



PERPETUITY

Sexy Lawyer Man Book Two

MIRRAH MCGEE

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Mirrah McGee



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Humor & Love Ever After

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Daniella Garcia 1.

“...if you had performed your marriage duties adequately, he wouldn’t have needed to look elsewhere.” My spine snaps straight at the absurdity of my mother’s words. I stand in the living room, just around the corner from the entry way into my parent’s home and gnaw my bottom lip as I battle with myself to let Paige fight this herself. “You didn’t even give him the chance to explain, or for you two to talk it out. You pledged your life to him; how can you just turn off your feelings?”

Maybe because my *hermano estúpido* has been sticking his dick in some *puta* instead of his loving, devoted, very pregnant wife. What the fuck is wrong with my parents? Who are they? Paige has been with my brother Tomas for 21 years. They met in middle school and have been together ever since. They have two sons together and a baby on the way. She takes care of him, supports him, dotes on him all while taking care of the boys and the house and the bills. And how does he thank her for such devotion? He cheats on her with her massage therapist and friend. And my parents condone it...at least enough to allow him to bring that bitch into their home and smile while she plays with their grandsons.

I haven’t been shy about my feelings regarding Moon, yeah, that’s her name, and despite the many warnings from my mama, papa, and Tommy, I will continue to express my disappointment in his choices and the continued fallout of his actions. Because that’s what you do when someone does something monumentally STUPID! You don’t smile and pat him on the back, you kick his ass to the curb like Paige did and you let him figure it out on his own.

My heart shatters for the woman who has been the sister of my heart since I was 6 years old, my best friend for just as long. Paige is an incredible woman and doesn’t deserve an ounce of pain and unhappiness. She shouldn’t be made to feel like a failure, she has done nothing wrong.

“How can I turn off my feelings for him? Why not, you two have done just that to me. When I saw Tomas with his arms around...her, when I saw his lips touch hers, his hands caress her, looking at her in a way he hasn't looked at me in months, maybe years...my heart broke, shattered, and my love for him spilled out. I can't scoop it back in, there's nothing left to hold it, even if I wanted to. I understand he is your son, and you love him, as you should, but this...you are condoning his behavior, setting a precedent for your grandsons, and I can't seem to reconcile who I thought you were with who stands before me today, accusing me of failing in my marriage duties and betraying the man who sought relief in another woman's body.”

She tells my parents she'll be back to get the boys tomorrow and leaves amid the shouts from my adulterous brother and his slore. Bending my head to listen to the boys playing in the den at the back of the house, I sit on the couch in the living room and wait for everyone to come inside.

Moon's eyes brighten when she sees me, a creepy smile stretching her lips. “Dani!” Tommy is hesitant, as he should be, hanging back as Moon makes her way towards me with her arms open. I'm aware my parents have shut the front door and are standing with Tommy, but I can't bring myself to care. I don't know these people.

“Stop right there, bitch.”

“Daniella!” Mama gasps in shock.

“You don't call me Dani. That is reserved for people I like, people I respect. You don't call me anything at all. I don't want my name to pass your traitorous whore lips.”

“Daniella, that is—”

“And you!” I spin to face my brother. “You are my no brother of mine.”

“Silencio!” Papa roars.

“No, I will not be silent. Silence is why we are here. Twenty years you've watched him run roughshod over Paige, treat her like a servant, a cash cow. No matter what I said,

nobody listened.” I wave my hands around the living room and Moon’s frozen stance. “How can you stand there and welcome this...this...thing into your home? This thing that helped break up your family. That destroyed the heart and soul of your daughter-in-law? And allow Tommy to move back in? He’s a grown fucking adult! Let him fend for himself. He fucked in someone else’s bed, now let him lie in it!”

“Daniella, you don’t understand—”

“I need to understand fuck all, Tommy.” I am seething, my chest heaving, my eyes stinging, and my body tingling. “Until you all pull your heads out of your asses and realize the magnitude of what is happening...the rippling effects of his and your actions...I won’t live here. I won’t speak to you. As of right now, I have no family but Paige and the boys.”

“You don’t mean that.”

