



INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

**K. L. RAMSEY**

**HIS CURVY**

**ASSISTANT**

BILLIONAIRE BOYS CLUB BOOK FOUR

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# **HIS CURVY ASSISTANT**

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# **Billionaire Boys Club Book 4**

**K.L. RAMSEY**

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His Curvy Assistant (Billionaire Boys Club Book 4)

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Welcome to the Billionaire Boys Club where the men are hot, rich, and very bossy. They make being in charge look easy and their custom-made suits look sexy as sin. Confidence is not a problem for these guys—well, not until they find the women that they want and are turned down flat. Sparks will fly, tempers will flare, and there's sure to be a whole lot of steam when these alphas meet their match.

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**MILLIE**

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# Prologue

## Six Months Earlier

Millie opened her front door when the incessant banging wouldn't stop. Who the hell would be banging on her door this late at night? She checked her watch and noted that it was only nine at night and giggled at herself. Millie had always been the type of girl who liked to go to bed early and read into the wee hours of the night. Those were her exact plans for the night, and she had a book on her nightstand that was sure to not disappoint her.

She pulled the door open and found the most gorgeous man that she had ever seen standing on her doorstep. "You Millie?" he asked.

"Um, yeah," she squeaked. "Can I help you?" She hoped like hell that he'd tell her, yes, because she knew exactly what she wanted to help him with.

"I hate to tell you this, but you might be in danger," he said.

"Danger?" she asked. "How so?"

"You were over at Ruby's place tonight?" he asked. She wasn't sure how much she should and shouldn't say to a perfect stranger—and he was pretty perfect. Millie nodded, not really knowing what to say to him.

"Well, her friend, Luke, is in trouble, and unfortunately, he might have put you both in danger," the guy said.

“I didn’t catch your name,” she said, ignoring the fact that he just told her that she might be in danger.

“I’m Luke’s friend, Ranger,” he said. “Sorry, I’m kind of a cut-to-the-chase kind of guy.”

“Yeah, I got that,” Millie teased. He cracked a smile and she had to admit, he was even more handsome when he was smiling down at her like that. “You have a nice smile, Ranger,” she said.

“Thank you,” he mumbled, turning the cutest shade of pink. “But could we get back to the part about you being in danger?”

“Sure,” she agreed. “Well, I appreciate you letting me know,” she said.

“Don’t you want the details and to know what to watch for?” Ranger asked.

“Not really,” she said. “I’ve learned to keep my nose out of other people’s business. I appreciate your wanting to help me. Good meeting you, Ranger,” she said as she started to shut the door in his face. The poor guy looked so confused, that she almost wanted to giggle.

He put his hand on her door, stopping its progress. “If you need me, I’m going to be staying at Ruby’s place—you know just to keep an eye on things.”

“Where will Ruby be staying?” she asked. If the new hottie standing on her doorstep said that Ruby would be staying with him, she was going to need a whole gallon of ice cream to drown her sorrows.

“Actually, that was one of the things that I didn’t get around to telling you. Ruby has agreed to leave town with Luke until this thing blows over,” he said. Millie just bet that Ruby jumped at the chance to spend some one-on-one time with the hot guy from work.

“How do I know that Luke didn’t abduct my friend?” she said.

“Ruby promised that she’d call you in the morning so that you will know that she’s safe,” Ranger assured. “For now, if you notice anything out of the ordinary, just bang on the door.” He nodded over to Ruby’s place, and she nodded.

“Will do,” she promised.

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Millie woke the next morning to someone banging on her front door again and she moaned and rolled over, pulling her pillow over her head. She pulled off her covers, got out of bed, and stomped off to the front door to see who was trying to bang it down. She pulled it open to find Ranger standing there again.

“What the hell?” she hissed. “Do you have any idea what time it is?”

“You really have a shitty morning disposition,” he growled. “Ruby’s been trying to call you all morning because it’s after nine and you haven’t answered your phone. How about you answer the phone, and I won’t have to come over here?” he asked.

“I turn my phone off while I’m sleeping,” Millie spat. She was a light sleeper, and every notification would wake her up, and the one thing Millie loved most was sleep. “What can I do for you, Ranger?” she said, looking the big guy over. She loved the way that he always seemed a bit flustered around her, but she knew that she wasn’t his type. He was probably like that with all women, her included.

“I’ve come to ask if you have any coffee,” he said.

“Ruby doesn’t have any?” Millie asked.

“Ruby doesn’t have much of anything over at her place. I’m guessing that she was going to need to make a grocery trip soon but didn’t get around to it before she took off with Luke.”

“Come in,” she said, “are you ever going to tell me what’s going on with her? I mean, I think I have a right to know since you said that I’m in danger and all.”

“I can’t tell you too much, Millie,” Ranger insisted. “It’s for your own safety.”

She found the coffee and handed it to him. “Just return it when you’re done with it. Maybe keep some for tomorrow. Better yet, I have to run to the grocery store to pick up a few things. I’d be happy to grab you what you need if you want to make me a list.”

“No,” he almost shouted at her. “You can’t go into town and go shopping. I don’t think that you’re taking any of this seriously, Millie. You are in danger and if you go to the grocery store, you’ll be out in public where anyone can get to you.”

“Well, my need for groceries isn’t going to go away on its own,” she said.

“I’ll come with you then,” he insisted. “I have off today, and I can take you to the grocery store and pick up a few things for Ruby’s place since I’ll be staying there for a while, to keep an eye on you.”

“While I like the idea of you keeping our eyes on me, Ranger, it’s just not necessary,” Millie insisted.

“We’ll have to agree to disagree on that, honey. I’m going to take you to the grocery store. Be ready to go in about an hour. Thanks for the coffee,” Ranger said. He walked out of her apartment not waiting for her to give him an answer. Honestly, she wasn’t about to fight with him about spending time with him. She liked the idea of having some extra time with the big guy.

Millie showered and got dressed in a pair of ripped-up jeans and a t-shirt, grabbing her favorite sweater to pull over it to keep her warm. She loved this time of year when the weather was turning cooler, and she could wear her cozy sweaters and drink hot cocoa. She pulled her hair back and was ready to go just minutes before Ranger banged on the front door. That man was a force. Every time he knocked on her front door, it sounded like he was going to bang it down.

She pulled the front door open and found him standing there with his fist in the air, ready to bang on her door again. “Don’t,” she shouted pointing her finger at him. “You need to stop beating my door down every time you come over here.”

“Sorry,” he breathed, “I guess I’m just on high alert with everything that’s happened to Luke and Ruby. I promised to keep an eye on you and you’re not exactly making that easy.”

“How exactly am I not making it easy for you, Ranger?” Millie asked. “I’ve opened my door every time you’ve banged on it and even gave you coffee. And I’ve done all that in good faith since I still haven’t spoken to Ruby, since I’ve missed her calls. How do I know that she’s all right? How does any of that make me difficult?”

“You could let me just stay with you,” Ranger said. “That way, I wouldn’t have to worry about you over here.”

“You’ve been worried about me?” she asked. “You know that I can take care of myself, right?”

“Ruby said that you’re in cyber security, Millie. That doesn’t mean that you can take care of yourself—well unless you hack your attacker to death.” He laughed at his own joke, and she crossed her arms over her chest and stared him down.

“Not funny,” she grumbled. He looked her over and sobered.

“What do you want from me here, Millie?” he asked.

“I don’t know you, Ranger. Why would I let you stay in my apartment with me just because you said that I’m in danger?”

“I think I have a remedy for that,” he said.

“I can’t wait to hear this one,” Millie teased.

“Go out to dinner with me and get to know me. Then, you’ll see I’m on the up and up and you’ll let me do my damn job and protect your sexy ass.” Ranger’s face turned the cutest shade of red and she couldn’t help her giggle.

“You think I have a sexy ass?” she asked.

“It’s just a term, Millie,” he insisted. “Don’t go getting any ideas.”

“Right,” she agreed. “I won’t get any ideas about my ass being sexy,” she promised. She grabbed her purse and jacket. “You ready to hit up the grocery store then?” she asked.

“Sure, after you agree to have dinner with me tonight,” he said.

“Fine,” I’ll have dinner with you, Ranger. Is it safe for us to go out?” she asked.

“No,” he breathed, “I’ll have to order in. Do you have a favorite take-out place?” he asked.

“I know just the place. They have the best Chinese food in the area. You’ll love it,” she assured.

“Great,” he said, “we can order in and get to know each other tonight. It’s a date.” She wasn’t sure if she wanted to correct him for calling their dinner a date or hope that he meant what he had said. It was about damn time that Millie had a date with a hot guy. Her last real date was when she was in college and that was many moons ago. Yeah, tonight was going to be fun—a date to remember.



They spent the morning shopping and Ranger even agreed to run her over to the library to pick up the books that she had reserved for herself. It was a stack of books tall enough to get her through the weekend. By the time they got back home, he got the name of the Chinese place from her, and she told him her order. Ranger promised to be over at six with dinner, for their date.

Every time he called their dinner that, she felt a little bit giddy, and who’d blame her? Ranger was way out of her league, but she refused to buy into that shit. She was always a little bit different from the other girls, but she had confidence that helped her to push past her inadequacies. Her mother used to tell her that if confidence was enough to get her through

life, she'd be golden. It was something that she'd always liked about herself—her confidence, and she wasn't going to go and change any of that now.

She put away her groceries and freshened up, even cleaning her little apartment before Ranger came back over with a bag of Chinese that smelled like heaven. “Did you get the fortune cookies?” she asked.

“I did,” he said, looking pretty damn proud of himself. “And I got the egg rolls that you asked for.”

“You rock,” she said. “I'd high-five you but I don't want you to drop our food. Come on in. We can sit at the kitchen table or on the couch. You can choose.” Ranger walked into her apartment and put the bags of food on the table.

“Want to watch a movie while we eat?” he asked.

“That depends,” she said. “What kind of movie are you thinking of?”

“Um, whatever you'd like. I don't even mind Romcoms if that's what you're into,” he offered.

“Really?” she asked, pleasantly surprised by his admission. “Well, while we're being honest, I don't mind an action movie.”

“And here I had you pegged as a total Romcom kind of girl,” he teased.

“Let's see what we can find,” he said. “The second bag has a few beers in it. I didn't know what you liked to drink.”

“Beer works for me,” she said. “Thanks.”

“Not a problem,” he said. They both grabbed some food, and she handed him a plate and a beer as they settled on the couch to find a movie.

“Thanks for agreeing to a laid-back date tonight,” he said. She leaned into his body and gave him a little bit of a nudge.

“I don't mind,” she said. “It's been a long time since I've been on a date, so this is actually quite nice.”

“You don't go out much?” he asked.

“Um, no,” she said, “not since college, really. Work keeps me pretty busy.”

“You know, we could use someone with your job skills at McTavish. You looking for a job by any chance?”

She chuckled, “Not really, but I’ll keep it in mind. Thanks.”

“Well, the offer stands,” he said. “Just think about it.” Millie was pretty sure that was about all she’d think about. Working with Ranger day in and day out would be a dream. She knew that Ruby loved her job at McTavish.

They ate and found an action movie to watch and before the end of the night, she was cuddled into Ranger’s side, his arm around her shoulder, and she was sure that she had to be dreaming up the whole thing. And when he leaned in to kiss her, she nearly asked him to pinch her, just to check to see if she wasn’t dreaming.

“Was that okay?” he asked.

“Yes,” she breathed. “You know how you said that you’d like to stay here and get to know me, Ranger?” she asked. He nodded and she wasn’t sure if she’d be able to get this next part out without choking on her words.

“Yes,” he whispered.

“Spend the night with me—in my bed,” she said.

“Are you asking me for what I think you are, Millie?” he asked.

“If you think that I’m asking you for sex, then yes,” she said. “I’d like for you to stay here and have sex with me, Ranger.”

He stood and carried their plates to the kitchen, and she was sure that she had pushed him for too much. Millie felt like an idiot and there was no taking back what she had just asked him for. He came back and stood over her and she wasn’t sure if looking up at him was a good idea or not, but she just couldn’t help herself.



She looked into his big blue eyes, and he nodded. “I’m in,” he said. Millie felt like a kid who just got what she wanted on Christmas morning, and she couldn’t wait to unwrap her next present—Ranger.

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## RANGER

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Ranger didn't know if agreeing to what Millie wanted from him was a good or bad idea, but he was about to find out. She reached up and took his offered hand and he knew that he should put a stop to this whole thing from happening, but he couldn't. If he was being honest with himself, he wanted her just as much as she did him—possibly more.

Millie was his walking wet dream with her curves and sass, but he wouldn't tell her that. She was brave—probably too brave because she asked him for what they both wanted when he just cowered out. The only problem he could find with Millie was that she seemed like the kind of girl who'd get attached—fast. And that was the last thing he needed. He had no plans on having a relationship with her or any other woman, for that matter, but one night couldn't hurt—right?

Her apartment was set up much the same as Ruby's place, except she had more flowery, frilly, girly things than Ruby had. Hell, even the comforter on her bed had flowers all over it.

“You do like flowers, don't you?” he asked.

“I do,” she admitted, “tell me you're not one of those guys who refuses to sleep under a blanket with flowers on it. Are you secure enough in your masculinity to lay on my bed, Ranger?” she asked. She was teasing him; testing him to see if he'd follow through and there was no way that he'd back out of their arrangement now. Flowers or not, he was all in.

He looked the offensive comforter over and then smiled back at Millie, "I'm good," he assured. He sat down on the bed and pulled her on top of his lap.

"Good," she breathed. He carefully removed her glasses and she blinked at him as if letting her eyes adjust.

"Is this okay?" he asked.

"Yeah, I just can't see much. I'm blind as a bat," she joked. He thought that she was the sexiest bat he'd ever met, but he kept that to himself.

"Why did you agree to this?" she whispered.

Ranger shrugged, "Because I think that you're sexy as fuck," he growled. There, that was a truth that he could give her. She was sexy and wanting her wasn't the problem.

"You do?" she breathed.

"Yes," he admitted.

"I think that you're sexy too," she said, running her hands up over his pecks. Ranger tugged off his shirt, wanting her to touch him skin on skin and when she obliged, he moaned out loud.

"Do you like that?" she asked.

"Yes," he hissed. "Your turn." He pulled her shirt up over her body, revealing every curvy inch of her, and hiss out his breath when he realized that she wasn't wearing a bra. "See now, that's fucking sexy." He palmed her breasts, loving the way that she filled his hands and she leaned into him. The little whimper that escaped her parted lips was nearly his undoing. Millie seemed to feel as raw and needy as he did.

She straddled his lap, wrapping her arms around his neck, and pulled him in for a kiss that nearly took his breath away.

"Where'd you learn to kiss that way?" he asked.

"A girl doesn't kiss and tell Ranger," she said. He rolled her underneath his body, covering her with his own, and kissed her until they were both panting for air. "More," she ordered. Ranger was happy to comply with her order, kissing and

licking his way down her body until he got to her leggings. He tugged them off, leaving her bare for him, and settled between her legs. He didn't wait for permission because he wasn't about to ask for it. He parted her folds and God, she smelled like heaven. His cock couldn't wait to get inside of her, but first, he wanted to make sure that she was ready to take him. He licked his way through her folds, giving some extra special attention to her sensitive nub. She cried out and nearly bucked him off the bed. Ranger put his hands on either side of her hips, holding her firmly to the bed so that he could finish eating her. By the time that he finished with her, she was soaking wet and had cried out his name three times.

He stood and stripped at the end of the bed, feeling pretty damn proud of himself as she looked up at him and smiled. "That was incredible," she said, her voice hoarse from crying out his name.

"That was nothing. Wait until the next part," he insisted.

"What's the next part?" she asked.

"This," he growled, pulling her to the side of the bed. He slid into her body without any warning, and she cried out. He stilled, giving her time to adjust to his size and she squirmed underneath him.

"You keep doing that and I won't last honey," he warned.

"Good," she sassed, "turnabout is fair play." She continued to wiggle around, and he grabbed handfuls of her ass, pulling her up from the mattress. Ranger pulled out of her body and slammed back into her pussy, loving her breathy little sighs and moans that she gave him with each thrust.

"Ranger," she shouted, "I'm going to come."

"Good," he growled, pumping in and out of her body until she shouted out his name once more. Ranger quickly followed her over, finding his release deep inside of her body and when they collapsed onto the bed together and Millie snuggled into his body, his whole damn world felt right. That scared the hell out of him too because what they had just done could never happen again. It was a mistake, and holding her now, he knew

that. Losing his heart wasn't part of the plan, no matter how much he wanted Millie again.

"I'd like to take that job that you offered me, Ranger," Millie whispered against his neck.

"You would?" he asked. He wasn't kidding that they could use someone like Millie on their payroll at McTavish. He and Luke were in charge of all of the company's security, including cyber security, and that would be right up Millie's alley. She'd be a perfect fit for McTavish.

