment they'd met, but he'd known how valuable she would be to him professionally and he never mixed business and pleasure.

Pleasure was fleeting, business was finite, but this attraction, this need, had always remained. The unspoken understanding that they possessed had never faltered. This want to be near her, protect her, had come on fast. If he was away from the office for more than a day, he had to call simply to talk to her, hear her voice, question things that didn't need questioned to keep her on the phone longer.

He shook his head with a stupid grin on his face as full understanding finally came to him, explained why he'd never liked seeing her with her boyfriends, and never liked seeing her upset. It explained why he could recall her birthday with ease yet needed prompting from her to remember anyone else's birthdays. She was the most important woman in the world to him, had been even when he was dating and now he finally understood why. He'd fallen for her, likely the moment they met, but until now, he'd been too stupid to realize it.

He was in love with Brianna. The feeling he thought foolish and fleeting, more fleeting than pleasure, had been with him for far longer than he'd ever expected.

It was the only reason why making love to her touched his soul, why her completion meant more to him than his own. It also explained why his friends hadn't been the least bit surprised to discover that his hurried marriage was to her. They likely sensed what he'd refused to acknowledge.

Now he had to make up for lost time, for things they could have shared, the children they could have created in the last four years. He would start to show her how he really felt about her, convince her that she could feel it too if she gave herself the chance. Then he wouldn't worry that after the baby was born, things between them would change, go back to only being friends.

He wouldn't be able to survive losing her now. One child, two, or none, she was what he wanted, and he would do whatever he had to in order to keep her. The first step to accomplish that was to let the world know she was his. He would start with his mother, then go on to let the company know by changing her name. After that was her family,

meeting her parents and then her group of friends, showing them that he loved her so they could convince her of the fact.

He always succeeded in getting what he wanted, even this time it appeared to be working, perhaps by some random accident, or divine intervention, it didn't matter to him which it was, she was his and he'd keep her for life. His ring was on her finger, and he'd ensure it stayed, his child would have his name, and he would have everything he wanted in life.

It might take him until after the baby was here to convince her that he loved her, to get her to love him in return, but he'd be patient. He would figure out the right way to make it happen and show her heaven, give her heaven forever.

He turned off the TV, watching her simply sleep, and smiled. After all it was impossible not to when he had his whole life right in front of him. He didn't need anything else.

Chapter 4

“Carter, your mom’s on line two,” Brianna stated poking her head around the office door, giving him a light smile seeing the head of HR, Audrey, and the head of Financial, Jarred, in his office with him. They must have snuck in while she was out in the bathroom ten minutes ago having felt her stomach roll from her breakfast, their breakfast. She rested her left hand on the doorframe and Audrey’s eyes widened spying her ring.

“Well, don’t tell me some lucky guy finally snagged you,” she said moving over quickly to stare down at the sparkling three-carat round cut diamond with a French halo design on her finger. She noticed the matching band and lifted a brow at her, her eyes seeking answers. “This is stunning Brianna.”

“It is,” she agreed of the ring Carter had chosen for her. The diamond was on a solid platinum band and her wedding band matched, showcasing the amazing clarity and cut of the diamond to perfection.

“Well obviously congratulations are in order, but I don’t recall you taking off any, unless Carter here kept your week away as secret for you to slip off and get married,” Audrey questioned looking from her to him in curiosity.

“Your mom’s on line two still Carter,” Brianna stated not sure if they should announce everything quite yet.

“She’ll be fine with waiting a few more seconds Brianna, especially when she hears our news,” Carter replied heading around the desk towards her.

“Wait...did you just say *our* news?” Jarred questioned watching them with wide-eyed wonder. “No way...you seriously finally wised up and convinced her to marry you and didn’t bother inviting the rest of your executive board?”

“It was very private, our parents don’t even know yet,” Carter said sliding his arm around her waist, dropping a kiss onto her temple.

“Oh my god,” Audrey gasped giving them a wide smile. “I always knew you had a thing for her. So, how’d you convince her to look at you as anything other than our boss?”

“I told her I was in love with her and that it wasn’t going to go away,” he stated with such ease that it rooted her to her spot. “She tried to laugh it off but then I kissed her, and she finally believed me.”

“Really? Just like that?” Jarred asked in surprise. “Come on Carter, we all know there’s more to it than that and when exactly did this come about?”

“Four almost five months ago,” he said sticking with their timeline of her last breakup. He hadn’t dated anyone the last six months as he tried to focus on the new product line they’d debuted in New York. “Brianna was in a mood over her latest no-good paramour, and I was tired of listening her to soft sighs of annoyance each time he’d text her another apology. I told her the guy wasn’t good enough for her that none of the guys she’d dated would be good enough for her, not in my estimation because they didn’t know her.”

“Then shocked me with his declaration but when he kissed me...everything that’d never been there before was suddenly there,” Brianna added relaxing into his hold as her body woke swiftly.

“So then when exactly did you get married and why didn’t you tell anyone here about it?” Audrey asked unable to stop smiling at them.

“I proposed in New York, and we were married Friday night at my house, just my friend John, Brianna’s friend Emily and our housekeeper Nora there,” Carter answered. “We’re waiting for the certified copy of the marriage license to get Brianna’s name changed officially but there’ll be a mass email informing every one of the change by the end of the week.”

“Well congratulations, I’m sure you’re anxious to tell your mother,” Audrey stated as she and Jarred moved to the door.

“We are but we actually need to talk to you for another minute,” Carter told her waiting until Jarred was gone before letting Brianna tell her.

“Boss man here is insisting I follow normal procedures when it comes to things, so no one calls favoritism, but we also want to keep things quiet for a few more weeks so...I need to change my recent sick leave over to FMLA.”

“What for...oh?!” Audrey said, as she smiled even brighter at them before her eyes widened in understanding. “You’re pregnant?”

“Yes, ten weeks as of today,” she admitted while Carter rubbed her stomach lovingly.

“Which also means we need to schedule her maternity leave and coverage for her after the baby gets here,” Carter added. “I’ll likely be out of the office the first two weeks at least, but since the baby’s due at the end of May I’ll be reachable at home.”

“I’ll get everything worked up for you, do you have an estimate of how long you want to take off after the baby gets here?” Audrey asked her.

“Not yet, I have plenty of sick leave to cover it since someone thankfully lets us accrue it,” she said giving Carter a teasing smile.

“Probably at least through mid-August if not all of it,” Carter stated returning her smile. “I know the instant our little addition arrives she’ll be anxious to spend every moment possible with him or her. Right now, she claims she’s coming back but I’ll hazard a guess after a week back she’ll be saying bye-bye to the office and hello to munchkin life.”

“See why I’ve avoided being with him? I mean really, he thinks he knows me or something,” she mused earning a kiss from Carter and a happy sigh from Audrey.

“I’ll make sure we get someone who can backup Brianna in case she needs to be out, cover her maternity leave, and potentially anything else necessary. Actually, Marsha downstairs in HR would be a great person to back her up as it

is. She's discreet and knows when to keep her mouth shut," Audrey suggested making Brianna shoot Carter a grin.

"Plus, she's forty-five and happily married, she'll keep an eye on you for me," she said with a wink.

"If you're comfortable with her shadowing you that's fine with me, but you could put a Victoria's Secret supermodel at your desk and the only thing I'd care about would be if they can type and answer a phone," Carter said against her ear, loud enough for Audrey to hear and send her out of the room with a full laugh.

"Mmm..." Brianna sighed as he kissed her earlobe. "Your mom's still on the phone Carter."

"I know, so come on, let's tell her," he stated leading her over to the desk to pick up the line.

"Well, it's about time Carter, what were you doing, kissing that pretty assistant of yours?" Megan Russells questioned her son and Brianna had to cover her mouth to keep from laughing aloud.

"Actually, she's that pretty wife of mine now," Carter said sending her the wedding photo using his cell phone.

"What?!" Megan shouted through the phone. "Hold on... Carter Dominic Russells. You did not get married without telling me! I should beat your butt, young man..."

This time Brianna couldn't hold in her laugh and let it out as Carter slid his arm around her and held her tightly against him as they sat in his chair.