“Oh, I assure you, mama, I do. He doesn’t have to be married to Paige; God knows she’s always deserved better than him.” I point at my brother who shrinks in on himself. Good. Little boy should feel shame for what he’s done. “But be a man, talk to her, don’t go behind her back, don’t break vows you swore before God and family to keep. Different is new, but rarely is it better, it’s simply a distraction from your own insecurities. She makes you feel good about yourself because you don’t respect her. You don’t have to face your inadequacies and failings as a man, a husband, and a father. I pity you, the lot of you. You will realize your mistakes and if I were a vindictive person, I’d pray it will be too late. If it wasn’t for those boys,” my voice wavers when I lift my chin to the back of the house where my precious nephews play unaware, “I’d say Paige is better off without you in her life. But she would never do that to Xavier and Elias, she would suffer any amount of pain and sorrow to ensure they had what they needed. You all should take a page out of her book and reexamine what kind of human beings you want to be, what kind of example you want to set for them.”

I spin on my heels and make my way to the stairs. I need to call Paige and pack my shit. Hopefully, she’ll still want to speak to me despite my unsavory kin.

“You are in school, *hija*, you live here rent free, under my roof and you will not speak to me that way!”

“Weren’t you listening, *Nicolas*, I don’t live here anymore.” Eek, I’ve never seen my papa’s face so red before. I hightail it up the steps and into my room. Closing and locking the door, I pull out a bag and start stuffing my clothes into it. I call Paige, she doesn’t answer. I don’t blame her, but dammit, I’m not one of them. Grabbing my school stuff, I call again.

“Hello?”

“Paige...” Thank God she answers.

“If you’ve called to berate and belittle me, I’m not in the mood right now.” Oh, Paige.

“Can I live with you?” It’s several seconds before she responds.

“What?”

“I won’t stay here. They’ve lost their fucking minds. I heard what they said to you. I refuse to stay here and pretend what he did is all hunky-dory, hanging out with his side piece and blaming you. I wasn’t happy when he came to stay here, but I knew you made the right call. But now...they aren’t who I thought they were. Can I come stay with you? I can babysit the boys when I’m not in class and I can help with the baby. Please, sissy?” I hold my breath, waiting.

“Dani, if you come to stay with me...there’s going to be backlash, are you prepared for that?”

My answer is immediate, “I’m prepared.”

“Ok, meet me at the house, when you’re ready.” Thank you, Lord.

“I’m heading out now, I’ll be there in 20 minutes.” I look around my room and make sure I’ve got everything I need. Books, computer, charger, phone, charger, tablet, charger, notebooks, clothes, underwear, and bras. Ah, I forgot my toiletries. I unlock my door and quickly stride into the bathroom.

“I might not be, wait. I’m about 30 minutes away.”

“Take your time, I’ve got a key. See you soon, roomie!”

Ending the call, I grab everything I need from the bathroom. Back in my room, I pocket my phone, hoist my bags over my shoulders and trudge back downstairs. I roll my eyes when I see Tommy consoling Moon. My parents hovering anxiously. My foot slaps the bottom step, and all eyes swing my way.

“*Hija...*” mama begins.

“Tomas, give me the keys to the Durango.”

“What?”

“Give. Me. The. Keys. Now.”

“But that’s my car!”

“My keys are hanging on the hook, we’re trading vehicles.”

“No. Daniella, I don’t know what Paige has said to you, but you need to chill the fuck out. The Durango is mine.”

“Funny, you fight harder for four wheels that your wife paid for then your wife herself. Keys. NOW!” I scream the last part, reaching the limit of my patience with this asshat.

“Dan—”

“Don’t speak, twatmouth!”

“Tomas, are you gonna let her—”

“This motherfucker doesn’t ‘let’ me do a damn thing.” I spit at her, then turn my ire to Tommy. He swallows hard once, then gives me the keys to his Durango. Smart move.

Keys in hand, I move towards the front door. Papa grabs my arm roughly, his fingers digging into my skin. “We are your family. You walk out that door—”

“Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Big threat from a man who fraternizes with his son’s mistress and shuns and shames his actual wife as if that’s fucking normal and not a reprisal of the *Twilight Zone*. You all have fun playing house.”