"Yes," she said. "I'd like to work for you, Ranger," she said. Hell, that wasn't a part of the job description that he had given much thought to. If she was working with him day in and day out, after they had just slept together, that might cause some problems. Namely the one about him not wanting a relationship with Millie or any other woman. Yeah, he really hadn't thought any of tonight through, and now, he might be the one paying the price for opening his big mouth before thinking about what he was about to say.

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### **Five Months Later**

Ranger walked into McTavish Industries and turned the corner right into his office. It was his daily routine and this morning, he hadn't planned to deviate from it, but he had. Instead of walking into his office and booting up his computer, he ran into sexy Millie—the only person at the company who he actually tried to avoid.

"Sorry," she breathed, placing her hands on his chest to steady herself. "I didn't know that you were here." That was obvious since she was in his office. Millie never went into his office and that thought left him curious and a bit worried.

"What are you doing in here?" he asked.

"Um, I didn't want to bother you, so I just left you a letter," she said. "It's over on your desk." Millie pointed over to where she had put the envelope and he smiled down at her.

“So formal,” he said. “An envelope and everything.”

“Well, I thought that I should make my resignation look as professional as possible.”

“Resignation?” he asked. They had been working together for about five months now and he had to admit, it seemed to be working out, even if he spent most of his time avoiding her. He and Millie were able to work together, and she was damn good at her job. She had taken over their computer security network and she was the most talented hacker he’d ever met, and being in the military, he knew a lot of them. But now, she was thinking about leaving and it was all his damn fault. Ranger thought for sure that he’d be able to keep their work and private lives separate, but he was so wrong. Sleeping with her felt right at the time—hell, hiring her to work at McTavish felt right, but everything had fallen apart so quickly, he wasn’t sure how to fix any of it.

“You can’t leave,” he insisted. She sighed and pulled her hands from his chest as if just realizing that she was touching him still. He hadn’t forgotten since her every touch felt as though she had scorched his skin. He still had it bad for Millie Jenkins, not that he’d ever admit that to her.

“Listen, Ranger,” she said. “I want to say that I’m fine with the way things are between us, but I’m not.” Ranger’s finger’s itched to reach out and pull her curvy body against his, but he also knew that wouldn’t end well for either of them.

“What’s wrong with the way things are between us?” he asked.

“For one, I don’t like being ignored.” After they slept together, and he went crazy and offered her a job, he just about ghosted her, and for that, he still felt like shit. Millie was right, she deserved better than the way that he was treating her, but he couldn’t go back and redo the past.

“I’m sorry,” he breathed. “I should have done better, but I wasn’t sure what the protocol was. I mean, we jumped into bed together, I hired you, and then, I guess I freaked out.” There, that was as honest as he’d ever been with her and from

the look on her beautiful face, she wasn't buying his apology or his excuse for his bad behavior.

"Thank you for saying that," Millie said. "But it's just too late. I don't think that we should work together, and well, I've already taken another job. In fact, I start next week, if you wouldn't mind not holding me to the two weeks that I promised. I have to move since it's out of state and well, I'd like to get settled in before starting my new position."

"You're quitting and moving to another state?" He felt as though he had been kicked in the nuts and honestly, he didn't like any of this one bit. He wanted to protest, to tell her that he wanted a redo with her—with everything.

"I am," Millie said. "Thank you for this opportunity, but it's time for me to move on, Ranger." She held out her hand to him and he looked down at it as if it offended him. He took hers into his own and shook it, trying to remain as professional as possible.

"Well, I'm going to head back down to my office. I'll finish out this week," she offered. Ranger couldn't do anything but nod and smile, even if he felt like he was dying inside watching her walk out of his office.

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Ranger walked into Luke's office and slumped down into one of the corner chairs that he kept in there. "What's up your ass?" Luke asked. "You've been in a funk since Millie left."

"Shut the fuck up, man," Ranger grumbled. He wasn't in the mood to fight with his friend. The fact that Luke was right really rubbed him the wrong way. He'd been in a shitty mood for over a month now, ever since Millie moved two hours away to take a new job. He wasn't sure how he'd take her leaving, but now that he knew, all he wanted to do was get into his pick-up truck and drive to her new place.

"Well, I'm just stating the facts here, man. Millie left town and you slipped into a full-blown drama queen. Why not just call her?" Luke asked.

“Because she won’t take my calls,” Ranger mumbled. He had tried to call her repeatedly after she left. The first week she was gone, he had called her cell phone every day. The second week, he backed off some and called her every other day, leaving messages every time to, “Call him back,” but she never did. Hell, maybe that was for the best since he wasn’t sure what he’d say to her anyway. Now, he was randomly calling her, practically begging her for a callback, but he knew that she wasn’t going to give him that courtesy.

“I take it you tried to call her then?” Luke asked.

“Yep, and she’s not returning any of my calls,” Ranger grumbled.

“I’m sorry,” Luke said. “What about if I get Ruby to give her a call? She can pretend to just be checking in and you’ll have peace of mind knowing that Millie’s okay.”

“That’s something, at least,” Ranger agreed. “I’ll swing by your place tonight on the way home if that works.” Ruby was almost seven months pregnant now and she had started working a three-day week.

“That should be fine,” Luke agreed. “Ruby will probably even insist that you stay for dinner. I swear, she’s decorated the house and the nursery, and every day she has off, she cleans the place and has dinner waiting for me when I get home.”

“That sounds very domesticated, man. You ever imagine that you’d be settled down with a wife and a kid on the way?” Ranger asked.

“Nope, but I wouldn’t change a thing. I like the way things turned out—all of it,” Luke admitted.

“I’m happy for you, man,” Ranger said. He was more than happy for his friend, but once in a while, he felt that little green-eyed monster show his face. A part of Ranger wondered if he’d find what Luke had with Ruby, but he wasn’t sure that he ever would. First, he’d have to figure out his obsession with Millie and then, he’d try to find a way to move on—hopefully.



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## MILLIE

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Millie slumped into her very uncomfortable bed and rubbed her growing belly. She had gotten out of town just in time to avoid anyone else noticing that she was starting to show, but there was no avoiding it now. She was six months pregnant, and she had outgrown most of her clothing.

She hated her new apartment, but most of all, she hated being away from family and friends, but what else could she do? If she had stayed back home, she would have had to explain to everyone, including Ranger, that she was an idiot who forgot to take her birth control pills and got herself pregnant. Telling Ranger that he was going to be a father would be nearly impossible since he wasn't really even talking to her. She couldn't take the silent treatment that he was giving her anymore, and she knew that if she told him about the baby, he'd do the right thing and help her. That was the last thing that Millie wanted from Ranger. If he wanted her, he would have made a move by now. It was very clear that he only wanted her for a one-night stand and that hurt like hell.

Since their only night together, she spent so many sleepless nights trying to figure out what she had done wrong. It had to have been something that she did. Things seemed to have gone great until the next morning when he felt like he was trying to put a little distance between them. The night before, he had taken her to dinner, offered her a dream job, and then, she pushed him for more. Maybe that was her mistake—pushing Ranger to jump into bed with her. Maybe she was too pushy, and he liked his woman a bit more laid back, but that was who she was. When Millie wanted something, or in this case,

someone, she went for it. She just had no idea that it would end with Ranger not even speaking to her within the first few days of them working together.

It was so embarrassing, and she only seemed to make things worse. He had avoided her at work, and she couldn't seem to take the hint. God, she even asked him out to dinner, after her second week on the job, and he turned her down flat. That was the last time that he really talked to her besides when she handed in her resignation. Millie wasn't sure what she was hoping for when she turned in her letter of resignation to him. He acted like he didn't want her to leave—even asking her to stay, but she just couldn't do it. She had a little secret with an expiration date that she just couldn't tell Ranger about.

Millie decided to stop sulking in her bed and got up to go into her little living room. She plopped down on her sofa and grabbed the remote control, turning on the television. It was her routine—dinner, on the couch, watching television. Millie needed to get used to the fact that she was going to be trapped at home with her baby every night, soon enough. Not that she'd change that fact in any way. Being a mom was something that she'd always dreamed of for herself. She just never imagined that she'd be doing all of this alone—completely alone. She didn't even have a birthing coach to go to classes with her. And when it came time for her baby to come, she had no one to take her to the hospital or make sure she had her bags in the trunk for the big day. She had no one who'd be there with her to cheer her on or tell her that it was going to be okay. Millie would be all alone until her little one arrived and then, it would be just the two of them. She'd figure the rest out from there.

She was just getting into one of those crazy reality television shows when her phone rang in her pocket. She pulled it free and saw that Ruby was calling her again. Her friend had called her just about every day since she had moved, and it was getting harder and harder not telling her that she was pregnant. Millie wondered if she could do that and trust that her friend wouldn't tell Ranger. It was a big ask, and one that she wasn't sure was fair to make of Ruby.

She couldn't avoid Ruby's call. Millie knew that she'd end up just trying her back later and she planned on heading to bed early tonight. "Hello," Millie answered.

"Hey," Ruby said. "How are you doing?"

"I'm good," Millie lied. "How are you doing?" She was tired, as big as a house, and ready to break down in tears at any moment. Ruby was about a month ahead of her, pregnancy-wise, and she had to be feeling about the same. Millie decided to concentrate on her friend and then, hopefully, she'd be able to avoid Ruby's questions that would have her spilling her guts over the phone.

"How are you doing?" Millie asked, trying to put the focus back on Ruby.

"Um, you've asked me that question twice now," Ruby teased. "Are you sure that you're good?"

"I am," Millie lied again. "How's Luke doing?"

"He's good," Ruby said. "He's driving me crazy with getting things ready for the baby. I think that some of the girls around the office are going to throw me a shower and I don't want to go out and buy stuff first. It'll ruin the surprise." Millie knew all about the shower that was being thrown for her at the office. She was invited but had to come up with some stupid excuse about being too busy at her new job to travel back for it. Her new job allowed her to work from home, so she really could have taken a few days off, but then, she'd have to explain her baby bump and that wasn't something that she was ready to do. Millie had always been a little bit curvy, but there would be no hiding her belly behind her curves now.

"You're awfully quiet," Ruby said, breaking Millie's inner thoughts. She had forgotten to interject little hums and signals that she was listening to Ruby. God, she was just becoming a bad friend. "Why not tell me what's really going on, Millie? You haven't been yourself since you moved away. I'm worried about you, and you shouldn't make a pregnant woman worry."

"No kidding," Millie mumbled under her breath.

"What was that?" Ruby asked.

“Nothing,” Millie said.

“Millie don’t make me drive out to see you. I’m seven months pregnant but won’t hesitate to get in a car and drive down to see that you’re all right with my own two eyes.”

That was the very last thing that Millie needed. “You don’t need to do that,” she insisted.

“Give me one good reason not to,” Ruby insisted. “Tell me why you’ve been acting this way. Are you unhappy?”

“No,” Millie lied.

“Are you homesick?”

“No,” she lied again.

“Do you hate your new job?” Ruby questioned.

“No, Ruby,” Millie shouted, “I’m pregnant and alone. How do you think I should act?” Millie gasped and covered her mouth with her trembling hand as if trying to stop anything more that might come out of her pie hole. It was too late though. The damage had been done and there would be no taking her words back now.

“You’re pregnant?” Ruby asked.

“I am,” Millie whispered. “Please don’t tell Ranger. He hates me and I just don’t think I can raise this baby with him. He won’t even talk to me, you know?” The silence at the other end of the call worried her. “Ruby.”

“Um, I’m so sorry, Millie. The guys put me up to it. They wanted to know if you were really happy at your new job,” Ruby said. A sense of doom filled Millie’s gut and she knew that she wasn’t going to like what was about to come.

“What did you do?” she asked. “Tell me that he’s not there listening to what I just told you.”

“I wish I could,” Ruby said. “I’m so sorry.”

“So, he’s there, listening to everything that I just said, and he still won’t talk to me?” Millie asked. She couldn’t deal with his silence anymore. It was why she decided to leave town after finding out about the baby. She had grown up in a home

where her parents fought constantly. They hated each other and Millie didn't want her son or daughter growing up in a home like that. If Ranger didn't want to talk to her, that was on him, but she wouldn't be made to feel guilty about any of this. He was the one giving her the cold shoulder and not the other way around.

"Listen, I have to go," Millie said. "I have a busy day tomorrow and I need to get some sleep. I think it would be best if you don't call me anymore, Ruby," she said.

"Millie," Ruby shouted into the phone just before she hung up on her. She didn't care if she sounded like a bitch or that she had just told the father of her baby that she was pregnant over the phone. None of that mattered. In fact, the only thing that did matter was her baby right now. Millie rubbed her hand over her belly and longed for the day that she'd be able to feel her baby kick her, but for now, she'd settle for the little flutters that told her that her baby was just fine inside of her growing belly. Yeah—he or she was the only thing that mattered, and she'd make sure that her baby had the best she could give. Even if that meant being a single parent.

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## RANGER

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Ranger paced the floor in front of Luke and Ruby. Why had he convinced Ruby to call Millie and pretend that he wasn't listening in? It was an invasion of privacy and he'd be pissed if anyone did that to him, but now, Millie might not ever talk to him again.

"I'm so sorry, Ranger," Ruby breathed. "I had no idea that she is pregnant. I would have never put her on speaker had I known." She rubbed her belly and Ranger wondered what Millie would look like with her belly swollen with his baby.

"Would you have told me that she was pregnant if you had known?" he asked.

"I would have tried to get Millie to tell you, but yes, I would have ultimately told you about the baby. I had no idea that you two were even together. How long did you date?" Ruby asked.

"We didn't really date," he admitted. "I mean, we kind of had one date."

"How can you kind of have a date?" Ruby asked.

"We got takeout and watched a movie—well, part of one. And then, she coaxed me into her bed, and I guess that's how she got pregnant."

"She coaxed you into her bed?" Luke asked. "I'd love to know how that happened."

"Well, too bad," Ranger grumbled, "it's really none of your business how I ended up in her bed. I just did. I was trying to

show her that she could trust me.”

“Gee, how did that work out for you?” Ruby mumbled.

“Not well,” Ranger admitted, “she refused to let me stay at her place to protect her. She said that she wanted me to want to be there. She was under some crazy delusion that I only wanted to hang around her out of some sense of duty.”

“Was she right?” Luke asked.

“Hey—whose side are you on anyway?” Ranger griped.

“Yours, I’m just trying to figure this all out,” Luke admitted.

“I wanted to keep her safe. After everything that happened to you two, I wanted to make sure that she was safe. I mean, I did make you a promise that I’d keep an eye on her.”

“Right, an eye,” Ruby hissed. “But you kept a whole lot more than an eye on her, didn’t you? Millie isn’t like other girls, Ranger. She’s sensitive and sweet and you used her for one night of sex.”

“I did not,” he said. “She used me for sex if we’re being honest. I tried to stick around and keep an eye on her, but she refused to let me stay with her, so I took the hint and left her alone.”

“What happened after your one night together?” Luke asked.

Ranger shrugged, “She told me that she wanted to take the job that I had offered her. When we were getting to know each other, I told her that McTavish could use someone like her. She blew me off, but after we slept together, she said that she wanted the job.”

“That’s when you came into the office and pitched for us to hire her. I mean, it was a good call, but were you doing it because you felt bad about the way things turned out between the two of you?” Luke asked.

“No,” Ranger almost shouted. “I didn’t have anything to feel bad about. She pushed me away. Hell, she ran away and didn’t tell me about my own kid. How am I the bad guy in all

of this?” Ranger asked. He knew the answer to his own question, but he wasn’t about to admit that to either of his friends. He had all but ignored her from that day on. He got her hired at McTavish and then he shut her out of his life. Millie had even asked him out to eat once and he turned her down flat. He wasn’t about to lead her on. She was the most stubborn woman on the planet and getting involved with her wasn’t something that interested him. At least, that was what he had told himself. He wanted her more than he wanted any other woman that he’d ever met and that was what had him shutting her out of his life. The bottom line was that Millie scared the hell out of him.

“After she started working at the company, how were things between the two of you?” Ruby asked.

“Why do you ask?” Ranger questioned.

“Millie isn’t the type of person to up and leave without a reason. And there’s no way that she’d leave town and not tell you about the baby. Something had to have happened between you two.” Shit, why was Ruby on his case? She had pegged him right and he hated that.

“She started working at McTavish and asked me out to eat. I told her no. I mean, that’s all I can think of,” Ranger insisted.

“Why did you turn her down?” Luke asked.

Ranger ran his hand down his jaw and rolled his eyes. “No clue,” he said. “I don’t do well with commitment, and I think that was what Millie was after. I didn’t want to lead her on.”

“That doesn’t explain why Millie would leave town and not tell you about the baby,” Ruby insisted.

“You ignored her, didn’t you?” Luke asked. “I saw how you gave her the cold shoulder around the office. I just thought that you two didn’t like each other. I had no clue that you had slept together and were acting like an ass. You didn’t want to commit, and you gave her the shaft. That day that she asked you out to eat—was that the last time that you spoke to her?”