"Brianna? You're there, aren't you?"

"Yes Ms. Russells, I'm here," she admitted covering her stomach with a glance at Carter as to whether or not he wanted to tell her.

"Oh, enough of that Ms. Russells crap Brianna, its Mom or Momma now," she said, and Brianna could hear the happy smile in her voice.

"Well, how about Grandma?" Carter suggested earning them another loud gasp.

“*What?!*”

“Brianna’s pregnant, ten weeks so this coming May...”

“You evil boy...you tell me this while I’m on vacation, a vacation you arranged for me none the less. I am coming to see you the moment I get back and you’d better be prepared for me to spoil your girl. Brianna, you have just made me the happiest mother in the world, twice in a matter of minutes. There’s no one else I’d want for my son than you.”

“Thank you Ms...Mom,” she corrected as Carter slid his hand up and down her arm. “Carter’s made me the happiest woman twice now, so I suppose it works out, doesn’t it?”

“Absolutely, Carter you take care of my girl until I can get there and take over,” Megan stated making him laugh.

“You can come visit and help some, but the only person taking care of *my* girl is me, Mom. She’s my angel and after everything it’s taken to get her I’m not about to let someone else butt in between us, not even you.”

“Good boy, Brianna, if you need anything call me,” Megan said, and she agreed before they hung up letting her relax into Carter’s hold.

“Now if only my parents would be that easy to please,” she sighed resting her forehead against his jaw not caring that they were supposed to be working.

“I’m sure it’ll be alright, I’ll have the techs keep your old email open, letting it forward to your new account. If they send you anything, then they’ll get the instant reply that it’s changed, and they’ll know right?”

“They never send anything to my work email, only my home account and trust me, we do not want to tell them this over the phone. It’ll have to be in person and I’m begging you, please don’t make me go see them before Thanksgiving,” she said turning her face to his with a new smile. “I promise to make it worth your while.”

“How’s that Mrs. Russells?” he asked against her lips.

“Well, this assistant of yours will be quite happy to take your *dictation* in and out of the office,” she whispered against his ear making him let out a full groan as his hands tightened on her.

“Mmm honey, I never imagined such an easy phrase could be so dirty,” he said capturing her lips in a kiss that soon left her breathless and wanting, needing lunchtime to be there although the clock only read eleven-forty. He lifted her into his arms, moving over to lock the door and laid her out on the couch kissing his way down her throat.

“Is that a yes on your need for dictation?” she teased as he slid her blouse from her shoulders.

“Yes and yes and yes and yes,” he agreed keeping her with him until one o’clock rolled around and he heard the phone ringing in the outer office.

“No supermodels allowed at my desk,” she said as he gave her a lingering kiss at the door.

“Honey I’ll never be able to say the word dictation without thinking about you. You’ve completely ruined me for anyone else now,” he promised before patting her bottom with a grin. “Get to work; I’m not paying you to sleep with me.”

“It’s just a bonus,” she said giving him a wink before returning to her desk a smile on her lips. It remained that week and they were able to pick up a certified copy of their license, getting her new id with Russells and stopped in for a new social security card with it also.

Friday morning Carter sent out a company-wide email, which included a reference to her new email account, as well as the picture from their wedding. The girls from the secretarial pool insisted on taking her out for lunch, a fact that caused Carter to give her a playful pout, which she quickly soothed with a kiss that had the girls tittering.

Her email account flooded with ‘congratulation’, ‘lucky girl’, and ‘I knew it’ emails and she smiled flipping through them as the afternoon wore on around them. She felt her eyes

grow heavy around four-thirty and got up moving into Carter's office for a wake-up jolt.

"Someone's sleepy," he stated as he hung up his phone, moving around the desk to reach her. "I've certainly kept you up late the last few nights, haven't I?"

"I wasn't complaining, was I?" she teased earning a kiss.

"No, you weren't, why don't we cut out early? No one will dare say a word about it."

"Marsha's coming up to sit with me, walk through the week-end routine I do," she said, and he nodded kissing her softly as the door opened and Marsha came into the outer office. "Quick supper and a nap sounds great once we get home."

"I'll have Nora make something light for us, dinner in bed," he suggested, and she nodded before moving out to meet Marsha.

"I didn't mean to interrupt anything," the woman who was nicely rounded around the middle said smiling at her.

"You didn't," she assured her covering a yawn as she walked her through her normal fifteen-minute routine. She yawned mid-sentence pulling a smile from Marsha as she glanced at the phones.

"You should tell that husband of yours you need some sleep," she said picking up the line.

Brianna listened halfway to the conversation, nodding in approval when she routed it to Financial rather than bother Carter with it. He moved out towards them and dropped a kiss onto the top of her head making her eyes close.

"Take her home Mr. Russells; I dare say she needs some sleep," Marsha mused making him laugh.

"That she does," he agreed pulling her up from the chair. "You can handle the phones for the rest of the day?"

"I've got it covered," she agreed, and Brianna went over to the cabinet to pull out her bag.

Her head spun as she straightened and put out her hand to catch herself, shutting her fingers in the door as Carter hurried over to her. He sat her down in the extra chair and checked on her fingers before cupping her cheek in worry.

“Brianna, honey what’s wrong?” he asked noting her paleness as he knelt down in front of her.

“I’m fine...I think I just stood up too fast,” she said leaning into his touch.

“You’re sure?” he questioned rubbing his finger gently over hers.

“I’m fine, it’s not the first time I’ve felt dizzy,” she said quietly as he kissed her hand softly. “It’s normal and I’m fine...”

“I think you should call the doctor and make sure everything’s okay,” he argued making her grin slightly at his worry. She reached into her bag taking out the information Janelle had given her at her last appointment and showed it to him, the ‘when to call, when to make an appointment, and when to go to the ER’ pamphlet that’d calmed her nerves greatly the last few weeks.

“See, I’m fine,” she said before looking at Marsha who seemed a bit concerned. “You have three kids, right? Can you please tell this overcautious, crazy man that feeling a little dizzy is no need to instantly flip out over when you’re in the first trimester?”

“You’re pregnant?” Marsha asked and she nodded making the woman smile giving Carter a knowing glance. “It’s true...I probably fainted on my husband five times during each pregnancy. Something about the increase of blood circulation makes it more possible...”

“Alright I’ll back off for now but if it continues then I’m calling, I need you healthy and happy, especially when we go home for Thanksgiving to tell your family the news,” he said kissing her temple as he helped her up from the chair.

“Goodnight Mr. Russells, Brianna, have a good weekend,” Marsha called after them.

“Thank you Marsha, and for now can you keep our news to yourself?” Brianna asked and the woman nodded letting her go home with Carter with ease.

He brought up a tray of fresh fruit, a vegetable omelet that made her mouth water, and an ice pack to put on her hand where a light bruise was forming. When she finished, he set it aside, pulling back the covers for her, and she slipped her robe off seeing the way his eyes took in her curves, but he made no move to entice her putting a light smile on her lips as he tucked her into the covers.

“Sleep, I’ll be right here honey,” he said softly brushing her hair until she slid into a nap that lasted until the early hours of the morning.

When she slid her hands down his body after returning to the bed, he woke, stealing her lips and enflaming her until she was back asleep, holding her against him and making her wish things between them were real. She wanted it to be real, but she’d have to deal with what they had. They were sharing this part of themselves and a baby, and she’d have to be happy with what she could get.

Chapter 5

“Ready for this?” Brianna asked lifting a brow at Carter as they pulled into her parents’ driveway. “We could always hurry back to the city, say something came up and we couldn’t make it...”

“No, we’re going to go inside, tell your parents about us and the baby, and take it from there,” he said, parking the car where she indicated before moving around to open her door for her. He gave her a light kiss as she grabbed the pie that had tantalized him all evening, but not nearly as much as she had tantalized him.

They were closing in on their one-month anniversary but first they had to make it through this weekend and her parents. This would be the biggest test, not to mention her sisters who were also going to be here today, or from the looks of the other cars, already were there.

Brianna moved around to the side door, the kitchen door he discovered as she opened it and moved inside with a smile. He heard her name exclaimed by a few female voices and stepped in behind her to see what her sisters were like.