The sound of the door shutting behind me is...exhilarating. Cathartic. And just a little sad. I love my mama and papa, and I even love Tommy. But I don't like them right now and haven't for some time. I'm grateful for everything they have given me, the opportunities they have afforded me, but I will not compromise my principles for anyone.

Ugh. Even driving the Durango, my dream vehicle, isn't enough to lift my spirits. I'm 27, and for the third time in my life, I'm starting over. A small smile curls my lips when I think that Paige and I will be starting over together.

Dani 2.

2 ½ months later

“What are you doing?” My head tilts to the right on its own, as I stare at Lukas’ son Edward.

“I’m putting up decorations...what does it look like I’m doing?”

I snort, “It looks like your using breast pads as doilies.” Eddie stops immediately, a breast pad dangling precariously from his fingers, his eyes large and round, going from his hand to the coffee table and back again.

“Seriously?”

“Yes, dear. Seriously.”

“I wondered why they were so small...and...not doily like at all.”

“Jessica!” I yell for Edwards older sister. She comes in from the kitchen, a dish towel over her shoulder, their youngest sibling, Lily right behind her.

“You send in his MENSA application yet?”

“I want to, but he keeps signing his name in crayon. Why?”

“He’s...well...”

“I was just cleaning up!” Eddie shouts, leaning over the coffee table and scooping the opened breast pads to his chest. Then he rushes over to the many other flat surfaces of the living room and dining room to get the rest. Meanwhile, his sisters and I are laughing our asses off, leaning on each other so we don’t fall over.

“Dani.” Jessica corners me in the kitchen a little later.

“Jessica.”

“I just wanted to say...I know we haven't spent much time together, but from what I've seen and what I've heard from dad and Mama Llama...thank you for being there for Paige and my dad. I know its not really my place since you've known her longer, but I really like...no, I love Paige and I love her for dad. He's come alive since he met her in a way I didn't know he needed. You've encouraged their relationship from the beginning, and I just wanted to say thank you.”

“Oh, *novia*.” I pull her into my arms and hug the hell out of her. Lukas' kids are amazing and the way they've welcomed Paige and her boys into their family is incredible. Sniffling, I pull back and wipe at my eyes. I'm so happy for Paige.

I haven't had much contact with my family. A few times, mama or papa called to invite me over for dinner or to tell me I had mail to collect. It was strained and unpleasant and hurt my heart. I can see in the lines on their faces that these last few months have been stressful, and I don't envy their position, but I can't agree with their actions either.

Living with Paige has been a dream, honestly. I get unfettered access to my nephews, an eye-opening glimpse into motherhood that has me thinking it will be years before I venture in that direction, if ever, and extra guidance and real-world knowledge in my course work, since I'm studying to be a Nurse Practitioner like Paige. Plus, Lukas is easy on the eyes, and he likes picking up take out for dinner several nights a week and I enjoy food, especially when its free and I don't have to cook it.

The ice cream is a problem though. I don't have enough energy or hours for all the exercise required to work off all those ice cream calories, no matter how many times I pray to his confectionary gods.

The doorbell rings...and rings...and rings. Soon, the house is packed with everyone who loves Paige. Her parents, the boys, coworkers, friends, family, all here to celebrate the new life she's bringing into the world. And not a moment too soon, it was difficult to find a time when everyone could get

together, but she's 8 ½ months pregnant and looking like she could pop at any second.

I answer the door when the doorbell goes off for the umpteenth time and stare at the gorgeous specimen of man on the other side. He looks familiar but I don't think I've met him before.

"Hello." Oh my, his voice is nice.

"Hello. Can I help you?" The man is taller than me by more than half a foot, head of dark hair, tantalizing stubble on his square jaw, and intense brown eyes that pin me in place.

"I'm here for the baby shower." He lifts his arm in the air, a gift bag with pink and blue tissue paper dangling from his fingers. I like the way his biceps stretch the black cotton of his t-shirt, the way his chest is... Oh, hell no.

"Sorry, we don't allow your kind inside. You can leave the gift and once I've disinfected it, I'll think about giving it to the expectant mother."

His eyes narrow, his lips thin... "Excuse me? My kind? Lawyer? Scottish?"

I let my eyes linger on his chest, wishing it didn't have to be this way. With a sneer, I correct him, "Soldiers of the Roth Army."