He didn’t want to answer Luke’s question because it would prove that he was in fact the bad guy that he insisted that he



wasn't. Luke crossed his arms over his massive chest and stared Ranger down. He wasn't as intimidating as Ruby who stood next to him, mimicking his stance. She was terrifying if he was being honest.

"Yes," Ranger grumbled, "that was the last time that I talked to her."

"Jesus," Luke mumbled. "You shut her out and she had no choice but to leave and keep her secret from you."

"He's right," Ruby agreed with Luke, "you acted like an ass and now, she's all alone out there, and she's pregnant."

"I know," he whispered. "I have her address." He wasn't sure what to do with her new home address, but he was forming a plan. "I think that it's time that Millie and I talked."

"You think?" Ruby hissed.

"I'll leave in the morning," Ranger said. "I'll fix this."

"You'll leave tonight, and you'll get to her before she takes off again. This time don't fuck everything up, Ranger," Ruby said. Luke chuckled and Ranger shot him a look, silently telling him to shut the hell up.

"Fine," Ranger agreed, "I'll run by my place and grab a few things, and then, I'll head out. If you talk to her again, don't tell her that I'm on my way to see her. She'll take off again and then, I might never find her." He had fucked everything up once and Ruby was right, he needed to get himself together and find a way to get through to her. He didn't want her to have to go through her pregnancy alone. Hell, he wanted to be there for both her and their baby, he just needed a chance to prove that to her.

"Thank you and please let me know when you've found her. I need to know that she's okay. She might be pissed at me right now, but she's still my friend," Ruby said.

"Got it," he agreed, "I'll call as soon as I have her." After that, he planned on sitting Millie down and begging her to forgive him for acting like an ass. Then, he'd ask her to come back home with him. If his intel was right, her new job was a work from home opportunity, and she could work anywhere

she liked. He had done a bit of checking up on her after she left. What his intel didn't tell him was that she was pregnant with his baby. He felt like a special kind of stupid for missing the signs with her. Were there signs? He had no clue, but he wasn't going to turn a blind eye to her again. If she gave him another chance, he'd take it and prove to her that he was worthy to be their baby's father and hopefully, come to mean something to Millie along the way.

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## MILLIE

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She couldn't believe that Ruby would do that to her. She had put her call on speaker with both Luke and Ranger in the room and gotten her to admit that she was pregnant with Ranger's baby. She was a fool for trusting her former friend. That's what Ruby was to her now—an ex-friend for what she had done to her.

Millie tried to think about her next move. She should run. That way, if Ranger came looking for her, she'd be long gone. But running while six months pregnant wouldn't work. She was already tired and having to pack up her stuff and leave now would be too much. Plus, she had already paid in advance for six months and didn't have any way to come up with another down payment since she had just started her new job a few weeks ago. She was stuck—pregnant and stuck.

“He probably won't even show up here anyway,” Millie said to her bump. She found herself talking to the baby most of the day. Working from home was lonely, especially with no friends or significant other to share her day with. She was completely alone, and that had to be the way things were now.

Her cell phone rang again, and she picked it up from the couch where she had tossed it after getting off of her call with Ruby. Her ex-friend had tried calling her four times now and there was no way that she was answering the call. She texted back to Ruby to leave her alone and shut off her phone. That should send her a clear message—hopefully.

As for Ranger, Millie was sure that finding out that she was pregnant wouldn't change things between them. He had

sent her a message and she received it loud and clear. After she foolishly asked him out, and he basically laughed in her face and told her no, he stopped talking to her all together. It was embarrassing enough to be turned down but to have him ignore her hurt.

The morning after they slept together, he pushed her to let him move into her apartment. He said it was for her own good—to keep her safe. That made her feel cheap like he had sex with her just so she'd agree to let him move in. He had used sex to get what he wanted from her—her compliance, and that was something she would not give him.

Millie refused to let him stay at her place, she told him that if he wanted to protect her, then he could continue to do so from Ruby's apartment. She also let him know that if they wanted to stay with her because he wanted to be with her, then she'd allow him to move in. Millie had never seen a man backtrack so fast in her life. It was as if Ranger's ass was on fire with the way that he beat it out of her place and went back to Ruby's. He didn't want her. He wanted to keep a promise to his friends that he'd keep her safe, and that wasn't something that Millie was willing to help him do.

She wanted to kick herself for agreeing to take his job offer. Well, it wasn't exactly a job offer. He said that McTavish could use someone with her skill set. She didn't give him the chance to tell her that there wasn't really a job offer. She foolishly believed that working with Ranger would bring them closer, and after they had sex, she wasn't thinking clearly. Millie said that she'd take the job and asked Ranger when he wanted her to start and that was it. He told her to come in on Monday and he'd walk her through everything and get her set up with HR.

She wasn't sure what she was expecting to happen after that. Maybe she had bought into the romantic notion of them spending time together at work and falling madly in love with each other, but that never happened. Ranger seemed to find ways to avoid her. He barely spoke to her unless it was absolutely necessary for work, and usually, he'd have Luke do it. He completely ghosted her.

When she figured out that she was pregnant, she knew that she had to make some hard and fast decisions. Millie thought about telling Ranger about the baby, but then, every time she tried to corner him to have that conversation, he dodged her. She tried to tell him five times—five, and when she got the brush off the fifth time, she decided that enough was enough. Millie knew that she couldn't raise a child with a man who wouldn't even speak to her, so she decided to leave town. What was the point of sticking around?

Ruby had stopped coming around as much since she and Luke had gotten a place out in the country. She saw her friend once or twice a month and that was usually around McTavish. Ruby was busy with Luke—building her new life and getting ready for the baby. Watching how happy her friend was should have made her happy too, but it didn't. Instead, Millie only saw what she wanted and didn't have. She was going to be a single mom and have no support from a loving partner. Sticking around and watching Ruby have everything that Millie wanted wasn't her idea of a good time. So, she gave her notice at McTavish, making sure that Ranger would be the one to receive it since he was technically her boss, and then, she packed up her meager belongings and left town. She had found a job that she could work from home, and she really didn't have to move—that part was a total lie. Millie could work from anywhere, but she knew that she couldn't stay in town. Her friends would start noticing her baby bump sooner or later, and then, Ranger would find out about the little secret that she was keeping. Millie knew that she'd have to tell him about the baby eventually, but she wanted time to think before that happened. Plus, there was nothing he could do for her until after the baby got there. That's when she planned on telling him and leaving town was her only option, and it worked out for her too—at first.

She liked her new little apartment. It had just enough room for her and the baby. Later, when the baby grew and would need a room of his or her own, she'd find a bigger place, but for now, she'd save some money for everything that the baby would need. Baby items weren't cheap, and the crib alone was going to set her back almost a week's salary. Still, she had a

little bit of time and was a master at budgeting. Plus, she learned to scout out yard sales and secondhand shops for almost everything that she was going to need. If she played her cards right, she could be ready before the baby got there, and that was the plan. Millie would have to take a couple of weeks off, but for the most part, she'd be able to get back to work quickly, working from home. Being able to work around her baby's schedule was one of the main reasons she took the job. Millie also liked the fact that she wouldn't have to put the baby in daycare to return to work. She was really beginning to feel as though she had gotten her life together—until that call with Ruby.

Millie would have never thought that Ruby would betray her the way that she had, putting the call on speaker for Ranger to listen to and getting her to say things that she normally wouldn't. Ruby wasn't playing fair, and now, Millie had to figure out what to do next.

She sat back on the sofa, her hand on her belly, and smiled. "I think that we'll stay right here," she said. "I'm sure that your father won't bother to come looking for us, and if he does, I'll just tell him to leave us alone." She half expected a response but got none. She knew that her plan to stick around could backfire on her. Ranger could show up and prove her wrong. The only question that remained was why was she actually hoping for that to happen. Millie didn't usually like to be proven wrong, but in this case, she'd make an exception.

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## RANGER

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Ranger left Luke and Ruby's house to run to his own, grab a few essentials, and then, he took off for the address that he'd found for Millie. She wasn't the only one who could track people down. He had done a pretty good job finding her when she made it nearly impossible to find where she had moved to. Her only mistake was that she left her new address with HR to have her last paycheck sent. It took him breaking into the HR office after hours and going through her file, but he had found her.

He drove two hours south and finally found the apartment complex in a not-so-great-looking part of town. He was sure that she had picked the most run-down place in the whole county and moved into it. What the hell was she thinking?

Ranger parked his car in the lot in front of her building and practically ran up the two flights of steps to her place on the second floor. There was no security and nothing to stop anyone from getting into her place—him included.

He banged on the door a few times, and when she didn't answer, he shouted her name through the door. "Millie, I know that you're in there," he yelled.

A little, old woman to the left of Millie's apartment opened her door and peeked out at him. "Do I need to call the police?" she asked.

"No ma'am," he insisted. "I just need to talk to Millie. Do you know her?"

“Nope,” the woman said, “that one keeps to herself.” That sounded like Millie—well, what he knew of her. Ranger really didn’t know her much at all, besides what he learned about her during their one night together. He remembered everything about her from that night, including her breathy little sighs every time he kissed her or touched her just right. He shook his head, trying to shake those memories loose so that he could concentrate on the here and now.

“Are you all right?” the woman asked.

“I am,” he lied. He wasn’t. Nothing about what was happening made him feel all right in any way. “I just really need to talk to Millie.”

“I noticed that she’s pregnant,” the woman said. Yeah, everyone had noticed that except for him. “Are you the baby’s father?” It wasn’t any of Millie’s nosey neighbor’s business, but maybe if he answered just a few of her questions, he’d be able to get into her place to talk to her.

“I am,” he admitted. “Although, she didn’t bother telling me that. I just found out and that’s why I’d like to talk to her.” There, maybe a bit of honesty would play in his favor.

“If you promise not to upset her, I can give you a key to her place. My friend who used to live there passed away and I still have the key she gave me. I doubt that Millie changed the locks since she moved in.” Yeah, he doubted that too.

“Thank you,” he said. “I really appreciate it.” He waited outside the older woman’s door for her to return with the key. She handed it to him and smiled.

“Go easy on her,” she said. “Us women make some crazy decisions when we find out that we’re pregnant. Just give her a chance to explain,” she said.

Ranger nodded and thanked her. It wasn’t really Millie who needed to explain anything to him. He was the one who had some explaining to do. He was the one who had shut her out of his life and basically turned his back on her. Ranger didn’t give her a chance to tell him about the baby, and that was on him.



He quietly walked back to Millie's door and opened it, hoping that she didn't buy a gun or taser in the past couple of months. He was essentially breaking into her place, and she'd have every right to clobber him over the head if given the chance. He waved to her neighbor who was still watching him and quietly shut her front door. The last thing he needed while he groveled was an audience.

Ranger looked around her tiny apartment. It looked like Millie had already started to buy a few things for the baby and the thought of not being included in any of that made him sad. He walked back through the dark apartment to the only bedroom and found Millie sleeping. She looked so peaceful, he almost didn't want to wake her, but he had to. He didn't come all this way to not talk to her.

He reached down and touched her shoulder, shaking her just a bit. "Millie," he whispered.

"Not now," she breathed.

"Millie, it's time to wake up," Ranger insisted.

"Just five more minutes," she begged. "My head hurts."

"Shit," Ranger grumbled. "Millie, you need to wake up now, honey," he said.

"Can't open my eyes," she grumbled. "Hurts too much."

"That's it," he said, "I'm taking you to the hospital." He pocketed the key that her neighbor gave him and picked Millie up, noticing her belly. She was really pregnant with his baby and there would be no denying it now. He cradled her against his chest and walked with her out of her apartment. Ranger shut and locked her front door and carried her to his pickup truck. He got her settled, making sure that she was buckled in, and then rounded his truck to get into the driver's seat. He programmed the closest hospital into his GPS and pulled out of the parking lot.

"We'll be to the hospital in just ten minutes, honey," he promised. "Just hold on."

"Head hurts," she repeated.

“I know, Millie,” he said, taking her hand into his own. “We’re going to get you all fixed up.” She seemed so helpless, all he wanted to do was take care of her. He planned on going into her place, apologizing to her, and then asking her a million questions about why she left without telling him about the baby. She was all alone in the world, and she didn’t have to be. Instead, he found her in pain and all he wanted now was for everything to be all right with both her and the baby.

He found the entrance to the ER and pulled right up to the front door. He got out of his truck and shouted at the security guard manning the front door. “I have a pregnant woman here and she’s in distress. I need a wheelchair or a bed.” The guard disappeared into the building and came back out with two other people who Ranger assumed were nurses or doctors, and a gurney.

“Let’s get her up onto the gurney and we’ll take her from there.” He panicked thinking that they might not let him go in with her.

“Can I be with her?” he asked. “I don’t want to leave her. The baby is mine,” Ranger said. Saying those words out loud for the first time really threw him off kilter. He was going to be a father and seeing Millie made that all too clear.

“You can come in with her, but you might not be able to stay for all of the tests that we have to run. Right now, we need to take her vitals. You can park over there and come in to join her. What’s her name?”

“Her name is Millie Jenkins,” he said. “Please, help her.”

“We’ll do our best,” one of the nurses promised. He parked his car and then followed them into the ER. They wheeled her into a cubical that barely fit the gurney in, let alone him, two nurses, and a doctor.

“Millie, I’m Dr. Drew. Can you open your eyes for me and tell me what’s going on?” They were hooking her up to a bunch of machines and suddenly a loud whooshing sound filled the room.

“What’s that?” Ranger asked one of the nurses.

“It’s the baby’s heartbeat,” a nurse said. “It’s nice and strong” That was one less worry, but Millie still looked so frail.

“Head hurts,” she mumbled.

“She said that it hurts to open her eyes,” Ranger helped.

“Check her blood pressure, please,” the doctor ordered one of the nurses. She strapped a cuff around Millie’s arm, and he could tell by her face that it wasn’t good.

“It’s 180/110,” she whispered loud enough that Ranger could hear her.

“Okay, we need to get that blood pressure under control. I’m betting that’s the cause of her headache,” the doctor assured. He gave instructions to the nurses as to what to give Millie and promised to check back in on her in a few minutes. One of the nurses drew some blood and assured him that she’d be back just as soon as they got the results. They were all gone in a matter of minutes, and he was left wondering what was going to happen next. Ranger did the only thing that he could. He sat down next to her on the gurney and pulled her hand into his own.

“We’re going to be all right, honey. All three of us,” he promised. Ranger just hoped that it was a promise that he wouldn’t have to break to her.

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They got back from the hospital late that night and he was dead on his feet. He knew that Millie had to be feeling even worse than he was, given the fact that she was carrying around another human inside of her. The doctors said that she had hypertension and assured her that it was quite normal during pregnancy. Millie had to be on bed rest for the rest of her pregnancy and she didn’t seem very happy about that fact. Honestly, she didn’t seem very happy that Ranger was there either, but if he hadn’t barged into her apartment, she might have had a stroke. When the doctors told her that, she calmed down a bit.

They had driven home in near silence, besides him asking her if she was all right and her nodding her head at him while staring out the front windshield. When he parked in front of her apartment building, she turned and thanked him for the ride, effectively dismissing him.

“That’s not how this is going to work, honey,” Ranger said. “I didn’t drive all this way to be your chauffeur. I’m going to come in and we’re going to talk. Then, I’m going to sleep on your sofa because I want to be able to keep an eye on you both.” She rolled her eyes at him and sighed, and he couldn’t help but laugh at her theatrics.

“Why did you come here, Ranger?” she asked. “You’ve ignored me for months now and all of the sudden, you want to talk about everything. Well, guess what—I’m not interested.”

“You don’t have to talk,” he assured. “In fact, I’m the one who should be doing all of the talking here. I came to apologize to you for the way that I acted.”

She crossed her arms over her chest, “I’m listening.”

“I’ll explain it all, but I need for you to get into bed. You just got out of the hospital and you’re on bed rest now.”

“I’m aware,” she sassed. Millie sighed and climbed into her bed. “Fine,” she said. “I’m in bed, now talk.”

“After our night together, I freaked out. You weren’t budging on letting me stay with you, to keep you safe, and I wasn’t willing to give you what you wanted—a relationship. I couldn’t give you that because I had never been in a relationship with anyone. I was afraid that I’d fuck things up with you, and then, when you told me that you wanted the job at McTavish, I knew that making you promises would only end badly for us both. The crazy thing is, I still managed to fuck everything up. You should have been able to come to me to tell me about the baby, at the very least. You should have known that you could turn to me and that I would have been there for you, but you had to go it all alone. I’m sorry, Millie,” he said.

“I appreciate you saying all of that, Ranger,” she said. “It means a lot. And for what it’s worth, I’m sorry that I didn’t tell you about the baby. I shouldn’t have kept him or her a secret, but I worried that you wouldn’t care about either of us. I guess it was easier to not tell you and hope that one day, you’d find out and want our baby in your life.”

“I would like the chance to be a part of his or her life. While I was driving here, I had some time to think, and I’m not promising that I’ll be a good father, but I’d like to try.”

“I’d be good with that,” Millie said. “I’ll need all the help I can get, especially now that I’m going to be on bed rest for the next three months.”