“Brianna, you didn’t tell us you were bringing a guest,” the oldest in the room said as footsteps headed down the hallway towards them.

“Hi Mom,” Brianna stated kissing her cheek as she set the pie onto the counter waiting for her grandmother, father, and brothers-in-law to come into the room before doing the introductions as they took off their coats.

“There’s my sugar plum,” her father said moving over to hug her tightly before stopping, staring at Carter in question, taking in his slacks and sweater compared to her brother-in-law’s jeans and tees. “Who’s the suit?”

“Dad be nice,” she said giving Carter a grin before kissing her grandmother’s cheek who studied her intently lifting a brow at her as she smiled.

“You’re finally making me a great-grandmother aren’t you, angel?” she whispered making Brianna’s jaw drop slightly.

“How did you know?” she replied just as softly.

“It’s a gift and you’re positively glowing,” Grandma Helen stated patting her left hand where the ring sat. “He’s done you good.”

“He has,” she assured her grandmother before moving back to Carter’s side with a smile at him. “Everyone this is Carter Russells...yes he’s my boss...”

“Only between eight and five, the rest of the time that’s you, honey,” Carter teased, as he slipped his arm around her waist.

“Now before any of you say anything...I’ve got something for Mom and Dad,” she said taking the wrapped photo from her bag and handed it over to them. She watched as they unwrapped it and her mom’s eyes grew wide with shock as her dad’s shoulders tensed.

“Surprise...” she stated sliding her left hand up to rest on Carter’s chest. He pressed a kiss to her temple as his hand came up to cup hers and she saw the looks her sisters shared.

“You eloped?!” her mother cried, and she nodded.

“You little brat, we wanted to tell you ‘we’re not wearing that’ a billion times like you did to us,” Grace said coming over to see the ring and hug her. “That’s a rock, Sissa.”

“It is,” Ashely agreed, and she introduced them and their husbands to Carter before turning to introduce her grandmother who gave Carter a hug, adding a squeeze to his black slacks covered bum that made her laugh.

“He works out,” Grandma Helen teased with a pointed look at Tyler who was only two years older than he was.

“I try,” Carter said as her parents came over to them. “Mr. Nichols...”

“If my little girl married you it means you love her, so you’d better not do anything to hurt her, you hear me?”

Alexander stated and he nodded.

“Will never happen sir, she’s my world,” Carter assured him, and he stepped aside letting her mother give her a hug.

“You know how much I wanted to plan your wedding. I’ve been dreaming about this for years Brianna...what am I supposed to look forward to now?” Veronica questioned giving her a sad look that put a bright smile on her face.

“The end of May and your grandbaby?” she offered, and her mom’s eyes widened, a hand flying up to her chest as she sank down on a stool.

“A grand...grand...baby...” she stuttered, and Brianna handed over the copy of the ultrasound photo from her first appointment, just before the eight-week mark. “Oh, my girl... at least one of you is finally giving me a baby.”

“Alright, how far along are you and when exactly did you marry my granddaughter, young ‘un?” Grandma Helen questioned making her laugh.

“We’re at...thirteen and a half weeks,” she said easily knowing they wouldn’t care they married for the baby, they’d just be happy she was married.

“And we’ve been married for almost four weeks now,” Carter added kissing her temple again. “We found out about the baby about six weeks ago but had a conference in New York and wanted to wait until we got home to get married. We might have rushed it a bit because of the baby but I fell for Brianna the moment we met, just didn’t realize it until recently.”

“My baby’s having a baby?” her dad questioned, and she nodded, finding herself pulled out of Carter’s hold and hugged tightly. “It’ll be a little girl just like you...”

“I’m hoping for a boy,” she countered giving Carter a wink.

“No, a little girl just like you sugar plum, that’s all we need,” her dad said but she knew if it were a boy that he’d become ecstatic and show how happy he was that it was a boy.

“We’ll see,” she mused breathing a bit easier once they let them take a seat. Her family started grilling Carter, he answered things honestly, telling them about their work together, and for the first time, her sisters didn’t seem to sneer at the name executive assistant.

“I have to say I’m surprised you’re having a baby,” Grace said giving her a long look after her father took Carter out for a little man-to-man talk.

“Why do you say that?” she asked, pausing her movements as she peeled the potatoes.

“Come on Brianna, you’ve never been the maternal type, always playing sports, going fishing with Dad,” Grace stated giving her that look that said they’d fully dismissed her again. “You never would dress up or babysit when someone asked.”

“So, because of that, stuff that was when I was a teenager, you find it so strange that I would be happy, ecstatic, to be having a baby with the man I love?” Brianna retorted letting her irritation wash through her. “Everything you do as a teen doesn’t automatically dictate what happens in your future.”

“Well at least we now know why you stuck with that ridiculous job for so long,” Ashley stated, and her anger piqued hotly thanks to her added hormones.

“*Excuse me?*”

“Oh, come on...who wants to be stuck as an ‘executive assistant’ all their life? It’s obvious that you only stayed because you were in love with Carter, which I can understand but seriously it should not have taken you five years to land him...”

Brianna tossed the half-peeled potato down into the bowl and pushed back her chair standing as she glared at her sisters. “For your information, I haven’t been trying to ‘land’ Carter for years. I didn’t even know I liked him let alone loved him until *he* kissed *me*. As for my choice of career, go to hell...I like, no, love my job. I’m great at what I do and when Carter’s out of the office, I’m the one in charge. I dare you to handle my workload for *one* day, instantly route people to the

right place in a company of over eight hundred employees, of which I know each and every one. It may not require an MBA or law degree but it sure as hell isn't a job just anyone can do. Why don't you stop being such snobs and realize that your comments, whether about my job and especially about the happiest events in my life, are hurtful, and I'm sick of it!"

"Someone's being a bitch, sure you're not PMSing?" Ashley snorted infuriating her fully.

"My god, can you for one damn day, realize that there are people who think differently than you? Are you that miserable that you honestly have to rain on my happiness? You have to use my choice of how to get married to try to lord yourself over me again. You have the *nerve* to say you're surprised that I'm having a baby and happy about it. News flash, I'm not you. I don't care if you never wanted kids because I do and always have. I will gladly have this one and another if we're blessed with it. You're not damn queens so stop acting like I should follow your every choice!"

Brianna swung around quickly, catching sight of Carter's face as a wave of dizziness overtook her. She stumbled then was in Carter's arms as he lifted her tightly against his chest carrying her into the living room worry flooding his face. He laid her out on the couch and caressed her cheek as her eyes cleared.

"Drama queen much?" Ashley said and Carter swung around shooting her a black stare of death. "What? She got herself worked up over nothing."

"It's not nothing," Carter stated harshly to Ashley keeping Brianna lying down as she attempted to sit up. "Don't Brianna, take it slower honey," he added softly to her, his voice full of concerned warmth that made her heart flutter. "You can't scare me like that angel."

"I'm fine," she said with a soft sigh as he pressed a kiss to her forehead.

"I plan to keep it that way," he promised as color came back to her cheeks.

“I think you girls should go to the kitchen,” her father stated looking between Grace and Ashley with a warning in his eyes. “Now,” he added when they refused to move from their spots frowning at Brianna.

“Naturally, let the baby have all the attention, it’s always been all about Brianna,” Ashley sneered taking a long drink from her wineglass and Carter’s back tensed.

“I think you’ve had enough to drink,” Carter said shooting her a look that Brianna clearly knew meant ‘say another word and you’re dead’. “Say anything like that to or about my wife again and I guarantee you’ll regret it, no matter if you’re her sister or not. No one hurts or upsets my Brianna. Is that clear?”

“You can’t threaten me, Mr. ‘Oh So Rich’ Russells. I’m an attorney. I’ll take you and your company down if you so much as try...”

“Ashley, I think we should take a walk,” Jacob suggested turning her out of the room quickly at the black anger that instantly appeared on Carter’s face. He didn’t give her a choice as he walked her out of the room and out of the house as Brianna slid a hand onto Carter’s cheek, calming him down as best she could.