It takes him a second, but I see the moment he realizes what my problem is. His eyes slowly trail down my face, my body, then back up again. "Shame. You're quite attractive...if only you had brain cells or decent musical taste, *Redhead*."

"Uncle Owen!" Lily pushes past me to leap at the man in front of me. I remember now, I saw a picture of Lukas and Owen from a few years ago, on Lukas' phone when I asked if he had any other sexy lawyer man friends. It was grainy, a night out at a bar, but the man with Lukas had been sexy. I watch with the hint of a smile as he embraces his pseudo-niece, kissing her on her temple and setting her back down. He's even better in person. Dammit.

"Lily-bug." He grins fondly at Lily when she takes his hand and pulls him into the house.

“Lily. I’m sorry, but he can’t come in.” I stop her with a stern voice and a shake of my head.

“What? Why not?” She bends low and picks up one his feet and then the other. “He didn’t step in shit.”

Because that’s the only reason someone wouldn’t be allowed in. “His shirt, Lily. It’s offensive.”

“It is?” She stands back up and runs her gaze over the old picture of David Lee Roth, reading the words, “David Lee Roth for President” out loud. “Who is David Lee Roth?” I stagger a few steps, leaning against the wall so I don’t fall.

“Who is...what the hell has your father been teaching you?” I whisper in shock.

“Or not teaching her, it would seem.” Owen is equally upset at this turn of events.

Lily looks between the two of us and rolls her eyes. “Is this like an older generation thing?”

Ok, now I’m pissed. “Pardon?”

“Are you hard of hearing? Did you forget to turn your hearing aids on, granny?”

“I’m only nine years older than you!” I screech and start chasing her around the house. Xavier and Elias get in on the fun, then Eddie and Jessica. “You little shit, get back here!”

“Why?” Lily yells over her shoulder as she rounds the island in the kitchen, “Did I step on your lawn again? Is my music too loud? Have me and the Scooby-Gang foiled your nefarious plans?”

That one halts me in my tracks. “You know Scooby-Doo but not Van Halen?”

Out of breath, Lily grins, “Oh. Is that what this is about?” I nod. “I know who Van Halen is. Sammy Hagar is awesome. But who is this Roth guy?”

“That physically hurt.” Owen clutches his chest, leaning against the archway between the kitchen and the dining room.

“Children.” Paige’s mom, Eloise snaps.

“Yes, Gramma Llama?” Lily flutters her eyelashes innocently at her new grandmother.

Eloise rolls her eyes with a fond smile, “They are on their way back.”

Jessica claps her hands and raises her voice from the living room. “Ok, people. This is not a drill. This is the real deal. Three minutes, everyone, get into position.”

“Isn’t anyone else nervous about shouting at an almost 9-month pregnant woman?”

“The danger is part of the fun.” I shush Owen and crouch behind the couch.

The door is thrown open and we all jump and yell surprise. Paige pauses in her journey to the bathroom long enough to squeal in surprise and put a hand to her ass, as if to contain the shit we might have just scared out of her. We stand and wait for her to return, Lukas joining us. Paige reemerges and we shout again.

Because my bestie is the best, we eat cake first, then gorge ourselves on the massive amount of food prepared. Owen comes to stand next to me. I’m leaning against the bookshelves, letting others sit since I’m nice like that.

“Nobody would give you their seat, huh?” I shake my head and sigh.

“No. Apparently having a food baby doesn’t elicit the same sympathy as an actual human baby.”

“Seems discriminatory. You might have a case.”

Alright, he’s funny. And handsome. And kind. And obviously loves Lukas and his kids. And has terrible taste in lead singers.

“We live in such a litigious society.”

“Thank God.” He wipes away imaginary sweat from his forehead. “Or I wouldn’t be able to afford to take you out to dinner and support that food baby in your belly.”

“How do you know it’s yours?” I place my hands on the top and bottom of my stomach in a gesture I’ve seen Paige do countless times.

Owen growls, stepping closer, and my body betrays me by reacting. “Who else’s would it be?”

“I’ve eaten with other men, Owen. I can eat with whoever I like. Whenever I want. And you can’t do anything about it.” I stifle the urge to laugh, thinking I’m in some kind of telenovela. His lips twitch but he maintains character and I think I fall a little in love with him right then.