“I’ll do whatever you need, honey, but I have to make one request. I need to go back home, to work. How about taking your old job back? I’m sure that we can make it a work from home deal like you have here.”

“I won’t come back to McTavish. I like my new job, but I can live anywhere. I’ll go home with you, but I’m afraid that I can’t get my apartment back. I’ll need some time to find a place, but once I do, I’ll come back.”

“You don’t have to stay here, Millie. I don’t want to leave you here alone. You can move to my place. Hell, my house has four bedrooms, and you can take your pick.” He wanted to ask her for more. Ranger wanted to ask if she’d share his bed, but it was too soon to push her for more. He was just lucky that she accepted his apology and was agreeing to come back home with him.

“Can I think about your offer?” she asked around a yawn. “I’m really tired and would like to get some sleep.”

“All right,” Ranger agreed. “I’ll run to the pharmacy and pick up your blood pressure medication while you rest. Are you hungry?” he asked.

“I’m starving and I’d love a burger and some watermelon,” she said.

“Um, a burger and watermelon?” he questioned.

“Yes,” she said. “It’s what I’ve been craving lately. I love the burger place around the corner, and I have some watermelon cut up in my refrigerator. Oh—and a vanilla milkshake so that I can dunk my watermelon in it.” He must have made a face because she giggled and rubbed her belly. “Blame this kid of ours. I have had the craziest cravings since my second trimester.”

“Okay, I’ll be back as soon as possible.” He pointed at Millie, “You stay put,” he ordered.

She gave him a mock salute and rolled over to her side. “Lock up on your way out.”

“Will do,” he assured. He left her apartment, locking the front door on his way out. He’d call Luke and Ruby to let them know that he had found Millie and that she was safe. He was going to be sticking around for a bit until he could get Millie packed up and moved home because there was no way that he was going to leave her behind.

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Ranger was able to catch a few hours of sleep on Millie’s very uncomfortable sofa before his cell phone rang early the next morning. He had fallen asleep and forgotten to call Ruby and Luke after he ran out to pick up Millie’s medication. He was so focused on getting back to her, that he blocked out everything else that he had to do.

“Hello,” he grumbled.

“You okay?” Luke asked, “You haven’t checked in.”

“Yeah, sorry,” Ranger said. “I had to get Millie settled after we got back from the hospital, and I guess that I was more tired than I thought.”

“Hospital?” Ruby shouted into the other end of the phone, causing him to hold his cell phone from his ear. “What the hell is going on, Ranger?”

“Hey, Ruby,” he whispered. “When I found Millie, she was asleep in her bed. I tried to wake her, and she said she had a

headache. I took her to the ER to have her checked out. It's a long story," Ranger said.

"Well, I've got time," Ruby spat, "continue, please." He knew that she wasn't asking. Ruby could be quite demanding when she wanted to be.

"Her blood pressure was up, and the doctors put her on some medication and bed rest for the next three months until the baby comes. They said she had hypertension, but that it's quite normal in pregnant women. They want to see her every week until she delivers, and I got a blood pressure machine for home so that we can monitor it here—or there. She's agreed to come home with me."

"Thank God," Ruby breathed. "I've been so worried about her. Is the baby okay?" she asked.

Ranger felt a little choked up as he nodded and hummed. "The baby's heartbeat is strong. They want to see Millie back tomorrow for a sonogram. Their machine was down in the ER, and we had to schedule with maternity for tomorrow morning. I'm hoping to have her apartment packed up in the next few days so that I can get her back home by the weekend. Can you cover for me at work, Luke?" he asked.

"Of course," his friend agreed. "I'll take care of everything on that end. You just make sure that Millie and the baby are all right. We can help you out when you get home with unpacking her stuff. Where will she be staying?" he asked.

"With me," Ranger growled.

"All right then," Ruby said, causing Luke to chuckle. "Just keep us updated," she ordered.

"Will do," Ranger agreed. "And thanks for doing what you did earlier. I know that you felt bad about tricking Millie, but it possibly saved both her and the baby's lives. I owe you, Ruby," he said.

"Not at all," Ruby said. "I'm just glad that it all worked out and that they are both safe. Talk soon." He ended the call and turned to find Millie standing in the doorway.

"How much did you hear?" he asked.

“Most of it.” She shrugged and smiled at him. “I guess we’re all guilty for eavesdropping,” she teased. “But I’m thankful for what Ruby did too. I was angry with her, but if you didn’t come here, things could have ended very badly for us both,” she said, rubbing her belly through her t-shirt.

“Why are you out of bed?” he asked.

“Because I had to pee, and I’d rather not wear a diaper. I’m hoping that we can agree to me using the bathroom because if not, things will get very messy. Besides, the doctor said that I can shower and move to the couch when I get tired of laying in bed. I’m following the doctor’s orders. I wouldn’t do anything to hurt my baby.”

“Our baby,” he corrected.

“Our baby,” she agreed. “That’s going to take me some getting used to, sorry.”

“Me too, but we’ll figure it out,” he assured.

“I’d like to take a shower and I’m starving again,” she said.

He chuckled, “Okay, I’ll make us something to eat, and you take a shower. Anything I should avoid? I know that Ruby has a long list of things that she won’t eat since getting pregnant.”

“Nope,” Millie said. “I really have nothing that I won’t eat right now, unfortunately. I’m always hungry.” She looked down at her belly and back up at him, making a face.

“Well, if I get a vote, I like your new body. I mean, being pregnant suits you, Millie.” She turned the cutest shade of pink and nodded, turning to go back to her room.

“I won’t be long,” she shouted back. “I’d love some scrambled eggs and toast with lots of butter.”

“Got it,” he said.



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## MILLIE

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Millie woke before the sun was up the next morning. She was excited about seeing the baby today. Although, she wasn't sure how she felt about having Ranger with her when it happened. It was going to take some time to get used to him being around. Keeping her secret was easier than sharing her pregnancy with him. She wasn't sure how any of this was going to work between them, but they only had three months to figure it all out. Then, their little person would be there, and they needed to have their shit together. Their baby deserved at least that much from the two of them.

Going back home with Ranger was the right thing to do. She was going to need help and there was no reason for her to hide away now that he knew about the baby. Plus, it would be nice to see her friends again and share her news—especially with Ruby. Millie had to be careful about everything that she said to her friend over the past few months, but now, she'd be able to ask Ruby a gazillion questions about being pregnant. Plus, they could have playdates and talk about everything baby, once their little ones were born. She was actually excited about going home. What she wasn't excited about was having to live with Ranger. She was sure that decision was a mistake, but what choice did she have? She couldn't impose on Ruby with her baby coming in just two months. She'd really need to be settled in the next few months and living in someone's spare room wasn't her idea of home. Millie would give herself some time, but as soon as it was safe for her and the baby, she'd find an apartment nearby Ranger so that he could help out with the baby.

“You’re up early,” Ranger said when she walked into the kitchen to get a glass of water.

“Yeah, I guess I’m excited about the sonogram today. I can’t wait to see him or her,” she admitted, rubbing her belly. “Do you think that they’ll be able to tell us what we’re having?” she asked.

“Do you want to know?” Ranger asked.

“I think that I’d like to know,” she said. “I’ve picked up a few things for the baby, as money has allowed,” she said nodding to the few items that she had been able to get second-hand. “I would like to buy some gender-specific clothing and decorate the nursery when I can find my own apartment.”

“Your own apartment?” he asked. “I thought that you said that you’d stay with me.”

“Your spare room isn’t a home for our baby. I mean, I’m sure that you’ll want a room for him or her, but our child should have a place in both of our homes.”

“When did we decide on two separate homes, Millie?” Ranger growled.

“Well, I certainly don’t remember agreeing to one home for the three of us, Ranger,” she said. “I mean, you only just started talking to me again after six months of ignoring me.”

“And I said that I was sorry about that. I acted like an ass,” he countered.

“You did, but your apology doesn’t mean that we’re living together now,” she said. “I mean, I’m still trying to get used to you knowing about my baby.”

“Our baby,” he shouted. Ranger sighed and took a step back from her. “Listen, this isn’t good for your blood pressure. Let’s just have breakfast and I need coffee. Then, maybe we can sit down and figure some of this mess out. There has to be a compromise in all of this, somewhere.” She wasn’t sure if they would find a compromise any time soon. She hated feeling so unsure of not only herself but of Ranger too.

“I just want to see the baby and make sure that everything is all right with my pregnancy,” she admitted. “After that, we can sit down and come up with some ground rules. I appreciate you letting me live with you, but I won’t cramp your style. I don’t want to be a burden. I hope that we can be friends, Ranger,” she said, “for our baby’s sake.”

He paced the floor in front of her, something that he did a lot, and ran his fingers through his already unruly hair. “What if I wanted to be more than friends, Millie?” he asked.

“We tried that, and it didn’t work,” she reminded. After their night together she wanted him to move in with her, but not to keep her safe. Ranger went on and on about him moving in with her for her own safety and that just pissed her off. Millie wondered if he had slept with her just to get her to agree to let him move into her place to keep an eye on her. She wanted to ask him if he felt anything for her, but she was sure that she already knew his answer and it was only going to hurt her feelings.

“We slept together once,” he said. “That hardly counts as us being more than just friends. I won’t fuck it up again, Millie. Just give me another chance to prove that to you.”

“Can I think about it?” Millie asked. She noted the disappointment in his face, and she felt bad for making him feel that way, but she didn’t want to rush into anything that would affect her baby. If she moved into Ranger’s place permanently, and it didn’t work out, her child would be the one paying the price and she couldn’t allow that to happen. This decision was going to be one that she wouldn’t take lightly, even if her not giving Ranger an answer right away, upset him.

“Sure,” he agreed. “You should shower and get dressed while I make us something to eat. We’ll need to leave for the hospital in just over an hour.” They had given her the earliest appointment that they had for her sonogram. She was thankful that she wouldn’t have to wait all day to make sure that her baby was all right. It was torture trying to sleep last night without having all of the answers that she needed to hear. As

soon as she found out that the baby was all right, she'd find a way to sit quietly and decide what to do about Ranger's offer.

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By the time she checked into the hospital for her tests and sonogram, she was about ten minutes late. "How is it possible that I'm up before dawn and still late for my appointment?" she asked Ranger.

"You took forever in the shower," Ranger grumbled.

"Hey, you took forever to make breakfast," she accused.

The technician who had gotten her ready for her sonogram giggled. "How long have you two been married?" she asked.

"What? We're not married," Millie insisted. "We're not even together. We had sex once and I got pregnant, but then, he ghosted me."

"Jesus," Ranger moaned, "can you not tell everyone our personal business? I mean, I've apologized a few times now. What will it take for you to actually forgive me, Millie?" he asked.

"I'm not sure yet, but I'll let you know," she hissed. The technician pulled up Millie's shirt exposing her belly and she almost wanted to tell her to cut it out. It was the first time that Ranger had seen her belly since the night that he got her pregnant. Her body had changed so much, that she worried that he'd find her gross now.

"Sorry to bring it up and cause a tiff," the technician said. "You two just act like an old married couple. You certainly argue like one too. This might be a little cold," she said, squirting some gel onto Millie's belly.

"Will we be able to find out the baby's sex?" she asked.

"I'll try," the technician said. "Sometimes these little guys don't cooperate. If I can tell, do you want to know?" she asked.

"I'd like to know," Millie agreed.

“I don’t know that I’d like to know,” Ranger said. “I like to have some things be a surprise.”

“Well, I just surprised you two days ago, letting you know that I was pregnant with your baby. Wasn’t that enough of a surprise for a bit?” Millie asked.

“If you don’t want to know, you can always step out of the room,” the technician offered.

“But then Millie will know, and I won’t,” Ranger said.

“Right—we’ll both get what we want. We’ll be compromising just like you said earlier,” Millie said.

“You didn’t let me finish what I was going to say,” Ranger said.

“Go on then,” Millie prompted.

“I was going to say that you have a big mouth and will tell everyone in town, including our mutual friends and I’ll eventually find out what we’re having. So, it’s not really a compromise. I’ll eventually lose.”

“I’m not sure what you want me to say here, Ranger. I want to know the sex of the baby—my baby,” she said.

“Our baby,” he shouted, causing the technician to jump. “Stop calling him or her your baby. We made that baby together and it’s our kid.”

“Fine,” Millie spat. “I’m going to find out what sex our baby is since he or she is inside of my body and it’s my decision to know.” The technician was bobbing her head back and forth between the two of them as if she was watching a ping pong match.

“Have we made some kind of decision here? I have a full schedule today,” the technician said. “How about if I can tell the baby’s sex, I’ll write it down and put it into an envelope. You two can decide what to do with it later after you’ve had some time to think about it, and maybe some couple’s counseling.” Millie wanted to point out that they didn’t need couple’s counseling because they weren’t a couple, but that wasn’t the truth. Even if they weren’t together romantically,

they were still two people who were going to raise a child together and that made them a couple, for better or worse.

“That sounds fair to me,” Ranger agreed.

“Me too, as long as you promise not to destroy the envelope before we decide what to do, just to get your way,” Millie said.

“I wouldn’t do that,” Ranger challenged. Millie made a humming noise in the back of her throat letting him know that she didn’t believe him for a second. He’d do it and then tell her it was for her own good. Kind of like when he told her that he wasn’t jumping into bed with her again for her own good. She was sick to death of Ranger telling her the way things were going to be. He was the one who had decided to stop talking to her. He was the one who pushed her aside as if their night together meant nothing to him. It’s one of the reasons why she quit at McTavish. She loved her job there but working under Ranger with him not speaking to her, was almost too much.

“Let’s see what I can find,” the technician offered. She put the wand over the gel and moved it around. It felt cold and clammy on Millie’s skin as she spread it around, trying to get a good picture of the baby. She got to work, taking measurements, and assuring them both along the way that the baby looked good.

“Ah,” the technician breathed.

“Can you tell what we’re having?” Millie asked.

She smiled and nodded at Millie, “I can. I’ll write it down and give you each your own envelope. That way, you can make the decision together. Or, if you go your separate ways, you’ll still have your answer.”

“We aren’t going our separate ways,” Ranger insisted. “Millie’s moving in with me once we get back home.”

“I thought that we weren’t telling strangers our business,” Millie challenged.

“Right, sorry,” Ranger grumbled. “I just want you both to know that I’m in this for the long haul. I’m that kid’s father,”

he said, pointing to the screen. “I plan on being here for him or her, and for you too, Millie, if you’ll allow it. I’m not going anywhere.” Hearing Ranger say those things to her gave her so much hope, but Millie had been hopeful before. The night that they shared gave her hope that something more was happening between the two of them than just sex, but she was wrong. He only wanted her for one night, but now, he was stuck with her forever. They’d forever be linked by the child that they created that one night together and they were going to have to find a way to get along somehow.

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## RANGER

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Ranger spent most of the afternoon packing under Millie's supervision while she lay on the sofa and did some work. The doctor was pleased with her blood pressure and said that as long as she took it easy, she could go back home. Millie was ordered to find and check in with her new OBGYN as soon as they got back home and she texted Ruby and got the name of her doctor. He was happy to see that Millie was taking this health scare seriously. It was crazy since he had only just found out about the baby, but he didn't want to lose them. Ranger knew that Millie still had not forgiven him for shoving her out of his life as he had, but he really hoped that with some time, she'd find a way to do just that. He hoped that it would be before their baby came, but he wouldn't push her.

His cell phone rang in his pocket, and he was thankful for the break from packing. His back was beginning to ache, and he was ready to sit for a few minutes. "Hello," he answered.

"Hey man, it's me. I'm sorry to reach out to you on an unknown number, but we have a problem," Luke said.

"A problem?" Ranger asked. "It must be a pretty damn big problem if you're using a burner phone."

"You know how Joo Wan tracked me to find out where his wife and sons were?" Luke asked. Ranger remembered every terrifying minute of that ordeal.

"Yeah, he tried to kill you and almost took me out too," Ranger reminded. Joo Wan believed that Luke knew where his wife and sons were, but he didn't. He was given fake intel



while they were both in the military, and he had no idea how to find Wan's family. But Wan didn't believe him and tracked down Luke all those years later, trying to get the answers he so desperately wanted. Ranger got involved and called Millie to do some digging around to find out where Wan's family was. Unfortunately, she found out that they were all dead—killed by Wan's own government.

“He wants Millie,” Luke said.

“What do you mean by he wants Millie?” Ranger asked. He was trying to be as quiet as possible since Millie was sleeping in the next room. She needed her rest, and he didn't want to wake her.

“He knows that Millie was the one who found out about his family. I don't know how and I'm not sure what he wants, but he's sent out men to find her. They stopped by McTavish today, asking about her. The guy gave me Wan's business card and told me to have Millie contact him as soon as I heard from her.”

“Shit,” Ranger grumbled.

“That sounds about right,” Luke said. “They said that Wan wants to offer her a job, but we both know what that means. He wants to put Millie on his payroll and that won't end well for her or any of us, really.”