“Forget it...she’s drunk,” Brianna said softly to him sitting up to drop a sweet kiss onto his lips. “She’s always like this at holidays anymore.”

“Brianna, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean anything hurtful by my comment,” Grace said coming over to them. “If you’re happy about it then I’m happy for you. Ignore Ashley, she’s miserable all the time and wants to take it out on anyone who’s happy.”

“Are you okay sweetheart?” her mom added coming over to them.

“I’m fine,” she assured her as well as Carter who was still tense. “I shouldn’t let her get to me...”

“I’ll talk to your sister,” Alexander said, and she gave her father a smile leaning into Carter’s side when he slipped up

onto the couch next to her.

“Stop fussing over her,” Grandma Helen said moving through the group with a smile at her. “She’s strong and healthy, that little baby’s not going anywhere for a long time.”

“She’s right,” Brianna said giving Carter and her mother smiles.

“Says the woman who just practically fainted for the second time in three weeks...”

“Just means she’s got a healthy pregnancy going,” Grandma Helen said patting his shoulder. “I passed out all four times I was pregnant, and those babies never had a health issue amongst them. You’ll see I’m right. Now you all go finish getting dinner ready,” she added ushering the others from the room. “And you young ‘un...you enjoy the perks of being full-blooded. Make sure that man of yours does you right.”

The look her grandmother gave her put a blush into her cheeks. “Grandma!”

“Don’t give me that look Brianna, I was young once myself and why do you think your mother’s here? It wasn’t because I enjoyed the morning sickness and I dare say you already know precisely what I’m talking about my girl.”

“Oh, I dare say she does too,” Carter agreed kissing her cheek before Grandma Helen left to give them some space. “Your grandmother is quite cheeky, isn’t she? I think you got your attitude from her.”

“Amongst other things?” she teased him, sliding over his lap letting her hands slip up into his hair as she kissed him.

“Mmm, damn honey,” he groaned ten minutes later pulling her tightly against him as blood rushed to his groin. “You make me forget where we are Brianna.”

“Me too,” she sighed turning to sit across his lap, leaning back against the arm of the couch to stare up at him. She slid her hand into his running her fingertips over the palm of his hand simply to feel him, feel connected to him.

“You have no idea what you do to me do you, angel?” he asked her quietly as he did his best to control the need she aroused with her simple touch.

“Maybe a little,” she said smiling up at him, enjoying the way his hand tightened as she teased it with her fingers.

“If we weren’t at your parents’ house I would leave to take you home, spend all weekend in bed with you and then if we had any strength at all, get up Monday morning and start it all over again,” he whispered against her ear as he leaned over her, putting a full smile on her lips he had to taste.

“Is that right? Well did I mention my bedroom’s the furthest from anyone else’s and it has really, *really* thick walls?” she whispered back, and his hands tightened on her waist slightly.

“You think you can be that quiet?” he teased skimming his hand along her breast hidden from view in case anyone came back into the room.

“Mhmm...can you?” she questioned letting him claim her lips fully in answer.



“Don’t you dare mess with them,” Grandma Helen said pointing her finger at Ashley as she began to walk into the living room. “You are not going to upset your sister again. I dare say that man will eat you alive if you try it.”

“She’s not worth it,” Ashley said letting out a huff of breath, Jacob leading her to the kitchen as she caught sight of them wrapped around each other on the couch. “Really, you’re just going to let that happen on the couch?” she questioned the others when they walked into the room.

“Let what happen?” Grace asked.

“She’s just miffed because Brianna’s boy is showing her his affection,” Grandma Helen stated calming the others down as worry mounted. “You leave your sister alone.”

“As I said, she’s not worth it,” Ashley repeated, and Alexander gave her a long disappointed fatherly look.

“That right there is what the problem is Ashley Renee. I don’t know why you’re causing grief with your sister, but you need to stop now. She is your sister, our daughter, and she is pregnant. She does not need you causing issues adding stress onto her.”

“Naturally let’s baby the baby...it’s always about Brianna who cares about the middle child, right?” Ashley returned.

“Oh, don’t even start that crap,” Grace said narrowing her gaze on her. “You’ve always been jealous of Brianna, from the moment she was born you’ve put her down, usually in order to get attention. You know, maybe if you didn’t follow someone else’s lead you might accidentally be happy. It seems to have worked for Brianna.”

“Whatever,” Ashley said grabbing a new glass of wine ignoring the look from her husband that said she’d had enough. She could never have enough when dealing with her baby sister who could do no wrong in their parents’ eyes.

Chapter 6

“Brianna!” she heard someone exclaim excitedly as she handed a few items over to the lead secretary for their marketing department. She turned her face, spying Megan heading towards her quickly. She spotted Carter not far behind her and moved over to meet them, letting the woman hug her tightly.

“Let her breathe, Mom,” Carter mused slipping around to her side, stealing her lips in a kiss once she’d released her. “Hi angel, I’ve missed you today,” he added against her temple as his hand slid up into her hair as he breathed her in, unable to stop himself despite the number of people milling about the lobby thanks to it being lunchtime.

“Whose fault is that for scheduling meetings all morning out of the office?” she teased him knowing there was another on his calendar for this afternoon she’d put there to ensure he’d be at the appointment with her although he didn’t know that.

“Mine and it looks like I only have about an hour before I have another,” he stated leading his two favorite women upstairs to the office before his mother spilled the news of their impending parenthood to the company. Brianna’s stomach was slowly growing, and he was certain that in a couple more weeks, everyone would know with just a glance at her, but he didn’t want that coming out from his mother.

“Really?” Megan said her face falling slightly. “I wanted to take you two to lunch and then shopping to help Brianna with the baby’s room. I couldn’t stop from buying some little things on the rest of the cruise,” she added as she held up a bag to show them.

“That sounds far more enjoyable than the meeting for this afternoon with the Thompsons,” Carter said as the door opened and Marsha came into the office.

“Perfect timing,” Brianna said giving her a smile. “We’re going to lunch and then we’ll be out for the rest of the

afternoon. If you need anything just give me a call or text me,” she told the woman surprising Carter.

“Anything fun planned?” Marsha asked as she logged onto the computer and checked out Carter’s calendar along with the other main executives to know who would and wouldn’t be available for the afternoon.

“Nothing with the Thompsons could ever be considered fun,” Carter said, and Brianna laughed lightly. “You’re the one that scheduled it so don’t give me that laugh,” he said giving her a teasing glare.

“Trust me Carter, this appointment with Thompson you’re going to love,” she said taking out her reminder card with the doctor’s name on it. “See,” she said holding it up in front of his face with a grin.

“Dr. Thompson,” Megan said seeing it, “ultrasound?”

“What? When did...is everything alright angel?” Carter said as worry filled his gaze.

“It’s perfect, I figured you wouldn’t mind paying for an extra ultrasound to see our little love yourself since you weren’t able to make the first appointment,” she said slipping her arms over his neck. “Especially considering we should be able to find out what it is if we want.”

“I’ll gladly pay for a million of them if it ensures that you’re safe, healthy and so is our baby,” he said before stealing her lips in a long, slow kiss that had his mother sighing with happiness.

“Enjoy your afternoon, Brianna, Mr. Russells,” Marsha said as they left, and Brianna knew she would no matter what the news of their baby’s gender because Carter would love him or her.

They did a quick lunch and she smiled when Megan suggested they invite her parents, sisters, and grandmother up for a gender reveal that weekend. They hadn’t told all of their friends the news yet and it would make a perfect way to let all of them know at once, letting her agree and Carter gave them a nod not about to argue over it.

She called her mother on the way to the doctor's office, and she promised that she, her dad, and grandmother would all be there, and they'd pass along the invitation to her sisters. After the mess of Thanksgiving, she wasn't sure if Ashley would show but hoped that Grace would, they'd managed to find a little more in common than she'd thought they had in recent weeks.

"Here's your baby," Dr. Thompson said turning the screen towards them letting them get a glimpse of the baby's face. She pointed out the fingers, arms, legs, and toes as Carter's eyes took it all in as he held her hand, pressing a kiss to it making her fall further in love with him than she already was. She didn't know when it happened, how it happened, but it had and she wasn't about to deny it to herself, to him yes, but not to herself.

"That's our baby," Carter said in awe turning to meet her gaze. "It's amazing, Brianna."

"I never get tired of these appointments," Dr. Thompson said agreeing with them. "Now, I know Brianna scheduled this to let you see the baby, hear the heartbeat in person, and see about finding out the gender, so...are you ready to know?"

"You can tell?" Carter asked and she nodded.

"Clear as day," she stated looking between them.

"I think we should wait until the party as well," Brianna said finding Carter's gaze again. "We can do cake or balloons or something like that at the party because if I know there's no way I'm going to stop from letting it slip before then."

"I probably wouldn't be able to keep it to myself either," Carter agreed, and Dr. Thompson nodded writing it down on a paper after turning away from them so they wouldn't be able to tell how many letters it was.

They let Megan drag them to a baby store and spent the next few hours looking around it, smiling fully when she spotted an ex-classmate there with two other little ones and her

stomach three times that of hers. Carter kissed her temple as Danielle paused beside them, her jaw open a bit in surprise.

“Oh, my goodness, don’t tell me you’re pregnant,” Danielle stated after greeting them.

“Sixteen weeks,” she said with a grin.

“Oh wow, you’re so tiny,” Danielle said, and she felt Carter tense beside her.

“Not that tiny, we just had an ultrasound and our doctor said everything looked great,” she said as much to Carter as to her.

“So, did you find out what you’re having? I didn’t with this one,” Danielle said resting a hand on her daughter’s head. “Worst mistake ever, she had no hair, we’d bought a generic car seat and until she was two, unless she was in pink, purple or something really girly, everyone kept asking if she was a boy.”

“Our doctor could tell, and we’ve decided to have a little party this weekend to find out all at once. We haven’t told most of our friends yet, so we’re thinking of it being a combined, marriage, baby, gender event,” she said making Danielle laugh.

“Smart but watch out, once your stomach gets big enough people can tell you’re pregnant, even strangers will walk over and try to touch it. I don’t get it at all,” Danielle said making her laugh. “This is our third and last...I made my husband get a vasectomy when I was about ten weeks, figured if I was going through hell he might as well be too.”

“I can relate, I was never happier when the morning sickness stopped,” Brianna mused as Carter let his hand caress her hip gently.

“Well hopefully the nearly fainting will stop as well,” he said making Danielle smile at the concern in his gaze.

“I see you found a really good one, congratulations Brianna, I should go before these two get too cranky for public,” Danielle said giving her a hug before passing along her phone number. “Let me know how you’re doing, I’m at

home with these two all the time and always looking for someone to talk adult things with.”

“I have a feeling that will be you soon, there’s no way you’re going to want to miss out on every little moment possible by coming back to work,” Carter said, and she smiled, not positive about it either if she was honest—not when it wasn’t going to be a necessity to take care of her baby.

“For now, I still have to make sure you’re taken care of,” she teased him. “Once the baby’s here, I suppose we’ll see how it goes.”

“Whatever you say, baby,” he agreed letting her think about it as the week went past them, not any closer to an answer than she was beforehand as they drew up to the party.

They found the restaurant half-full with friends already and she smiled at the surprise on faces as Carter walked her into the space, his arm around her waist. They mingled with the guests already there as the rest of their list came in and stopped by to say hello, asking the question everyone was thinking—if they were together.

Carter got everyone’s attention and she happily rested against his side as they stepped up behind the box that held the surprise for them. “We’d like to thank you all for coming and to answer the biggest question, yes, Brianna and I are together. But that’s not all, we are also married, and... expecting...”

The group there let out audible gasps of surprise and she couldn’t stop the smile from settling onto her lips.

“We are at sixteen nearly seventeen weeks and in here,” she said resting her hand on the box, “is another surprise that I can’t begin to wait to unveil.”

“So, I think we’ll start with that and then enjoy the rest of the afternoon with all of our friends,” Carter stated, and she held her breath slightly as they tugged the bow holding the top of the box together.

“Oh my god,” Brianna laughed as the box fell down and blue balloons flew towards the ceiling.

“Happy?” Carter asked sliding his hand behind her head seeing the joy in her eyes clearly.

“Never more so,” she assured him before his lips stole hers and she leaned into him as he kissed her thoroughly.

“A little boy to love, oh it’s perfect,” Megan gushed hugging them tightly once he’d let her lips go, her smile filling her heart full.

“I guess I can’t complain too much here,” her dad said after her parents hugged her. “Looks like I’ve got some work to do though have to make sure that little boy can fish as well as his mommy.”

“I love you, Dad,” she said happily seeing the excitement in his eyes despite his words from Thanksgiving.

“You too, honey,” he stated and Monday at work, they sent out the announcement to the staff about their coming blessing as well as their Christmas bonus of offices being closed from Christmas until New Year’s this time.

Brianna knew Carter was doing it mainly, so she’d take it easy, especially since she’d have to put up with Ashley at Christmas, but she honestly didn’t mind. The idea of having some free time to spend with just him felt perfect.

Somehow, Christmas went better than expected. It might perhaps be because her parents invited Megan to join them at it as well since she’d be alone otherwise. Ashley didn’t say a word to her, simply sat sipping on her wine throughout the day until they packed up to leave.

Brianna slid into the bedroom late that night from a trip to the bathroom, her heart racing a bit faster seeing Carter’s chest bare above the covers, the sheet resting low enough on his hips that it would only take a tiny little tug to bare his incredible dick to her gaze. He was semi-hard, and it made her instantly wet.

She couldn’t believe she’d never realized she was in love with him until they were married, his arms holding her sweet and loving, while loving her body to a point of madness. She’d pretended to not notice how handsome he was, how

annoyed she got when other women were hitting on him when they were out together. Mostly though she'd forced herself to not think of him as anything but her boss—ignoring the wild flares of attraction she felt towards him until she'd been completely unable to deny it.

Her hand slid onto her belly, feeling the flutters again. She'd worried a bit when she felt them earlier today, but her grandmother seemed to instantly know what was going through her mind and asked if she'd felt the baby moving yet. It hadn't taken long for her to put it together and now, she couldn't wait for Carter to be able to feel it as well.

Carter turned onto his side, the sheet falling away, letting her eyes roam over his gorgeous body as his hand slipped over her spot. She was half-way across the room by the time his eyes opened, his brow scrunched a bit, putting a smile on her lips.

“Are you okay, baby?” he asked, his eyes stopping on her hand on her stomach, and she closed the space between them, giving him a kiss in answer as she slid back into bed with him. “Brianna...”

“We're fine,” she promised, smiling further as his expression eased. “I just had to use the bathroom and then was enjoying ogling you until our baby boy decided to remind me he was here.”

“How did he do that?” Carter asked, a smile spreading across his face as he cupped her face gently making her fall further for him.

“Waking up and moving,” she told him, letting his hand rest on her belly even though she knew he wouldn't be able to feel it. “He gave me one of the best Christmas gifts possible letting me feel it for the first time today.”

“You can feel him move?” Carter's voice was filled with awe, and she nodded, running her hands through his hair when his lips pressed kisses to her growing bump. The sheen of tears in his gaze as he looked up at her, hit her hard, and she couldn't stop staring at him. “You and this baby are the greatest gifts to me, Brianna. I...I know this wasn't what we

intended but...I can't imagine being without either of you now. You are my world...I..."

Brianna leaned down, sliding her hand against his cheek, kissing him again. This time wasn't entirely lust filled—it definitely showed him how much she wanted him still, but she gave every bit of herself over to it, drawing him up along her body as he laid her back into the pillows.

"Brianna..."

She stopped him with a soft, feathery kiss when he finally pulled back, smiling as her hands slid down his back and shoulders, unable to hold in the words any longer. "I love you, Carter. It was as unexpected to me as this baby being yours was, but I'm just as happy about it as I was to actually be pregnant, even if the timing wasn't the best for the office. No, it's not what we intended but..."