“And if she refuses?” Ranger asked. “I mean, is turning Wan down even an option?”

“I'm guessing not,” Luke said. “What are you going to do?”

“Well, I can tell you that I'm not coming home with her. I mean, if Wan's men are already there looking for her, I won't bring her back to be found. I'm just not sure where we should go. She's six months pregnant and on bed rest for the next three months. I'm not really sure where I can take her that's safe for her and the baby.”

“Stay put for the night, and give me time to think,” Luke ordered. “I'm sure that between the two of us, we'll be able to find you a place to lay low until this passes.”

“This might not ever pass, and then what?” Ranger asked.

“I don’t have the answer for that either,” Luke said. “But I’m willing to give it some thought. There has to be a way to get Wan to back down again.” Ranger thought that had already happened. They gave him the answers that he was looking for, but now, he wanted more, and there was no way that Ranger would let Millie give that asshole what he wanted. Luke was right, if she agreed to work for Wan, he’d lose her, and Ranger just found her again. He wasn’t going to let that happen.

“Thanks for the heads up,” Ranger said. “I’ve got her apartment just about packed up. We’ll need to get out of here sooner than later. If they tracked her to McTavish, they’ll be able to find her here, and her security is crappy.”

“Just give me until the morning,” Luke said. “I’ll have a place for you two to go to by then.”

“Talk in the morning then,” Ranger agreed. He ended the call and debated on whether or not to tell Millie about his call with Luke. She’d want to know but upsetting her wouldn’t be good for her blood pressure. He promised her his honesty, and if he screwed that up now, he might not get a third chance with her. He was going to have to tell her, and that was something that he wasn’t looking forward to.

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He waited her out, letting her finish her nap, and the two hours seemed to drag on. “You got a lot packed,” she said, looking around her apartment. After he got off of the phone with Luke, he kicked his packing into high gear.

“Yeah, about that,” he said. “We need to talk.”

“Already?” she asked. “I thought that you’d at least save this speech for later. You do know that you don’t have to break up with me because we’re not together, right?”

“It’s not that kind of talk,” he said. “We aren’t breaking up because we have a child to raise together. Luke called and gave me some bad news.”

“Oh God, is Ruby all right?” she asked.

“Yeah, she’s good. It’s about you. Do you remember why Luke and Ruby had to go on the run? They had a guy named Joo Wan who was looking for Luke. He thought that Luke had information about where his wife and two sons were.”

“I remember,” Millie said. “You called me and asked me to track them down, and I found out that his poor family was killed.”

“Right,” Ranger agreed. “I’m so sorry that I involved you, honey,” he breathed. “Wan is looking for you. He sent a couple of guys to McTavish and gave Luke his business card for you to get in touch. He wants to offer you a job.”

“A job doing what?” Millie asked.

“It doesn’t matter what he wants you to do,” Ranger insisted. “You won’t be taking his job. Nothing he’ll ask you to do will be legal and when he’s finished with you, he’ll get rid of you. You’ll end up like his wife and sons. I don’t want that to happen to you or our baby.”

“I agree,” she said, “I just can’t believe that he wants me to work for him. I didn’t do anything except hack into his government’s computer system to find out where his family was.”

“I’m guessing that they will want you to do a good bit of work like that, but I don’t want you involved with him,” Ranger said.

“So, now you’re telling me what to do?” she sassed. Ranger knew that the right answer was no, but he just couldn’t seem to help himself.

“Yes,” he growled, “I won’t let you work for him. It’s not safe.”

She crossed her arms over her chest and stared him down. “It’s a good thing for you that I don’t want to work for that man,” she said. “I like my current job. It gives me flexibility.”

“And from the looks of this place, pays like shit,” Ranger added.

“What I’m being paid is none of your business, Ranger,” Millie spat. “I needed to make sure that I could save some money for when the baby gets here. Babies need a lot of stuff, and I was all alone in this.”

“And that’s on you. If you would have told me about the baby, I could have helped you, Millie. I’m going to help take care of our baby now, though,” he promised. “And whether you like it or not, I’m going to take care of you, Millie. I want to be a part of this, please, just let me in,” he begged.

She swiped at the tears that ran down her beautiful face and he groaned, crossing the room to pull her into his arms. The last thing he wanted to do was upset her and make her cry. “Don’t cry,” he ordered.

“I’m afraid,” she whispered.

“Of me?” he asked. She nodded and he took a step back from her, giving her some room. “What do you have to be afraid of me for?” he asked.

“I’m afraid that if I let you in and let you get close to me again, you’ll hurt me all over. You ignoring me the way that you did, Ranger, it broke my heart,” she sobbed. He couldn’t help himself. He pulled her against his body and held her close, and damn if she didn’t feel right there.

“I won’t do that ever again, Millie. I swear to you. If we’re being honest here, you scared me too,” he admitted. If he wanted a chance with Millie, he was going to finally have to come clean and that would involve discussing feelings and all of the shit that he usually tried to avoid.

“I did?” she asked, seeming a bit confused. “How did I scare you, Ranger?” she asked.

“That one night that we shared, I felt something for you, and it scared the hell out of me. It’s why I ran, like a coward, the next day, and shut you out of my life. I tried to tell myself that my job was to keep you safe. It’s what I promised Ruby and Luke but spending the night with you; that was for me. I wanted you, Millie. If I’m being honest, I still do. I’m just not very good at feelings and all that shit.”

She looked up at him and pressed her lips together, “You want me?” she whispered.

“I do,” he said. “Hell, I want you in my bed. I want you in my life. I want you, Millie. You’re the sexiest fucking woman I’ve ever met and if I have to say it out loud then I will. I still have feelings for you and that still scares the hell out of me.”

“You think that I’m sexy?” she asked.

“So fucking sexy,” he growled.

“But my body is so different from the last time you saw it,” she whispered.

“I don’t give a fuck about any of that. Seeing you pregnant with my baby—with all of those sexy curves, I’m a mess, honey,” he said.

She crossed the room to pick up her cell phone from the counter. “What are you doing?” he asked.

“I’m calling the doctor and asking if it’s okay for me to have sex. It was the one question that I didn’t ask because I didn’t know that it was an option.”

“Sex?” he asked. She held her finger to her lips as if silently telling him to shut up and he nodded. Ranger felt as though he was holding his damn breath waiting for her to get her answer.

“Hello, I need to talk to Dr. Holloway,” she said. “Um, sure, I can speak to his nurse. Oh, this is Millie Jenkins.” She smiled over at him when the receptionist put her on hold, and he rolled his eyes. He loved how sassy she was and right now, Millie was giving him full-on sass.

“Hi,” Millie said when the nurse answered. “This is Millie Jenkins. I’m a patient of Dr. Holloway’s. I have a quick question—can I have sex?” she asked. Ranger could hear the nurse giggling on the other end of the call while Millie patiently waited her out. When the sound of laughter finally ended, Millie made a few humming noises and nodded her head, thanking the nurse for her help before ending the call. She tossed her cell phone back to the kitchen counter and looked over at Ranger.

“Well?” he almost shouted.

“Well, she said that my blood pressure was good at the last visit. She told me to take my pressure before and after sex but having a few orgasms might help to relax me and would be good for the baby.”

“So, that’s a yes,” Ranger breathed.

“Yep,” she said. “Want to take my blood pressure for me?” she asked. He nodded and walked back to the bedroom to grab the machine. He found her sitting on the sofa when he got back to the tiny family room, and he sat down next to her.

“I never thought of taking someone’s blood pressure as foreplay,” he teased, “but, this is hot.” Millie giggle and held out her arm.

“I think so too,” she agreed. He put the cuff on her arm and kissed her. God, it felt good to put his lips on her again. She still tasted like heaven. He asked if the cuff was too tight and she shook her head, leaning into him. He turned on the machine and listened to it hum to life as the cuff inflated. As the numbers appeared on the machine and the cuff deflated, he felt as though he was holding his damn breath again. Millie had her eyes closed, relaxing and breathing, and he couldn’t help but kiss her again.

“Stop,” she whispered against his lips. “Every time you kiss me, I can feel my pressure go up.” He chuckled and sat back, waiting for the machine to beep that it was finished. As soon as it did, he looked down to find that her blood pressure was nearly perfect.

“It’s good,” he whispered into her ear, “you can open your eyes again.” Millie opened her eyes and looked at the machine as if she needed to see for herself that everything he was telling her was true.

“It is,” she breathed. Millie climbed on top of his lap, straddling him, and when she asked if it was okay, all Ranger could do was groan and pull her down for a kiss. Having her on top of him was more than okay, but he just couldn’t seem to get the words out.

He halted her from rubbing herself against him, putting his hands on either side of her curvy hips. “Before we do this, Millie,” he whispered. “I need to know that you forgive me for ghosting you.”

“I do,” she said. “As long as you’ll forgive me for not trying harder to tell you about the baby. I should have found a way,” she said.

“Forgiven,” he said. She smiled and leaned in to kiss him, her belly rubbing against him. “One more thing, honey,” he said, “if we’re doing this, I want to keep doing it.”

“You want to keep having sex with me?” she asked.

“I do,” he admitted. “I want you in my bed, and in my life. I don’t want you to find another place to live, Millie. I want you both to live with me. I want you to be with me—permanently,” he said.

“Permanently?” she breathed. “As in, committed in a relationship together?”

“Yes,” he said. “Do you want that too, Millie?” he asked. She smiled up at him again and nodded.

“I want that with you, Ranger,” she said. “I wanted that since our first night together, but when I asked you to stay because you wanted to and not because you felt the need to keep me safe, you bolted and shut me out. Do you want that with me, Ranger?”

“I do,” he said. “I was an idiot before. I ran because I was a chicken shit and I almost lost you—lost both of you,” he said, running his hands over her belly. “I was confused, but I’m not anymore.”

“I’m happy to hear that,” she said. “Are we finished negotiating?” she asked.

“I think so unless you have something to add,” he said.

“To recap, we’ve both forgiven each other, I’ve agreed to live with you, permanently, and we’ve both agreed to be in a committed relationship. Did I get all of that right?” she asked.

“I believe that you did,” he agreed.

“Then, I think that we’ve done enough negotiating and compromising for one day. Let’s get to the sex part.” She giggled and rubbed herself on him and he had to agree with her—it was time to get to the sex part.

“I think that I should be on top,” she said, “my belly’s getting bigger. And, just keep in mind, my body looks different from it did last time.”

“Got it,” he assured. “And you need to remember that I’ve already told you that you look sexy as hell,” he reminded.

“Got it,” she teased. He pulled her shirt up over her head and ran his hands down her body, cupping her breasts.

“These have definitely changed,” he whispered.

“Yeah, they’ve gotten bigger,” she said.

“And this has changed,” he said, running his hand over her bare belly. “Have you felt the baby kick yet?” he asked.

“Not yet,” she said. “Just little flutters, but that’s about it. I can’t wait to feel the baby kick though.”

“Me too,” he said, “will you let me feel him kick?”

“Him?” she asked. “How do you know that it’s a him and not a her?”

“I don’t,” he admitted, “it’s just a guess.”

“Well, there is a way that we can find out for sure,” she reminded. “Have you given any more thought to opening our envelopes?” He had, but he still wasn’t sure if he wanted to know what they were having. Either way, he’d love the baby, so why did it matter to him? And Millie had just conceded to live with him and give him a second chance that he probably didn’t deserve. He could do this one thing for her.

“I think that we should open the envelopes,” he said. Millie sat back on his lap and looked him over as if he’d lost his mind.

“Really?” she asked.

“Yeah, really,” he agreed. “You agreed to move in with me and stay, I think it’s my turn to meet you halfway. Honestly, it



doesn't matter what we have to me. I'll love the baby no matter what, so let's find out. I know that it's important to you and it will help us to decorate one of the spare rooms as the nursery and finish shopping for this little one."

"You're sure?" she asked.

"Yes," he breathed. He reached around her to the coffee table where he had tossed his envelope and grabbed it, handing it to her. "I know it will drive you crazy if you don't open it before sex."

"See, you do know me," she sassed, taking the envelope from him. "Can I open it?"

"Go for it," he ordered. She quickly opened the envelope and handed him the small slip of paper from inside it.

"Let's read it together," she offered.

"A girl," they both said at the same time.

"It's a girl," she breathed. "I was secretly hoping for a little girl."

"She's going to be perfect, just like her mom," he said. She wrapped her arms around his neck and gently kissed his jaw, working her way up to his lips.

"That's the sweetest thing anyone has ever said to me, Ranger," she said. "I didn't know that you could be so sweet."

"You don't know a lot of things about me and vice versa, but I plan on changing that before this little girl comes out to meet us," he said.

"How exactly do you plan on doing that?" she asked.

"Well, I was thinking that I could start here," he said, kissing her lips, "and then, I'll work my way around."

She giggled and tugged him closer. "I like the way that you think," she agreed. He was glad to hear it because as far as he was concerned, he wasn't going anywhere.

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## MILLIE

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Millie stood and quickly stripped out of her clothes, loving the way that Ranger looked her body over. She was expecting to see some hint of disgust at her new body. She had stretch marks and felt about ready to pop out of her own skin, but he didn't seem put off in the least.

"You are so fucking beautiful, Millie," he said. He had stripped out of his clothes and pulled her back down to straddle his erection. She was already wet and needy and when she pressed her wet folds against his cock, he hissed out his breath. She loved having that kind of effect on him. She'd waited so long to be with him again, and now, she was making him as crazy as he could make her.

"You're beautiful too, Ranger," she whispered. He pulled her down for another kiss and Millie couldn't wait any longer. She slid down onto his shaft, feeling so much fuller than before she was pregnant. He felt so good and all she wanted was to find her release, even if that made her sound selfish.

"I need more," she whimpered. Ranger seemed to know exactly what she needed from him because he quickly snaked his hand down between their bodies and rubbed his thumb over her clit. She felt like her whole body had hummed to life.

"More," she begged, riding his cock and his hand. He pumped into her body, rubbing her clit, and she was sure that she was going to explode.

"I'm going to come," she shouted. Ranger didn't let up as she rode him, and when he called out her name, finding her

release, they both collapsed onto her sofa. Ranger had wrapped his arms and legs around her, his hands resting on her belly. Millie loved the way that he was constantly touching the baby. They laid there like that for the longest time, she was just about asleep when she felt the slightest little nudge in her lower belly.

“Was that a kick?” Ranger asked.

“I think that it was,” she whispered as if saying it out loud would spook the kid. “You felt it too?” she asked.

“Yes, she kicked me,” Ranger said. “Do you think she’ll do it again?” he asked.

“Maybe, if we lay really still and be completely quiet, she’ll do it again,” Millie said.

“She’s not even here yet and she’s already as demanding as her mother,” he teased.

“Ha, ha,” she mumbled. They laid that for what felt like an eternity, Ranger’s hand on her belly, waiting for their baby to make the next move, and when she finally complied, they both cheered like idiots.

“I’ve never been so happy to be kicked by a girl before,” he teased.

“Same,” Millie agreed. “I need to shower, and I’d love some dinner. Do you want to order in tonight? I’m sure that you’re exhausted from packing up this place. The last thing you should do is cook dinner.” While she was on bed rest, she was going to be off cooking duty. But when she had the baby, she’d gladly help cook. She loved to make a nice dinner, even when it was just herself that she had to feed.

“I’d love to order takeout,” he agreed. “What do you want?”

“I’d love some sushi, but I’m not allowed to have that until she comes out,” she said, staring down at her belly. “So, I’ll settle for a burger and a side salad.”

“No fries?” he asked.

“I’m trying to behave, but if you order them, I will eat a few,” she admitted.

“All right,” he agreed, “you take your shower and I’ll order us some dinner and then come and join you. We also need to talk about what to do about Wan. We might not be able to go home just yet. His men were looking for you around McTavish and I’m afraid that they won’t stop until they find you.”

She pouted at him, and he chuckled. “I wanted to go home to nest,” she said. “I want to get things ready for the baby before she gets here. Can’t I just talk to this Wan guy and tell him no thanks for the job?” she asked.

“Probably not, but I do have an idea. Do you trust me to handle this for you?” he asked. “You need to stay calm, and I don’t know that dealing with Wan will help you with that.”

“I’d appreciate that,” she admitted. “I have enough to worry about without having this guy coming for me.”

“Agreed,” Ranger said, “I’ll handle this.” She nodded and stood from the sofa. “Thanks, Ranger.”

“Not a problem, honey,” he said. Millie brazenly walked back to her bathroom naked, knowing that his eyes were on her the whole way, and she loved every minute of being on display.

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Ranger had ordered dinner, joined her in the shower to help wash her back and hair, and then helped her dry off. It was heaven being pampered by Ranger. “A girl could get used to this,” she warned.

“Good,” he said. “I want you to get used to days like this, honey. I like taking care of you and our little girl.” He bent to kiss her belly and she thought that it was the sweetest gesture ever.

“Food will be here in about ten minutes. I’d like to call Luke and get him and Alex McTavish on a conference call.

I'm betting that Wan will not want to mess with a man as powerful as Alex, and I know that he'll help us out of this mess."