"I'm never letting you go, angel," Carter said stopping her this time, his hand tangled in her hair, his forehead resting against hers as he held her tight against him. "I love you too, Brianna. I realized it the weekend we got married. What my friends said about me never forgetting you, combined with the incredible pleasure that filled me as you were napping on my lap...it was just as deep as when we were making love, and I knew I'd never want to let you go or lose what was suddenly between us. I've spent every day since then wishing you'd fall for me even a tenth as much, so I'd never have to worry about you leaving me, taking my heart with you."

"You mean it?" she said, hugging him tightly when he nodded, and the soft tears slipped from her eyes as he kissed her again, filling every bit of her with happiness.

"I love you angel, everything I've told the others about our marriage, how I feel has been the complete truth, and so is this," he added, his thumb brushing the tears from her cheek. "I can't stand to see you cry, even if they're happy tears, which I'm hoping these are..."

"Of course, they are dummy," she got out, laughing, pushing them away. "I got so much more this year than I ever imagined possible with our baby, let alone with you now. So,

how about you kiss me, show me just how much you love me with that hard log pressing against me, hmm?”

“I’ll show you, baby, always,” he promised, his lips stealing hers again, his hands sliding down her body until he lifted her leg over his hip, and he sank into her in a single thrust, making her teeter on a ledge instantly.

He kept her there, alternating hard and softer thrusts, making her cling to him, her hips lifting into his, needing more.

“Carter, please...oh god, please,” she moaned, searching for his lips as they teased her face. “Please...”

“Tell me,” he said, a smile lighting his eyes as he lifted his head. “Tell me, angel.”

“I love you.” The words were barely out before she was tipped over the edge, her shout swallowed by Carter’s lips as he shuddered out his own orgasm, filling her completely with love.

“I love you, so much Brianna,” he whispered as he gathered her close, letting her slip into sleep, a smile on her lips.

Chapter 7

Carter lifted his head as Marsha stopped at his office door. The look on her face had his heart in his throat, worry instantly hitting him hard. “Marsha, what is it?”

“I don’t want to cause any issues, but I was on my way back in from lunch and saw Brianna in the lobby with another woman. They look like they’re arguing, and Brianna seemed upset,” Marsha said, and he was nearly on top of her before she finished speaking.

“Can you cover the phones while I go check on her?” he questioned, barely waiting for her yes before he was in the hallway. He was about to bypass the elevator in lieu of the stairs when it opened, letting a couple people off and he slid in, heading down to Brianna wondering who was there, and why she hadn’t told him she was going downstairs to see whoever it was.

In the three months since Christmas, they’d spent very little time apart. They had about two more months before their son was going to be here and every day he fell for her more, as well as grew more protective and worried about something or someone hurting her. It felt a bit irrational at first, but now he wondered if it wasn’t for this moment.

Brianna didn’t have arguments with people, not at work, everyone here loved her. Someone coming and upsetting her was entirely unacceptable, especially here in his building.

His anger ignited higher when he saw the woman Brianna was talking with in the corner of the lobby. He didn’t bother to hide his expression as he moved over to them quickly, sliding his arm around Brianna, feeling the tension in her body.

“Go away,” Ashley snipped at him, but he ignored her, turning Brianna into him, running a hand down her side, searching his wife’s face to ensure she was okay.

“You be quiet,” he retorted when Ashley began to speak again. “Brianna, are you okay, angel?”

“I’m fine,” she said, lifting her eyes to him, letting him see the anger glittering in her gaze, but there was thankfully no tears. “Ashley was just leaving.”

“Like hell I am,” Ashley replied, and Carter was beyond done with Brianna’s sister when Brianna’s hand tightened on his hip.

“This is private property, and we’re asking you to leave, now, before I call the police,” he added. “I’m certain it wouldn’t look good for one of the city’s ADA’s to be arrested for trespassing. How would your bosses like that?”

“You can’t do a damn thing to me. I’m here to talk some sense into my sister and it has nothing to do with you,” Ashley sneered at him, and his brow lifted higher when Brianna let out a scoffing snort.

“Nothing to do with him? He’s my husband, the father of the baby you just said I should *abort*,” Brianna seethed at her sister and Carter saw nothing but red as Brianna’s hands tightened around him, keeping him in his place.

“He’s not the father though, is he?” Ashley said, a smirk hitting her lips as she glanced his way, her eyes widening when he didn’t react in the least.

“You’re insane, Ashley. You’ve seriously lost your damn mind. I don’t know what the hell you’re playing at, but I’m done with it and you. You’ve spent the last four months harassing me with every email or text you’ve sent, telling me how horrible of a mother I’ll be, and I should just admit I made a mistake and get rid of the baby. I thought blocking you would show that I’m done, but here you are trying to make my life even more miserable. I understand you don’t know the first thing about pregnancy, but newsflash, I’m thirty-two weeks along. Our baby is old enough to be viable, premature, but viable if I had him now—something I have no intention of doing either. He’s mine and Carter’s entirely. Whatever the hell you’re playing at now...I honestly don’t care. I just want you to stay away and leave me alone,” Brianna fumed, leaning further into Carter’s hold as her sister’s eyes flashed with some victorious light.

“He’s not Carter’s though, is he? You just pretended it’s his to trap him,” Ashley said, and Carter had enough. Even if the clinic told them they’d made a second error and it wasn’t actually his biological child that Brianna was carrying, he wouldn’t give a damn now. This was their baby and Brianna was his.

“I was there when this baby was conceived, it’s mine,” he stated, pressing a kiss to Brianna’s temple, his hand gently caressing her side, letting her know he was here with her entirely.

“Is that why she paid the Horton Clinic three thousand dollars for sperm?” Ashley crowed and Brianna breathed in deeply, fury flowing through her that her sister—her *sister* would dig into her private information.

“No,” Carter said, dropping another kiss onto her forehead, calming her. “She paid the clinic to retrieve *my* sperm I have stored there, to show me that she was ready for us to start our family. Due to cancer treatments in my twenties, my sperm count is extremely decreased, and natural conception might have been difficult. When I learnt that she did it, I was thrilled, but I also let her know I didn’t mean to pressure her or make her think the reason I’d given her permission to access my sperm was for her to use it immediately. We sat down, talked it over and agreed that we wanted a family, but if we were going to use the saved vials, we should do it together, with the help of a doctor for our best chance at conceiving.”

Ashley’s eyes narrowed on them, and Brianna rested further into Carter’s arms, a smile on her lips.

“We sent the vials back to the clinic to hold until then, enjoyed an entirely undressed weekend afterwards, and got a surprise when I ended up pregnant naturally, but we’re both extremely happy about it. So, whatever the hell this is, stop it. I don’t want you here or anywhere near my family until you’ve gotten some mental help,” Brianna added, and the color that flared in her sister’s face told her she wasn’t the first one to tell her it recently. “I don’t know how...”

Brianna was cut off by a loud, furious shout of, “Ashley!”

It pulled her and Carter’s attention to the front doors where Grace stood with their parents, Jacob, and surprisingly a couple police officers as well.

“What’s going on?” Brianna asked, looking between Grace and her parents knowing something was majorly up if they were all here.

“How *dare* you!” Grace screamed at their sister, and their father grabbed her arm, stopping her from advancing further towards Ashley.

“Ashley Evans?” the police officer stated getting a snippy ‘yes’ back from her sister. “You’re under arrest for bank fraud. You have the right to remain silent...”

“What? You can’t do this to me,” Ashley shouted angrily over the rest of the cop’s words. “I’m a lawyer!”

“Then you should have known that using my computer to log into the bank’s system and look at Brianna’s bank accounts was illegal!” Grace retorted, fuming as the officers moved Ashley out of the building as onlookers gawked a bit.

Jacob stared after them, before looking back at their group with a sigh. “I’m sorry...she’s really been out of it since she learnt you were pregnant, Brianna. She...we...we wanted kids, but it just never happened and when we finally went to the doctor two years ago they told her if she wanted to carry a baby, it would likely have to be a donor egg because she wasn’t producing them, and they didn’t think meds would help any. After that...it didn’t matter what I said or did, she spends most of her nights locked in her room and just drinks. I’ve tried to get her to go see someone but...she refuses. I never imagined that she’d...I don’t know what she was hoping to find looking at your accounts.”

“It’s not your fault,” Brianna said as Carter held her closer, calming her immensely. “I just can’t deal with her right now...I blocked her just after Valentine’s Day because she

kept texting me, telling me I shouldn't be a mom and to get rid of the baby. I can't..."

"We understand, sweetheart," her mom assured her, squeezing her hand tightly. "Jacob, you should probably go down to the station. If the bank is going to press charges..."

"Of course, they are," Grace said, shaking her head at their mom. "She illegally accessed someone's information. It doesn't matter if she used my log-in to get in or that Brianna's our sister, it's still illegal. She can plead insanity but no one's going to just ignore it."

"I'll let you know what happens," Jacob told them before leaving.

"That explains how she found out," Carter said, brushing Brianna's cheek with his knuckle, giving her a soft smile. "We should probably tell your family in case it comes out."

"Okay," she agreed, waiting until they were in their car on the way to their house, the others following them to say anything else. "What was all that? The permission to use your sperm?"

"I didn't want anything to come out that would hurt or upset you, angel. If somehow the clinic was bought out and another lawyer came in and went through the files, I didn't want it to come out and blindside us. Or if we need to use the other vials to possibly have another baby and your family learnt about it, I figured it safer to have a backup in place. So, I contacted the clinic and let them know that we wanted all of the prior communication sent to us destroyed, that thankfully we were already acquainted, friends, and worked together, but we didn't want anyone else discovering anything about how our family came about.

"They think the fact that you work for me is how the mix-up occurred. Your contact information had the company listed, and they think instead of an incorrect barcode, the system glitch cross referenced Carter Russells International with my name, and that's how you got my vials," Carter told her, and she couldn't help but be happy if it had—not now that they were fully together. "I gave them a backdated

authorization form giving you full access to my vials, to cover when you had them, as well as had them change your record and show it as a sperm retrieval rather than purchase. It's also good for the future as well. If anything happened to me and you wanted another baby, it's yours to use however you want. I wanted to know you were covered, then and in the future, for any possibility. Plus given who I am, if the clinic was ever hacked, I didn't want anyone spreading our private information all over the internet."

"And you didn't think to tell me about it any time since then?" she asked, smiling as he lifted her hand to his lips, pressing a kiss to it.

"I didn't want you worrying about it, just that you were taking care of you and our little boy. I'll never let anything hurt you, baby. We'll get through this, together."

"Thank you," she whispered, giving him a kiss when they pulled up to the house, and she snuggled into his hold after giving his mom a hug seeing her already there.

Carter gave the group a quick run through of what Ashley had accused them of, and Brianna smiled, seeing the surprise on her parents' faces. Grace was still fuming but her shock showed over it as well, and Brianna laughed a bit at all of it.

"I couldn't believe she did it to begin with but to then bring it to you, accuse you of something so stupid, tell Carter it wasn't his baby...for it all to be a huge misunderstanding not to mention your all's private medical information and history...I swear that just makes it worse," Grace said with a sigh.

"How did you find out it was Ashley?" Brianna asked her as Carter smiled, feeling their baby boy kicking up a storm under his hand.

"It was the only thing that made sense. She and Jacob came over last Friday for dinner. I got a call from someone trying to work on a loan closing. I logged in to my laptop and left it on the coffee table when I got up. I locked the screen to the computer to go check on the food, but it didn't lock the bank's system in the background. Tyler and Jacob were out

looking at the new grill I got Tyler for his birthday, so Ashley was the only other person in the house. I got a visit from our regional manager and a guy from IT wanting to know why I was accessing private individuals' accounts after hours on Tuesday. It's a fireable offense to look at accounts unless it's for a work-related reason, and when they told me all of the accounts were yours, I knew it had to be Ashley. I now have a reprimand in my file about taking better security measures because of her, but I wasn't about to let her get me fired," Grace explained, and she reached over, giving her a hug, completely understanding since Grace was the main breadwinner between her and Tyler who was a high school science teacher.

"I understand the bank wanting to press charges and your anger, Grace," Carter said, pulling Brianna's attention back up to him. "I'm furious, especially with everything she's said to Brianna. I can't imagine Ashley will be able to keep her job with this, even if the charges don't stick."

"Why wouldn't they stick?" Megan asked, looking between them and Grace.

"Because technically she didn't hack into the bank's system, just my personal computer. It's iffy if a judge will let it go any further, even though she did look at Brianna's information while in it," Grace told them. "A decent lawyer could possibly get her off on a lesser charge because of the technicality of it all if nothing else. In order to protect my job and the bank, we had to file the charges. They'll be issuing Brianna an official breach notification, but they also have the proof that only her accounts were accessed during that time beyond the review of the loan file which I did while on the phone with the loan officer, so that's clearly been identified as work related."

"Well, I think losing her job might be the only thing that gets through to her right now," Brianna said, and Carter nodded.

"I'm sure her boss has already been notified of the pending charges, so that's probably already in the works," he said bringing a slight gasp to their mom's lips. "I don't think

any of us want to see her in actual jail though, so what if we see if we can't get the DA's office to agree not to press it if she agrees to get both psychiatric help and go to rehab?"

"I'd be okay with that," Grace said, her anger cooling finally.

"She won't get anywhere near me or our baby boy until then, so yes, I'd be okay with it," Brianna assured him, smiling beneath the kiss he gave her, and she happily stayed at the house with her mom and Megan while her dad, Grace, and Carter went to see what they could do.

Nora had a table full of food before they all returned with Jacob and Tyler in tow.

"Thank you," Jacob told Brianna, giving her a hug. "Ashley's boss was furious. If you and Carter hadn't been agreeable...let alone willing to pay for rehab..."

"Might hate her right now but she's still family," Brianna said, resting in Carter's hold, not upset he'd agreed to pay for the rehab without talking to her about it. His eyes showed he could feel the kicks against his side as he held her, and she couldn't imagine not having this as a possibility. "If she'd talked to us when you all learnt about having issues..."

"She said if I told anyone she'd walk out the door and as bad as she's been...I still love her," Jacob stated, earning a hug from her mom.

"Well, hopefully this will be her rock bottom and things will get better from here," Grace said, and Brianna fully agreed.

The next six weeks slid past quickly. Brianna had updates from the others about their visits with Ashley at rehab, but she stayed away, enjoying her now huge belly, and the way Carter loved it and her. She might struggle to get up from the bed and chairs, but she wouldn't change a single thing about it.

They were at the office Wednesday afternoon when her water broke, telling her the contractions she'd been having all morning weren't the fake ones any longer. She pushed herself

up after calling down to Marsha asking her to come up to cover for her—not telling her why precisely. She wanted to tell Carter that first, and she slid into his office not bothering to knock despite the meeting he was in the middle of.

“What’s wrong, angel?” he asked immediately, quieting the other man that started to complain about the interruption.

“I need you—we need you,” she added, breathing in a bit deeper as a new contraction hit.

“Now?” Carter asked, smiling fully as he jumped out of his seat, moving to her side.

“Yeah, my water broke,” she said as Marsha came in the other door.

“We’ve got this,” Jarred told him, and Carter ushered down to the car and to the hospital.

“You are about six centimeters,” Janelle said after her initial exam, and Brianna was honestly shocked. She’d barely been one centimeter on Monday at her appointment.

Emily got there about ten minutes later, and she laughed seeing the surprise on Carter’s face that she hadn’t been lying about being in the delivery room with them. He accepted it when he realized she was wearing scrubs and Brianna couldn’t believe they’d never told him she was a nurse on top of being her best friend. He’d never asked her what she wanted during labor, hadn’t pushed her to let his mom in when she’d told him that her mom likely wouldn’t stay because she couldn’t handle seeing people she loved in pain, let alone the blood from the delivery would make her faint.

“You don’t have your own floor to cover?” her mom Emily asked when she arrived about forty minutes later, squeezing Brianna’s hand giving her a forced smile.

“Nope, I’ve had backups worked up starting last week to cover my shift for whenever this guy decided he wanted to make his appearance,” Emily assured them. “I’ve got this Ms. Veronica. I know you can’t stand this part. I promise, I’ll come get you as soon as he’s here and momma’s ready to part with him for a few moments.”