"Are you sure?" she asked. "I hate to involve him or McTavish Industries," she said.

"I'm sure," he agreed. "It's the only way." Millie nodded, not sure if she completely agreed with the plan. She knew that if she could just talk to this Wan guy, he'd take no for an answer. When he got his answers about his wife and sons being dead, he stopped coming for Ruby and Luke. She was sure that he'd concede once she told him no.

"How exactly will you contact him?" she asked.

"The guys that he sent to find you left Luke their business card. He forwarded it to me."

"May I see it?" she asked. He hesitated and then handed over his phone to her. Ranger was right about them not knowing each other. He didn't know that she had a photographic memory and once she looked at Wan's phone number, it was committed to her memory. She was going to have to be the one to call him. It might be the only way to end all of this peacefully. If McTavish Industries got involved, Wan might see it as a threat. Millie would simply call him and tell him no thank you for the job offer.

"Well, I'm sure that you'll figure something out," she said. "If you need me in on the call, just let me know. I'm going to lie down for now. Dinner has given me heartburn." She stood and started back for the bedroom. Hoping that Ranger would take the bait.

"Can I get you anything or do anything to help, honey?" he asked.

"I get heartburn a lot. There's an old wives tale that if you get heartburn while pregnant, your baby will be born with a lot of hair. This kid's going to come out looking like a yeti," she teased.

Ranger chuckled, "Well, can you take anything for it?" he asked.

“I can take Tums, but I’m out of them. I needed to make a run to the pharmacy, but with everything that’s been happening, I forgot,” she lied. She had an entire bottle stashed in her purse, but she wasn’t going to tell him that. Millie would need Ranger to go out for a bit if she was going to get her chance to call Wan to turn down his job offer.

“I can run to the pharmacy for you,” he offered. Ranger checked the clock to make sure that it was still early enough to go. “They’ll be open for about another hour.”

“Would you mind?” she asked, even batting her eyelashes at him for good measure. “I’d really appreciate it. I won’t be able to sleep tonight at this rate,” she said, rubbing her hands over her belly. She was really laying it on thick and Millie was surprised that he hadn’t caught onto her act yet.

“I don’t mind at all,” he agreed. He grabbed his truck keys and wallet from the kitchen counter. “Do you need anything besides Tums?” he asked. She shook her head and smiled up at him.

“Nothing else,” she said, “thank you.”

He gave her a quick kiss and turned to leave. “Be back in a flash,” he promised.

“Take your time,” she shouted back, “I’ll be in bed.” That part was true. She was going to behave herself and lay down to rest while she called Wan. Having sex had tired her out and she needed to lay down. Millie just hoped like hell that she was making the right call here because she and her baby’s lives could be in danger if she was playing right into Wan’s hands. She’d just have to stand firm and let him know in no uncertain terms that she’s not interested in working for him.

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Millie pulled her cell phone from the nightstand where she had laid it to charge. She put the number in that she had memorized and waited for someone to answer. She felt as though she was holding her breath while she waited, and her

heart felt like it was racing at the possibility of this being a very bad idea.

“Hello,” a man’s voice answered.

“Um, hello,” Millie said. “I’m trying to reach Mr. Wan,” she breathed.

“Speaking,” he said. “And who might I have the pleasure of speaking with?” he asked. He was charming, Millie gave him that, but if she had to guess, he already knew who was calling him.

“This is Millie Jenkins,” she said. “I got a message that you wished to speak with me.”

“Yes, Miss Jenkins,” he said, “I’d like to offer you a job at my company.”

“A job,” she said, playing dumb, “I already have a job, Mr. Wan. Plus, if I’m not mistaken, you’re located in Korea.”

“South Korea,” he said as if that would make a difference to her.

“Right, and I’m American. I really don’t want to have to relocate to South Korea. I appreciate your job offer though.”

“You can work from America,” he assured. “I have buildings all over the world, actually, you can have your pick.”

“While I’m flattered, I just can’t take your offer. I’m about to have a baby and don’t want to start anything new right now.”

“You can start after your child is born,” he offered.

“I’m afraid that my answer has to remain a no. While I’m extremely flattered, I’m going to have to decline your offer,” she insisted. There, she was sticking to her guns, and hopefully, Wan would take the hint.

“And I’m going to have to insist that you do take my job offer,” he said. “Someone with your set of skills is too important to just let go, Miss Jenkins,” he said. “I won’t let you go so easily.”

“Are you threatening me?” she asked.

“You can take my offer as you will, but I won’t take no for an answer, Miss Jenkins.” Millie heard a noise at her bedroom door, and she looked up to find Ranger standing there staring her down. He crossed the room, took her phone from her, and ended the call.

“You just hung up on him?” she asked.

Ranger looked mad enough to tear something apart. Millie just hoped that it wouldn’t be her. “Do you have any idea what you have just done?” he asked. He tossed her cell phone to the floor and stomped on it as hard as he could with his boot. Pieces of it went flying everywhere. “You just alerted him as to where you are. He probably has your exact location and is sending his men here as we speak. God, Millie, why would you call him?”

She couldn’t help her tears, even though crying in front of Ranger right now was the last thing that she wanted to do. “I thought that I could reason with him,” she insisted.

“There is no reasoning with a man like Wan. He’s a criminal. I thought that you had picked that up when he tried to kill Luke and me by blowing up his house.” Yeah, she should have gotten the hint from that little stint, but she hadn’t.

“I was trying to keep you, Luke, and McTavish out of my problems,” she said.

He sat down on the edge of her bed, and she wondered if she shouldn’t give him some space. Instead, she held her ground, waiting him out.

“And I thought that we discussed the fact that your problems are my problems. That’s what being in a committed relationship is, and you and I both agreed that this thing between us is a committed relationship, remember?” he asked. He was right and Millie was already fucking this thing between them all up.

“I’m sorry,” she sobbed. “I thought that I was helping but I messed everything up.”

“We’ll fix it,” Ranger promised. “The question is, will you trust me to help you this time?”



“Yes,” she promised. “It wasn’t that I didn’t trust you before, I just didn’t want to drag you into this mess.”

“I’m already in it with you, honey,” he assured. “Let me help.” She nodded and he pulled his cell phone from his pocket. “Sorry about your phone. I’ll get you a new one as soon as we get settled.”

“Settled?” she asked.

“Yeah, we’re going to have to move tonight, if we’re going to stay one step ahead of Wan now,” he said. Ranger cuddled in next to her and called Luke, putting him on speaker and then he added Alex McTavish. She was sure that they were going to have a conference call to discuss how she had messed up and Millie felt awful about it.

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## RANGER

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Ranger knew that Millie was up to something when she said that she was out of Tums and needed him to run to the pharmacy to get some more. Of course, he didn't realize that she was lying to him until he was about halfway to the store when he remembered that she had some in her purse. He ran home to remind her about them when he found her laying in her bed talking to Wan as if they were old friends or something.

Hearing the guy say that he'd never let Millie turn down his job offer made him sick. He was right, Wan would come for her no matter where they were, and with the baby on the way, she couldn't run forever. Hell, she was supposed to be on bed rest, and hiding away from Wan's men wasn't an option. No, he was going to have to come up with one hell of a good plan to keep Millie and the baby safe, and he was pretty sure that he had one.

"Are you guys safe?" Luke asked.

"We are, for now, but we're going to have to get out of here tonight. Things have changed."

"What things are we talking about here?" Alex asked. "Someone needs to catch me up."

"Remember when Luke had to take off for a bit because he knew that someone was watching him?" Ranger asked Alex.

"Yeah, he was gone for a couple of months, and if I remember, you two almost got blown up along with his house," Alex reminded.

“Right, well, the man who came after me was named Joo Wan,” Luke said.

“Fuck,” Alex spat. “You’re lucky to be alive still.”

“Right, but luck had nothing to do with Luke and me staying alive—that was all Millie’s doing. She hacked into the Korean Central Intelligence computer system and found out what we already suspected. The North Korean government had Wan’s two sons and wife killed when he defected to South Korea. We sent him that information and that seemed to appease him. He agreed to leave Luke alone and he got to come home with Ruby.”

“Okay, so what’s changed?” Alex asked.

“Wan found out that Millie was the one who got him the information that he was after. He also found out who she had to hack to get that information, and now, he wants her to come to work for him,” Ranger said.

“Didn’t Millie quit at McTavish?” Alex asked.

“I did,” Millie said. “Sorry, I’m here too, Alex. I had to quit to move away. You see, I’m pregnant and I didn’t want Ranger to find out.”

“Why wouldn’t you want Ran—” Alex started to ask, “Oh, never mind. Am I all caught up?” he asked.

“Not quite,” Millie said, “you see, I didn’t want to involve any of you in my mess, so I snuck a call to Wan to tell him that I wouldn’t be taking his job offer.”

“Shit,” Luke cursed.

“What the hell, Millie?” Alex asked. “I’m betting that he didn’t take it well.”

“No,” Millie almost whispered, “he told me that he’d never allow me to turn down his offer. That’s when Ranger found me and ended the call.”

“And now, Wan knows where you are,” Luke filled in.

“That’s why we have to take off tonight. But Millie really can’t go on the run. She’s got hypertension and is on

mandatory bed rest for the next three months of her pregnancy. I won't risk her or the baby," Ranger said. "So, I need some help. At the very least, it will give us some security until after the baby is born."

"What can we do?" Alex asked.

"You can give Millie her old job back and let her work from home. She really is the best Cyber Security Analyst that McTavish ever had," Ranger said. "After you hire her back, I'll need for you to call Wan to let him know that you don't appreciate him trying to poach your employees. Your threat will hold weight since Wan will know who you are, Alex. He'll think twice about coming after Millie if she's involved in McTavish industries."

"Agreed," Luke said. "If you call Wan, he'll back down, and then Ranger can bring Millie home. His place has a ton of security. Have you agreed to move in with him, Millie?" Luke asked.

"I have," she said.

"Great, all we need is for you to be on board with all of this, Alex," Luke said.

"I hate putting you in this position, Alex," Ranger admitted, "but I can't lose Millie or the baby. I just got them back. Please," he breathed. Ranger wasn't above begging. He'd do it all day long if it meant that Millie and their child would be safe.

"I'm in," Alex agreed, "you know that I'd do anything for you guys. Consider yourself rehired, Millie."

"Well then, I'll need to send an email to my current employer to let them know that they are now my former employer," Millie said.

"Take your time with that," Alex said. "Give them the notice that they deserve, and when you're ready, let me know. I'll get in touch with Wan to let him know what's going on. He won't want to cross a business as big as McTavish. He's not going to take this laying down, so your security measures might be a good idea," Alex said.

“Already taken care of,” Luke assured. “I was over at Ranger’s house earlier, making sure that everything is up to date.”

“Thanks for taking care of that for us, man,” he looked over at Millie and she smiled through her tears at him. He wanted her to feel safe, but more than that, he wanted her to feel like she was a part of a team—his team.

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Millie must have apologized about a million times before they got off the phone. Luke and Alex both agreed that she and the baby’s safety was their priority, and she seemed to relax a bit. He hated that he was going to have to move her tonight, but he had no choice. Ranger loaded up his truck and secured her car. He was going to have to send someone back to finish grabbing the rest of her boxes and her car because there was no way that he was going to let her drive all the way back home in her condition. He planned on getting Millie settled in his passenger seat and telling her to sleep the whole way home. Then, he’d carry her into his house and put her in his bed, because that was exactly where she was staying from here on out—his bed.

Ranger knocked on Millie’s neighbor’s door—the same woman who had given him the key to her place when he first got to town looking for Millie. She opened the door, and he smiled in at her—a gesture that she did not return. “Hi,” he breathed.

“Can I help you?” she asked.

He pulled his business card from his pocket and handed it in through the door crack that she was peeking out from. “I’m taking Millie home with me. If men come snooping around, can you please call this number? Please don’t tell them where Millie is or answer any of their questions. They are bad men. Most likely, they will be Korean, but I can’t be certain,” Ranger said.

“You’ve gotten that nice girl mixed up with the North Koreans?” she asked.

“Actually, they are the South Koreans, and Millie got me mixed up with them, to be exact,” he admitted. The look on her face was priceless and worth telling her details that weren’t any of her business.

“I knew that Millie was trouble as soon as she got here,” the older woman spat.

“Listen,” Ranger growled, trying to keep his temper in check. “Can you please just promise to call me if the guys show up here snooping around?”

“Sure,” she grumbled, “but only because I don’t want any Koreans snooping around here causing trouble for me.”

“Understood,” Ranger agreed. “Thank you.” She quickly shut her front door in his face, and he almost wanted to laugh at her theatrics. Instead, he turned to go back into Millie’s place, finding her sitting on the sofa waiting for him.

“What about the rest of my stuff?” she asked.

“I could only fit so much into my truck. I’ll have someone come out here and pick up the rest of this stuff and your car, in a day or two. Will that work?” he asked.

“Yes,” she agreed, “I can live without most of it for a few days.” He knew that she was “nesting” as she called it and that she wanted to get everything perfect before their daughter got there. He couldn’t blame her; he was beginning to feel the exact same way.

“How about when we get back, we do a little online shopping, since you can’t go out, and find the perfect crib and nursery furniture for our daughter?” he asked. Ranger knew that giving her something to look forward to might get Millie out of her funk.

“Really?” she asked. He nodded and she squealed and clapped. “That would be wonderful,” she gushed.

“It’s settled then. And you can pick which room you’d like to be her nursery and I’ll get some paint swatches for you to

choose from. We'll have her room ready in no time," Ranger promised.

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## MILLIE

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Almost two months had passed since they had moved back home, and things were quiet—too quiet. They had finished the nursery, as Ranger had promised, making sure that she didn't lift a finger the whole time. Everything she purchased for the baby was done online and she was itching to get out of the house.

Ruby had been by a few times to see her, but she was days away from her due date and her visits had almost stopped. Ruby was able to surprise her with a small baby shower at Ranger's house. A few of the girls from the office had come by and it was a nice afternoon, even if Ranger did threaten to sit on her if she got up from the couch.

She was beginning to think of his house as her own. He had insisted that was the case, telling her to make any changes she'd like to his place to make it feel more like home. The very first thing she did, besides picking out a room for the nursery, was to donate his couch and bring hers over from her old apartment. When she ordered the paint for the nursery, she also ordered some for the kitchen. She explained to Ranger that she couldn't live with his bright red kitchen walls, and he told her that they were that color when he bought the house. That's when she decided to have the entire house repainted and he just sighed and agreed with her. He even admitted that he hadn't changed much since moving into his place and that it was probably time to make a few color changes.

She had started working from home for McTavish and she had to admit, she loved her new job. Her old one was a nice fit



but working for McTavish again felt like coming home. Alex had been true to his word, letting her work from home while she waited for their daughter to arrive. He also called Wan and explained her situation to him. Alex said that Wan didn't seem happy about having to give up his pursuit of hiring Millie. She was hoping that they wouldn't hear from Wan again, but Luke and Ranger assured her that wasn't going to be the case. They said that he was persistent and would wait for her if she was who he really wanted. If Ranger had his way, he would have kept Millie under lock and key for the rest of her life, but as she explained to him, she couldn't stay locked away forever. Sooner or later, she'd be allowed to leave the house—to which Ranger would grumble something about her being unreasonable.

Every morning before he left for work, Ranger would get Millie all set up in her bed or on the sofa, for work. He'd make sure that she had her laptop, pens, phone, paper—everything that she'd need for her day. He'd also make her promise to take it easy and to get a couple of naps in during the day. She'd tell him that it was almost impossible for her to get comfortable to sleep anymore, and he would make her promise to try. It was their little morning routine, and she had to admit, she liked it. She felt domesticated as if they were becoming a little family, and she loved that.

Millie planned on taking about four months off after the baby was born. They were still negotiating girl names, but when she told Ranger about her plans to take off for a while, he told her that he'd consider her top two choices. After all of the fighting that they had done over their daughter's name, if she had known that all it would take to get Ranger to agree to one of her picks was agreeing to some time off, she would have told him about her maternity leave sooner. It would have saved them both a lot of time and anger.

Negotiating was still one of the things that they were working on. It wasn't easy for either of them since they were both so stubborn. Millie hoped that sooner or later, they would get it together and agree on something, but so far that wasn't happening, and Millie was sure that after the baby got there, things might only get worse. They couldn't even seem to agree

on which brand of diapers to use. How were they supposed to agree on the important stuff, like her name, or where she'd go to pre-school?

Millie was in bed, working on security upgrades for the top floor at McTavish when she heard a noise in the kitchen. She got up and pulled on her robe. It was cold today, and the fire that Ranger had built her was going out. He had made her promise not to put logs on the fire, and by the time he usually got home, it was completely out and needed to be rebuilt. Most days, it didn't bother her, but on colder days like today, it did.

"Are you home early today or what?" she asked, walking down to the kitchen. She stopped dead when she found a man standing by the back door. "Who the hell are you?" she asked. Millie wrapped her robe around her belly as if trying to protect her baby.

"I'm sorry to intrude," the man said. She knew from his accent exactly who he was.

"Joo Wan," she breathed.

"Yes," he said, "I told you that I have issues with taking no for an answer, Miss Jenkins. I've come to get you to reconsider."

"My employer won't like this," she challenged.

"Ah, yes," Wan said, "I've spoken with Mr. McTavish, and he told me that he didn't like me making you an offer to come work for me, but I've never really cared what others thought of me, Miss Jenkins."

She tried to look around him, to see if he'd brought his army along with him. If it was just him alone, she might have a chance to get out of there before Wan could move her. "I'm assuming that you brought your men along with you," she said. "That way if I don't cooperate, you'll force me to go with you."

"I was hoping that it wouldn't come to that, so it's just me and my driver here today. I'm assuming that for the safety of your unborn child, you'll come with me willingly and won't make me force you, Miss Jenkins. I remember when my wife

was pregnant, she would have done anything to protect our unborn sons. Do you feel the same way about your daughter?"

"How do you know that I'm having a girl?" she asked.

"Because I've made it my business to know everything about you, Miss Jenkins. I've been watching you since you came back here with your child's father. I've also been watching him for a very long time."

"I see," she said. Millie noticed the shadow that ran past the kitchen window, her eyes quickly darting back to Wan. She didn't want to give whoever was out there away in case it was Ranger. If someone was trespassing on their property, he would get notification of it. Hell, the mailman couldn't ring their doorbell without him knowing about it. She was hoping that their security system had alerted Ranger that Wan was on their property, and he was there to deal with him.

"What's it going to be, Miss Jenkins?" he asked. "Will you be coming with me willingly or do I need to use force?" Millie felt a pool of wetness between her legs that had trickled down to the floor.

"Um, I hate to tell you this, Wan, but my water broke. Looks like I'll be heading to the hospital," Millie said, trying to stay calm when all she felt was panic. She was four and a half weeks early and that couldn't be good—right? She wouldn't know until she got to the hospital and there was no way that she was going to let Wan or his driver stand in her way.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the same shadow in the window of the back door, and this time, she knew that it was Ranger. He and Luke were standing behind Wan, their guns pointed at his side.

"She's not going anywhere with you, asshole," Ranger said. "You all right, honey?" he asked.

A small sob escaped her chest and she nodded. "My water broke. I think that I need to go to the hospital. It's too early."

"You're going to be fine," Ranger assured. "Let me help Luke get this guy out of our house and then I'll take you to the

hospital.”

“What about his driver?” Millie asked.

“We’ve already got him secured in the back of Luke’s truck. The cops are on their way. Wan here will be going away for a while. I’m betting that attempted kidnapping will earn you at least a few years behind bars in America.”

Wan shrugged, “And when I get out, I’ll be back to continue our conversation, Miss Jenkins,” he assured.

“You come near me again, Wan,” Millie said, doubling over in pain, “and, I’ll fucking kill you.”

“That’s my girl,” Ranger said. “Let’s go.”

“Hurry,” Millie shouted, “I’m having contractions.” Luke cuffed Wan and assured Ranger that he had him.

“Go take care of your girl,” Luke said. “Good luck, Millie. I’ll let Ruby know that you’re in labor. Boy, is my wife going to be pissed.” He chuckled and took Wan out to his truck.

“Can you walk to the driveway?” Ranger asked.

“My water broke all over the floor,” she said looking down at the kitchen’s hardwood floors.

“Don’t worry about that now,” he said, “I’ll get Luke to take care of it later. Can you walk to the truck?” he asked again.

“Yes, I think that I can,” she said.

“Good,” Ranger breathed, “I’ll grab your suitcase by the front door, and we’ll get out of here.” She was lucky that her doctor had told them to pack a suitcase for the hospital at their last appointment. She would have probably waited until closer to her due date to do that chore.

Ranger got her settled as the cops were pulling into their driveway. “I’m going to tell them to talk to Luke, and that you’re in labor. They can question you later,” he insisted.

“Thanks,” she said. Millie groaned out as another contraction ripped through her body. “Hurry,” she shouted. It

only took him a few minutes to have a path cleared for them to drive through.

“How did you know I was in trouble?” she asked.

“First of all, I have the best security system in town, and when Wan’s driver disabled it, my backup system went into play. It alerted me that someone was at my back door and when you didn’t answer your cell phone, I assumed that something was wrong.”

“I left my phone in the bedroom. I heard a noise in the kitchen and assumed that you were home early. That’s when I walked downstairs to find Wan standing by the back door. I was so afraid that he was going to try to take me,” she said.

Ranger reached across the seat to take her hand into his own, “I know, honey, but he didn’t. Once you give your statement, he’ll be in prison for a damn long time. Kidnapping is a federal offense.”

“I hope so,” she breathed. She was having another contraction and trying to use the Lamaze breathing that she was taught by the midwife. They had hired her to come out to check on her weekly, so that she wouldn’t have to go into the hospital to have her blood pressure checked.

“When we get to the hospital, I’ll call Miriam,” Ranger offered. He knew that having her midwife with her was part of her birth plan. She had agreed to give birth in a hospital with doctors since she was high risk, but she wanted Miriam with her too. It was actually a compromise that they could both agree on.

“Thank you, Ranger,” she breathed, “and thank you for coming to my rescue.”

“Any time, honey, any time,” he promised.

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## RANGER

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“Okay now,” Miriam said, “one more big push and she’ll be out.” Their midwife had practically taken over the birthing process, with the doctor on standby and she was doing an awesome job. She had talked Millie through the whole process and made them both feel comfortable with every step of the process.

Millie had been in labor for almost eleven hours and his girl looked about ready to drop. She was a warrior, in his book, working through her labor, and now, they were about to meet their daughter.

Millie pushed two more times before their daughter emerged screaming to the world that she was there. She was even more beautiful than Ranger ever imagined she’d be. He kissed Millie and whispered, “What should we name her?”

“Oh God, I just gave birth,” she breathed. “Can’t we fight about her name after I’ve gotten some rest?” she asked.

He chuckled, loving the way that she was always expecting a fight from him, but this time, he wasn’t going to give her one. This time, he was willing to compromise. “How about Tabitha?” he asked. It was Millie’s number one pick for a girl’s name, and he knew it.

“You’re okay with us calling her that?” Millie asked.

“I am,” he said. The nurse handed their daughter to Millie, and she choked back the tears as she held her daughter for the first time.

“She’s beautiful and healthy,” the nurse assured. “Get some rest and someone will be back in to check on the three of you soon.”

“Thank you,” Ranger said.

“I’m going to head out too,” Miriam said. “You both did great,” she said, looking down at the baby. “I’ll be by your place to check in on you once you guys get home. Just text me and we can set up your follow-up visits. And, if you need any help with breastfeeding, please feel free to call me. I’m always here for you guys.” Miriam gave them both a hug and kissed Tabitha’s forehead.

Ranger looked down, in awe of his daughter. “She’s beautiful, just like her mom,” he said, sitting on the side of the bed next to Millie. “She looks like a Tabitha too, doesn’t she?” he asked.

“She does,” Millie agreed. “Hi, Tabitha,” she said, “I’m your mommy, and that’s your daddy,” she said pointing up at Ranger. Their daughter’s eyes were still closed, and she made the cutest little squeaking noises as she squirmed around. When she opened her eyes to look up at them both, Ranger’s whole world felt right.

“Marry me,” he said to Millie. “Let’s make our little family official.”

“I thought that you’d never get married. Heck, I thought that you didn’t even really like dating,” she teased.

“Well, I don’t, and that’s why it’s a good idea for you to marry me. You’ll save me from ever having to go on a date again,” he joked. “Seriously, Millie,” he breathed, “I love you—I have for a while now. Marry me and let’s make this permanent, committed relationship even more permanent.”

She looked between Tabitha and him and Ranger was worried that she was going to turn him down. “What do you think, Tabitha?” she asked their newborn. “Do you think that I should marry your daddy and make this thing permanent?” Tabitha squirmed and let out a little cry and he wasn’t sure if

that was a yes or a no. He was hoping like hell that his daughter had just agreed to Millie marrying him.

“Well, what did she say?” he asked.

Millie giggled, “She said that I should definitely marry her daddy,” Millie said. “Apparently, I’m not the only girl in the room who’s in love with you, Ranger. It seems that you’re building quite the fan club,” Millie teased.

“You love me?” he whispered.

“I do,” she said. “I have for a long time now,” she said, giving him back his words. “Would you like to hold your daughter?” Millie asked.

“I would,” he said. He took the squirming baby from Millie and cradled her against his chest. Millie cuddled into his side and yawned. “Get some rest, honey,” he ordered. “I’ve got her for now. I’ve got you both.” He did too, and that made Ranger feel like the luckiest man on the planet.

### **The End**

**I hope you enjoyed Ranger and Millie’s story! Now, buckle up for a sneak peek at His Bossy Assistant (Billionaire Boys Club Book 5)—coming in November 2022 from K.L. Ramsey!**



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## EVAN

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Evan Kingston was looking forward to his first day at McTavish Industries. He was hired as their new Business Management Partner, and he was excited about bringing their company into the next phase. He was going to upgrade all of their training and make sure that their personnel were all up to speed in their job descriptions.

He walked into the building and nodded to the security guard on duty. “I’m supposed to check in with Luke Tracy,” Evan said. The guard told him to stay put and he walked back into the security room, coming out with Luke.

“Hey, Evan,” Luke said. “It’s good to see you again.”

“You too, Luke,” Evan said. He and Luke went way back. They both worked at another tech company together, back in the day, and he had to admit, the guy hadn’t changed much over the years. He was still one of the nicest guys Evan had ever met. He even used Luke as a reference on his resume when he applied at McTavish. He knew that using Luke’s name had helped him get the job, but he wasn’t complaining. Sometimes, it was all about who you knew in the industry.

“You ready to start your new job today?” Luke asked.

“I am,” Evan said, “I’ve been looking forward to this for weeks now. Thanks for giving me a good reference.”

“Not a problem,” Luke assured. “How about you come on back with me and we can get you all signed in and get your security badge made?” he asked.

“That would be great,” Evan said.

“Good, then I’ll show you up to HR and you’ll spend most of your day with them. They’ll walk you through the building and give you the whole run down,” Luke said. Evan followed Luke back to his office and they spent most of the morning getting him in the system and making sure that he knew the rules for entering and leaving the building. He had to sign a few confidential legal notices and when they were finished, Luke offered to give him a tour.

“Oh, I almost forgot,” Luke said, handing him a laptop. “Your password is your last name,” he said. “It’s all one word and all lowercase. When you get done with your online training, you’ll be able to change the password to whatever you’d like.”

“Sounds good,” he said, taking the laptop from Luke.

“What is it that you’ll be doing around here?” Luke asked.

“I’m the new Business Management Partner,” he said. Most people didn’t know what that meant and from the look on Luke’s face, he didn’t have a clue. Evan chuckled, “Don’t worry about it. I’m not sure what I’m doing half the time anyway. Basically, I’m going to be handling the day-to-day management of this place to give Alex and Rod a bit of a break.”

“Are you coming in as a partner?” Luke asked.

“I am,” Evan admitted. He had to buy in and honestly, his attorney and accountant both confirmed that he was making one of the best financial decisions of his life. He did it because he needed a change. He also had an inheritance from his mother to spend and he had no idea how to invest it. His friends all tried to get him to buy a bar or someplace that they’d all be able to hang out, but he knew that he needed to use his business degree. Plus, spending the money that his mother left him on a bar, just felt wrong. She told him the stories about his grandfather and the way that he treated his poor mom. His grandpa was a drunk and liked to drag his mother to the track to bet on the horses. She had an awful childhood and married his father to escape it. Unfortunately for her, Evan’s dad wasn’t much better than his grandfather.

His mother was lucky enough to get out of that marriage when Evan was just six, and she remarried one of the best men that Evan had ever known—his stepfather, Dale. He treated Evan as his own, and Dale and his mom didn't have any kids. It was just the three of them until Dale passed. He had a heart attack when Evan was in college and that's when he changed his major to business management, to follow in Dale's footsteps. When his mom passed, he inherited all of the money from their estate, and he didn't know what to do with it. He didn't have to work for some time but spending everything that they left him just felt wrong. That's when he decided to go talk to his mother's attorney and get some advice as to what he should do with the money. He told him to invest, and Evan had been looking for the best opportunity for months now. When he talked to his old friend, Alex McTavish, and was told about them trying to take on a partner because their company had gotten too "Big for its britches," as Alex liked to say, he knew that he needed to buy in. The only catch was he didn't want to be a silent partner. He wanted in. Evan convinced Alex and Rod to let him come on as the company's business manager to run the daily things that they didn't have time for. They quickly agreed, and now, here he was, ready for his first day.

"Well, congratulations," Luke said.

"Thanks, man," Evan breathed.

"If you need anything, all you have to do is give me a shout," Luke said.

"I appreciate it," Evan said. "How long will this online training take?" he asked.

"Um, I'm not sure," he said, "honestly, just give me the laptop back." He took the computer from Evan. "I don't know that you need to take the training that the rest of the employees do. I mean, you own part of the company."

"Right, and that means that I will need access to all of the company training materials. I need to watch all of them," Evan insisted. "It's the only way that I'll be able to know what I'm doing around here."

“Right,” Luke agreed, handing him back the laptop. “How about I just leave this with you and take you up to HR? Then, I’m sure that you’ll want to meet with Alex and Rod.”

“Rod’s busy today, but I’m here and ready to show you to your office,” Alex said, standing in the doorway. “Hey, Luke,” he said. “How’s it going?”

“Good, Alex,” Luke said. “I’m just not sure what protocol is for handling a new partner. I’ve handled employees on their first day, but I’m assuming that it’s not the same.”

“Yeah, I’ll take Evan around from here,” Alex said. “Thanks, Luke.”

“Not a problem. Good luck, Evan,” he said.

“Thanks, good to meet you, Luke,” Evan said back over his shoulder.

“Come on, I’ll take you up to your office. You’ll want to meet your new assistant,” Alex said.

“New assistant?” Evan asked. “I don’t need an assistant,” he said.

“Sure you do,” Alex insisted. “All of the partners have one, and I think you’ll like Carrie.” Shit, this didn’t sound like a good thing to Evan. He wouldn’t have any idea what to do with an assistant.

“Didn’t you and Rod both marry your assistants?” Evan asked as they got into the elevator.

“We did,” Alex admitted.

“Is that why you got me an assistant?” Evan asked.

“What? No,” Alex said, giving Evan a smile and a wink. “You have a new assistant because you need one if you’re going to keep up with this place, man. Trust me on this.” He was sure from the smile and wink that the last thing that he should do was trust Alex McTavish.

They got off of the elevator and walked down the hallway, past Alex’s office, and down to Rod’s. “We decided to put you up here with us. I hope that you like my brother enough to

have an office next to him. I mean, he's a lot, but Rod seems to really like you."

"Well, that's good to know, since we're all going to be working together," Evan teased. He peeked into the office that had a wall of windows overlooking the city and smiled. He'd always wanted an office like this. "It's great," Evan breathed. "I love it." Alex smiled and nodded over to the sexy little brunette who was walking up to them.

"I'm glad you like your office," Alex said. "This is your new assistant, Carrie McTavish," Alex said.

"As in she's related to you and Rod?" Evan asked.

"She's our little cousin. Her father and my father are brothers and Carrie just got here from Scotland." Shit, his new assistant was related to his new business partners and that was the last thing he needed.

"Carrie, this is your new boss, Evan Kingston," Alex said.

She held out her hand to him and he took it into his own, giving it a curt shake.

"Good to meet you, Mr. Kingston," she said. God, her accent was sexy. Why was it that hearing that same accent come from Alex or Rod did nothing for him, but hearing it come out of Carrie made him want to get on his knees and beg her to say something else?

"Please, call me Evan, Carrie," he said. "I'm not a very formal person, but you'll figure that out soon enough."

"Well then, I'll leave you two to get settled. It's Carrie's first day too, and she has an appointment with HR. Someone will be up to speak to you too, Evan," Alex said.

"I can save them a trip and accompany Carrie down to HR. I don't want any special treatment," Evan insisted.

"Suit yourself," Alex said. "I was just trying to make your day run as smoothly as possible," Alex admitted. "You'll be tossed into the fire soon enough."

"Gee, thanks for that," Evan grumbled. Alex chuckled and went back down the hallway to his office.

“Well, shall we?” Carrie asked, nodding to the elevator. He looked back in at the office that he hadn’t even stepped foot in yet and back at her, nodding.

“Right behind you,” he promised.

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# CARRIE

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Carrie wasn't sure what her overly eager cousins were up to, but she knew that they were up to no good. As soon as she stepped off of the plane, they welcomed her with their growing families and even threw a small party in her honor. They shared all of their favorite American foods with her, and she was sure that she'd never get tired of burgers, and she wouldn't have to since they were served on just about every street corner in the states. They both seemed so happy to have her there, in their homes, and around their families. When Alex offered her a job at their company, she had no choice but to say yes, because going back home wasn't an option for her. Her father wouldn't allow it.