Brianna nodded and was thankful for her best friend over the next six hours, but especially when she made certain their baby boy was put on her chest as soon as he was there. Carter's hand slid behind her head, lifting her face to his, and she laughed to stop from crying seeing the sheen of tears in his eyes. "I love you, you and Dominic, so much."

"He's perfection, baby. Thank you...for him, for being mine, loving me, letting me love you," Carter said, kissing her softly until Emily tore them apart.

"Okay, mush on your own time. You've got lots of it to come," Emily teased, and Brianna couldn't wait.

Epilogue

Brianna smiled as she leaned over Carter's shoulder, giving him a kiss, watching him rock their baby boy. He was ten months now, growing like a weed and she adored him just as much as she adored his older brother who was now two. Dominic was about five months old when she got pregnant with Micah, a complete surprise to both her and Carter.

Yes, they'd been all over each other but neither of them had really expected it to happen. Not with her potential decreasing egg production and his lowered sperm count. They hadn't complained in the least about it though and now, she wasn't complaining about the results she'd just gotten after almost fainting for the second time while checking on her sister.

Their family had changed a lot in the last two years. Not only just with her and Carter adding in a new baby.

Ashley ended up losing her job, barely keeping her license to practice law. She only did thanks in part to completing rehab and spending a year in intense therapy. Things were definitely tense when Brianna told the family she was pregnant with Micah, but thankfully Ashley hadn't snapped again. Carter was overly protective of them, especially whenever Ashley did eventually come around, but she loved it—as much as she loved being home with her babies because he truly had known her best.

She kept pushing back her return to the office and when they realized she was pregnant again, Carter teasingly told her he couldn't have her outside his office door, knowing she was growing their baby yet again. That he wouldn't be able to keep his hands off her and he'd run the business right into the ground. So, she stopped in, letting Marsha know that the job was hers permanently and spent her time with Dominic, spoiling him before his brother got there.

It was while she was pregnant with Micah that her sisters sat down and talked, got past some of their issues that were still lingering, and Grace offered Ashley her eggs that were

frozen. That news shocked all of them, when Grace admitted that she'd had hers frozen when she was twenty-five, well aware of family issues and also that she didn't want to run into the risk if she changed her mind when she was older and did want kids.

Carter gifted Ashley and Jacob the money to cover the IVF and about a month after she had Micah, they got pregnant with their baby boy Jacob Junior, or JR as they said they were going to call him, who was about to be here.

“Three grandbabies...I never would have thought this day would come,” her mom said hugging on Dominic who chortled happily.

“What would you say if I told you it was going to actually be four in about seven and a half months?” Brianna whispered to Carter as she snuggled into his side, giving him a full grin.

“What?” he said, his eyes widening in surprise and hope.

She opened the paper she held, showing him the results of the blood test Emily had the doctor run for her, then turned over the ultrasound photo, nodding as his jaw dropped. He gave her a slow kiss, making her sigh happily before quietly telling him what happened, assuring him she was fine, that even the doctor agreed she was. “Emily knows but for now... it's Ashley's day.”

“I won't say anything right now, you tell me when you're ready and I'll be there, grinning like the lucky guy I am,” he said, and two months later, at Micah's birthday party, they let the family know not only was another grandbaby coming, but thanks to the hidden surprise in the cake Micah destroyed with his chubby little fists, that it was a girl.

“Finally, a girl,” her dad teased, giving her a huge hug. “She's sure to be just like her momma and be the best fisher ever.”

“Sorry to disappoint you Dad, but I hated fishing and the worms...yuck,” she said, laughing at his surprise. “You can

take her and her brothers, but don't be disappointed if she hates it.”

“I could never be disappointed in any of my girls or their babies,” he promised.

Carter echoed the thought later that night as he kissed and caressed her belly. Something he did every night, with or without it leading to more, until their baby girl was there just in time for Thanksgiving.

“She definitely makes up for not getting your delicious pie today, baby,” Carter teased her, giving her a soft kiss as they stole some time just the three of them. The boys were with their grandparents being spoiled once more after having met their still unnamed little sister.

“I know, she's too sweet, isn't she?” Brianna sighed happily. “If she's our last, I'll be okay. I would have been fine with just you and Dominic as mine but adding in Micah and our baby girl...it's so incredibly amazing.”

“Are you going to suggest any more names or are you still upset I didn't like the name Hailey?” Carter asked, dropping kisses on their faces where he could reach without unsettling them.

“I'm not upset, I just couldn't come up with anything else I liked, and you haven't been helping the way our girl's daddy should. Dominic's name was easy you know. Naming him after you and Dad, simple. Micah was easy as well since we wanted to go with names that began with the same initials as our moms,” she added, loving their boys' names of Dominic Alexander and Micah Victor.

“That's because I knew you'd argue if I said I wanted our baby girl named after you,” he said, surprising her—happily but it was still a surprise. “I was thinking rather than a B name using Anna, but then I saw the name Annalise and it's been the only one that's stayed with me, that I've liked.”

“Annalise Helen Russells,” Brianna said on a hopeful lit.

“Done,” Carter agreed, certain Grandma Helen wouldn't object to it in the least, and at Christmas, she certainly didn't.

“I suppose I won’t complain too much that you used it for a middle name if that one turns out to be a boy,” Grandma Helen said, drawing surprised looks towards her from the entire group.

“If what one turns out to be a boy?” Veronica asked looking up from Ashley’s little JR towards the older woman.

“Irish twins, I’m telling you,” Grandma Helen said looking straight at Brianna and she laughed fully, shaking her head, not admitting that she and Carter had been doing everything except full out sex the last few nights.

“I think Annalise is likely to be our last, Grandma.”

“Ha...you’ve got one more coming, Grandma knows these things, young ‘un,” she argued, and a month later, her jaw dropped when the home test showed two lines.

“Brianna, where are you angel?” Carter called out, but she was too stunned to utter a word until he found her, glancing at the test still in her hand. “Brianna?”

“Seriously, when was the last time you had your sperm count tested because if this low sperm count you’re getting snipped,” Brianna said, giving him a half glare.

“You’re pregnant?” he asked, a shocked laugh falling when she showed him the test, and she couldn’t hold hers in and slid onto the floor with him, laughing until he kissed her right out of her clothes before bathing attention on her body, sending her deep into bliss.

“Do you want me to go to the doctor,” Carter asked that night before they slid into bed, Annalise asleep in the bassinet beside her.

“No, I just can’t believe it,” she said, snuggling with him, happy no matter how crazy it was. “We both know they’re our miracles so, why would I be upset?”

“I’d do it for you. I mean, it’s not like we wouldn’t have the ability to use the vials if we ever changed our minds,” he said, making sure.

“That’s why I love you. Even if it did take a baby and some serious pregnancy neediness to discover it,” she added, giggling when her remark got his hands on her, sending them both up and over quick to ensure Annalise didn’t wake.

They went to her parents’ house for Easter and Brianna shook her finger at her grandmother, getting an ‘I told you so’ from her, then a question of if it was a girl or boy, and Brianna handed over the basket full of pink eggs teasing her, “You weren’t entirely right, but we love you anyway.”

“Another girl?” her mom said, still in shock that she was truly pregnant.

“We did a sneak peek and there was no boy DNA found, so yeah, it’s a girl,” Brianna said, smiling fully and a similar smile was on her lips when their baby girl was there at the beginning of October.

“And what’s our new baby girl’s name?” her dad asked once they let their parents and Grandma Helen come back to meet their new girl.

“Cassidy Jean,” she told them, giving Carter a kiss, resting her head against his as their moms gushed over her. “Cassidy is Irish after all.”

“Gorgeous, just like her momma,” Grandma Helen said.

“Perfect little mini of her incredible momma for sure,” Carter agreed, his eyes showing her just how much he meant it. She couldn’t quite believe all of this had started with her wanting one baby, even if it was alone and now, she had four and the most amazing husband ever. Her baby daddy mix-up was the best mistake ever, no doubt. Absolutely the best mistake ever.

Thanks

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