She had gotten herself involved with a man named Alastair Macanroy and she thought that she had finally found the right man. She was almost twenty-five when she met him, and all of her friends, and even her younger sisters, were all paired off. But she waited until she felt ready to love someone. She attended university and when it was time for her to pick a profession, she was at a loss. All she really ever wanted was to settle down, get married, and have babies. Yeah, that made her sound pathetically old-fashioned, but she didn't care. Carrie believed that Alastair was the man she wanted to be with forever until they moved in together and he started to show his true colors. He was a drug dealer and when she found that out, she went to her father. He told her to come home, but she still refused. She had found out two days prior that she was pregnant and hadn't told anyone. She tried to make excuses to her father, even saying that she was probably wrong about

Alastair, but he could see right through her. Her dad always could. When Carrie finally came clean with him and told her father that she was pregnant with Alastair's baby, he insisted that she let him call Alex and Rod in America. He said that his brother's boys would take her in, no questions asked, and that worked for her since she didn't want to tell anyone that she was pregnant. Carrie made her father promise not to tell anyone about the baby—not Alex or Rod, and especially not Alastair. Her father agreed and called her cousins. They had booked her a flight before he got off the phone with them. Her father made her promise to call as soon as she landed, and she had. Getting settled in the little apartment that they had leased for her, wasn't easy. It was bigger than any place she had ever lived. It had two bathrooms when she had grown up sharing one with her three sisters. It had two bedrooms, which would come in handy in about seven and a half months. Between now and then, she was going to have to find a way to tell her very generous, overbearing cousins what she was really doing there, and she was sure that they'd send her back to Scotland as quickly as possible.

Now, she was riding in an elevator with her new boss to HR, staring at the numbers as they went down, praying that he didn't want to make small talk. "Are you excited about your first day?" he asked. So much for no small talk.

"Yes," she breathed. "I've only been here for about a week now, and in that time, I've met my cousin's families, and moved into an apartment that they rented for me, so, there have been a lot of changes in a short time, but I'm grateful." She left out the part about running away from Scotland to get away from her drug-dealing boyfriend because she was pregnant with his baby. Yeah, she wasn't ready to share any of that with her new boss.

"How about you?" she asked.

"I am," he said. "When Alex and Rod asked me to buy into the company and become a partner, I wasn't sure what to do, but I have to admit, it was a great idea. I'm really excited to be here." She nodded and sighed when the elevator doors opened, stepping out into the hallway. Evan practically bumped into



her when she stopped in front of him. He wrapped his arms around her from behind and held her steady.

“I’m sorry,” he breathed into her ear.

“Um, it’s fine,” she said, taking a step forward. “I believe that HR is right over here,” she said. He followed her into the office and was in awe of how she took over. She had them in and out of HR in no time flat, promising to return both of their paperwork to their department just as soon as they had finished with it. He had almost expected to be there for hours, not mere minutes.

“You are good,” he breathed. “You got us in and out of there fast.”

“Well, that’s what I’m here for,” she said. “To make your life easier.”

“How about you let me take you to dinner tonight,” he asked. She had to admit, that Evan Kingston was a handsome man. He was someone that she could have fallen for just weeks ago—before she found out that she was pregnant, but now, she was going to have to consider her unborn child. He or she had to come first, and going out to dinner with her new boss, whom she found handsome, wasn’t a great idea.

“I’m sorry, but I don’t think that dating my boss is a good idea,” she said. “I appreciate your offer, though.”

“A date?” he asked. “I wasn’t asking you out on a date, Carrie. I thought that it might be a good idea for the two of us to get to know each other a bit better—you know, for work purposes.”

“Oh,” she breathed, feeling like a complete fool. “I see. I’m so embarrassed.”

“Listen, there’s nothing to be embarrassed about. I should have clarified when I asked you to dinner. Can we try again?” he asked.

“Um, sure,” she said.

“Great,” he breathed, “would you like to have a professional dinner with me, to get to know each other better

as employee and boss?” he asked.

“I’d love to,” she breathed, “thank you for being so gracious, Evan.”

“Not a problem,” he said. “Thanks for giving me a second shot at asking. How about you pick that place and then, text me? Do you have your phone on you?” he asked. She pulled it from her pocket and handed it over to him. “You need to unlock it,” he said.

“Oh, sorry,” she took it back and put in her code, handing it back to him.

“I’m putting my number in here and saving it to your contacts. If you need me for anything, it’s the best way to reach me.”

“Got it, thank you,” she said.

“Text me where and when for dinner tonight, and I can either meet you there or pick you up, whichever you prefer.”

“I’ll meet you there,” she agreed. “That way, it won’t feel like a date.” He nodded and she felt somewhat relieved that she wouldn’t have him stopping by her place to pick her up. She was still unpacking, and it was a mess. Plus, she really didn’t need her new boss stopping by her home. That felt too personal, and the last thing she needed to be with her new boss, was personal.

**His Bossy Assistant Universal Link->**

**What’s coming up next from K.L. Ramsey? Trista’s Truth (Savage Hell MC Book 7) is coming in September 2022.**

**You won’t want to miss this one!**

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## JOEL

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Joel walked into Savage Hell to find Axel and Melody sitting up at the bar, the last thing he wanted was a night out, but he had promised his former partner and her new husband that he'd meet them for a beer to celebrate them getting hitched. Actually, they had been married for almost six months now, and he had been promising to meet them at Savage Hell, for weeks on end, but he was always too tired after his shift to join them for a few beers. He planned to cancel on them again tonight but then, he ran into Melody, and she threatened to hunt him down and drag his ass into the bar for a night out. He protested, saying that he was tired and just wanted to collapse into bed, but she reminded him that tomorrow was Saturday and he'd be able to sleep in. She took away any argument that he had and not showing up wasn't an option.

As soon as Axel and Melody saw him, they smiled and waved in unison, and he could feel his eyes roll. He found what everyone else thought of as adorable, to be annoying, although he kept that to himself. He'd never want them to think that he was jealous about the two of them being together. Melody was not just his partner on the force, she was also his ex-girlfriend. She was the one who had gotten away, and he might be over losing her, but he still didn't find her and her new husband to be cute, adorable, or a perfect couple as others had called them.

“Good to see that you could make it,” Melody said.

“Well, I didn't like the alternatives presented to me earlier today, if I didn't show up,” he grumbled.

“Tell me you didn’t threaten the guy, honey,” Axel said.

“She came into my office today to let me know that turning down your invitation again would end up with a manhunt—involving yours truly and your new, blushing bride.”

Axel chuckled, seeming to miss the point of Melody telling her new boss that she’d hunt him down and drag his ass to the bar, to be completely inappropriate. “I think your idea of funny and my idea of funny are very different,” Joel grumbled. He waved down the bartender and asked for another round of beers and sat on the barstool next to Axel.

“Well, getting you here tonight was kind of important to us,” she said.

“Why’s that?” Joel asked.

“We have someone that we want you to meet,” Melody said.

“No,” Joel simply said. “No setups. I thought that we’ve been through all of this before. I don’t want to date right now. I just don’t have time for it since my promotion. You know how many hours I put in at the station. I don’t have time for any extracurriculars,” Joel insisted.

“I know how hard you work, Joel,” Melody said. “It’s why I want to introduce you to my friend, Trista. She’s perfect for you and you can’t be serious about not dating. Work can’t be your entire life. You need to find a work/personal life balance, or you’ll wake up one day, all alone, and it will be too late.”

“I have some time before that happens, Melody,” he assured.

“You’re turning forty this year, Joel. You need to diversify, branch out and maybe, just maybe you’ll realize that work isn’t everything,” Melody insisted.

“Just give Trista a chance,” Axel chimed in. He knew that he wasn’t going to get the final word in all of this. Once Melody set her mind to something, she’d find a way to make it happen. And with Axel taking her side, she’d be relentless.

“Fine,” Joel mumbled. “I’ll meet this friend of yours, but I’m making no promises,” he said.

“At least have a beer with her,” Axel said. “Talk to her, maybe even get to know the woman a little bit. She might surprise you, man.” He hated surprises, and he had half a mind to tell Axel that, but it was too late. They had roped him into the bar only to ambush him with a fix-up. This whole evening was turning into one giant surprise, and he hated everything about it.

“I know that this is way out of your comfort zone, Joel,” Melody said. “But I worry about you. We were close once, and just because that didn’t work out doesn’t mean that I don’t still worry about you.”

“While I appreciate that, Melody,” he said. “I hate surprises—you know that. Remember how I reacted to that surprise birthday party you threw me at the precinct?”

“Oh, I remember that birthday,” Melody said. “You shouted at me for about ten minutes and then stormed out of the break room. You were a jerk, but we ate your cake anyway, and eventually, you got over it.”

“I’ve never gotten over it if we’re being honest here. I hate surprises, and now, you’re having me meet a complete stranger at a bar and you think it’s a good thing?” he asked.

“Just don’t throw a fit and stomp out of here,” Melody said.

“No promises,” he said.

Melody popped up from her barstool and squealed, clapping her hands. “She’s here,” she gushed.

“As if we couldn’t tell,” Axel teased. She ran across the bar and hugged her friend. “Trista’s not bad looking, right?”

He turned around to look her over, knowing full well that he was going to find her wanting no matter what she looked like. He was being an ass and that had everything to do with how tired he was. “She’s not bad,” Joel admitted. She was more than not bad but admitting that out loud would be equivalent to admitting that Melody might be right and that

was a dangerous game to play. She loved to make him tell her that she was right, at any cost, and he usually tried like hell to avoid having to do it.

Melody and Trista walked across the barroom and just about every guy in the place watched them make their way over to the bar. Trista was a beautiful woman, but that didn't make any of this setup feel right to him.

"Joel," Melody said, her arm around her friend, "this is Trista Stonewell. Trista, this is Joel Swensen."

"It's good to meet you," Trista said, holding out her hand to him. He took her hand into his own, noting the way his skin felt a bit tingly just by her touch.

"Good to meet you too, Trista," Joel said. He sat there like an idiot, holding onto her hand, not realizing that he hadn't let go of it until she pulled it free from his.

"Can I buy you a beer?" he asked.

Trista shook her head and reached into her purse, pulling out a gun and pointing it at his chest. "No, thank you," she said.

"What the hell?" Melody shouted. "What are you doing?"

"What I have to do," Trista whispered. "I'm sorry Melody."

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# TRISTA

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Trista wasn't sure how this was supposed to go. Her instructions were clear—find Joel Swensen and bring him in alive, by any means necessary. Keeping her job a secret from her friend while she got close to Joel's ex-partner wasn't easy. Working for the CIA was something that she loved but lying for a living wasn't something that she enjoyed doing. She looked at it as part of the job—lying to her friends and family had become a part of her life, even if she hated doing it.

“You will need to come with me Mr. Swensen,” Trista ordered.

“And why would I do that?” Joel asked. His slight smirk told her that he thought he had the upper hand in all of this, but he was wrong. He might be a good cop, but she was better. It's why she eventually was recruited to join the CIA.

“For your own safety,” she insisted.

Joel barked out his laugh, “It seems to me that the only person threatening my safety is you, honey,” he said.

“How about you put the gun down and tell us what this is all about, Trista?” Axel asked.

“Can't,” Trista said. If she involved Axel and Melody in this, they wouldn't be safe. She needed to get Joel out of there and then, hope that nobody was following her. It was going to be her best option to keep him safe. The men that he had looking for him were bad news and if she involved her friends, they'd be next on their list of targets.

“It wouldn’t be safe for either of you to get involved in this,” she breathed. She pulled her badge out of her jacket pocket and quickly flashed it at them. “I’m CIA and you’re in trouble, Joel.”

“So, it’s Joel now?” he asked. “What happened to Mr. Swensen?”

“If I’m going to help you, we should be on a first-name basis. The men who are after you won’t care what I call you, really,” she said.

“Men who are after me?” he questioned. “And who might they be?”

“The Gemini Brothers,” she leaned in to whisper. “I believe that you took down their gang’s leader a few months ago, and they’re looking for retribution.”

“Why would any of this be on the CIA’s radar?” Joel asked.

“Because we had a man on the inside when you took down the lead suspect. We need your help releasing Dante Gemini so that we can bring down their entire operation. It’s the only way to stop them and their human trafficking ring.”

“Wait, you said that the Gemini Brothers were after me, but this is about letting a known murderer go?” he asked. “Why would I do that?”

“Because the Gemini Brothers are after the same thing. They want Dante released from prison, but they won’t stop there. They’ll kill anyone close to you to get you to comply, and when you do, they’ll murder you too. If you agree to work with me and the CIA, we’ll get him released, but no one will have to end up dead.”

“Except the countless people who get in Dante’s way. What happens when he’s free and goes on a revenge-killing spree?” Joel asked. “Because you and I both know that’s what will happen, Trista.”

She shrugged, “We just have to be one step ahead of him and keep anyone else from getting killed. The CIA needs time to be able to bring him and his family down. We want all of



the big players, not just the head of the family. Dante being in prison doesn't make him less powerful. They just put another head in place and Dante controls the family from prison. You have to be smart enough to understand that, Joel. I mean, you seem like a bright guy."

"Gee, thanks for that," Joel grumbled.

"You know what I mean, Joel. I didn't intend to insult you in any way. I need you to come with me—you're not safe here. And everyone around you is in danger. Do you want that for Melody and Axel?" Trista asked.

"Oh—so now you care about me and my husband?" Melody questioned. "You used me to get to Joel. I thought that you were my friend, Trista," she spat.

"I was your friend," she breathed. "I'd still like to be, but the unfortunate part of my job is that sometimes, I have to lie to my friends."

"By lie, you mean you have to make up an entirely different life to feed to me, right? You told me that you're a nurse," she said. "That's what you do for a living, right? You lie."

"Well, it wasn't totally a lie. I was a nurse at one point—in the military. I served my time, and when I got out, I decided that I didn't want to become a private practice nurse, so I went into the police academy instead. I was good at being a cop, and that's when the CIA took notice of me and hired me to be an agent. There, now you know everything that there is to know about me," Trista promised.

Melody stuck her nose up in the air and made a little humming noise. "I'm sure that isn't the case. I'm betting that you have a few more secrets that you aren't sharing with us." She had a lot more secrets, too many to tell, and that's the way she'd keep it too.

She looked back over at Joel as if effectively dismissing Melody and her comments. "So, what's it going to be, Joel?" she asked. She was still holding her gun at him, pointing it at his chest, but she thought that she'd at least let him believe

that he had a choice in the matter. The truth of it was that she wasn't going to leave the bar without Joel by her side. Those were her orders and she always followed orders to the letter.

“You going to stay here and possibly get all of these people killed or are you going to come with me and help out the CIA?” she asked.

“Do I really have a choice in the matter?” he grumbled. She wanted to tell him that he didn't, but that would just be like rubbing salt in his wounds. Joel didn't seem like the type of man who took orders from others well. In fact, she was sure of it with the way that he had worked his way up the ranks to Captain so quickly.

“If I told you yes, you wouldn't believe me,” she said.

“Probably because it would be another lie,” Joel hissed. “Fine, let's get this shit show over with. I'll tell your superiors what I've already told you. I can't just release Dante Gemini. I'm not the person to give that order. You think that I have more power than I actually do, Trista.”

She laughed, “You and I both know that's just not true, Joel. You have all the power here,” she assured.

“Yet, you're the one pointing a gun at me,” he accused. He stood and nodded to Melody and Axel. “Thanks for a great night out, guys,” he drawled. “And thanks so much for introducing me to Trista, it's been a blast.” She nodded for him to walk in front of her so that she could keep her gun pointed at his back.

“Let's go, Joel,” she said. “We have a long drive ahead of us.” She didn't bother to look back at either Melody or Axel. She knew that she had burned her bridges with her new friends and there would be no point. All she needed to focus on now was getting Joel back to headquarters in one peace and knowing the Gemini Brothers, that was going to take a freaking miracle.

**Trista's Truth (Savage Hell MC Book 7) Universal Link-  
> <https://books2read.com/u/med5Rr>**

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## ABOUT K.L. RAMSEY & BE KELLY

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*Romance Rebel fighting for*

*Happily Ever After!*

K. L. Ramsey currently resides in West Virginia (Go Mountaineers!). In her spare time, she likes to read romance novels, go to WVU football games and attend book club (aka-drink wine) with girlfriends. K. L. enjoys writing Contemporary Romance, Erotic Romance, and Sexy Ménage! She loves to write strong, capable women and bossy, hot as hell alphas, who fall ass over tea kettle for them. And of course, her stories always have a happy ending. But wait—there's more!

Somewhere along the writing path, K.L. developed a love of ALL things paranormal (but has a special affinity for shifters <YUM!!>!! She decided to take a chance and create another persona- BE Kelly- to bring you all of her yummy shifters, seers, and everything paranormal (plus a hefty dash of MC!).

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KL Ramsey and BE Kelly's Website

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