“You might *eat* with other men, but you know I’m the only one who can satisfy your...hunger.” I squeal in an effort to suppress my giggle and walk briskly out of the room and upstairs to my bedroom. I’m simultaneously pleased and pissed that I can hear his footsteps behind me.

“Dani! Don’t walk away from me. You know its true. I am the only man who can sate your appetite.” I dissolve into giggles once inside my bedroom. Owen strides in and shuts the door behind him. I sober immediately, his grin remains in place.

“What are you doing?” I ask quietly.

He shrugs. “I don’t know. I wasn’t ready to stop talking to you. To stop looking at you.”

“That sounds creepy.”

“Yeah.” He sighs, running his hand through his carefully styled hair and messing it up. “Even I want to yell for an adult.” Standing up, I approach him slowly, closing the distance between us.

“What are you doing?” I ask again.

Owen raises his hands to my face, cupping my cheeks gently. His eyes bore into mine and I can’t look away even if I wanted to. The energy between us is intoxicating. “I’m... establishing a pattern.” He murmurs right before lowering his head and pressing his lips to mine. His warmth, his scent, the groan he emits when he tilts his head to deepen the kiss...it’s all too much. I place my hands on his chest to push him away,

but my fingers curl into the soft fabric of his shirt and drag him closer. On my tiptoes, I open my mouth and meet his tongue with mine and melt into him. He tastes divine with a pulled turkey aftertaste that I don't hate.

Needing air, we slowly break apart. My eyes meet his and I blurt out, "Did you say, 'establishing a pattern?'"

He looks over my shoulder to the left and winces. "Yes. I did."

I snort, then again. "You are such a lawyer."

"Do I qualify as a sexy lawyer man?"

I close my eyes with a groan. "Paige or Lukas?"

"Lukas, of course. Man wanted to have t-shirts, buttons, and beer koozies printed in honor of your nickname for him."

"And which did you order?" His grin is infectious, and I can't help returning it.

"Come to my house for dinner tomorrow night and I'll tell you...while keeping your canned beverage chilly."

"You sure this is a good idea? She's my best friend, he's yours. What if this doesn't work out—"

"What if it does? We're adults, Dani. We can handle whatever happens maturely."

"Aren't you a divorce lawyer? You should know better than to think adults are capable of handling anything maturely."

"I know better than to let someone like you pass me by without at least trying."

I huff a breath, step back and narrow my eyes at him. "That was smooth. Dammit." Hands on my hips, I lift my chin to the ceiling, then back down. One eyebrow quirked, I ask, "Favorite AC/DC song?"

"*Back in Black.*"

"Favorite Kiss song?"

He snorts, "*Lick It Up.*"

“Guns ‘n Roses?”

His eyes soften as he closes the distance between us again, pulling me into his arms. “*Patience.*”

I take a deep breath and throw caution to the wind. There isn’t much to throw, though, because I know Lukas wouldn’t be friends with him if he wasn’t a good guy. Lily, Jessica, and Eddie wouldn’t adore him if he was a bad man.

“You can pick me up promptly at 6, I’m a lady, so you better get your ass out of the car and ring the doorbell all proper like.” With a gentle kiss to my forehead, he takes my hand and leads me back downstairs.

We watch Paige open her presents, oohing and ahing over everything. Babies need a lot of shit. I glance up at Owen every now and then, laughing to myself how his eyes get bigger and bigger with each new gift. Looks like we might be on the same page as far as kids. That’s good. I know he’s older than me, I’d guess around 15 years or more. Do I have a problem with that? No, I don’t think I do. Once you’re in your twenties, I don’t think age matters quite as much. Maturity, however, does count for quite a lot. And so far, I’d say Owen maintains a nice balance of maturity and fun.

Paige is hugging her step kids, gushing over some sentimental gift they gave her, so I turn to Owen and ask an important question I forgot. “Sex before marriage? You good with that? Doesn’t offend your delicate sensibilities?” He chokes on a swallow and shakes his head at me.

“I left my delicate sensibilities in my other pants. Uh, yeah, I think I’m good with that.” He answers, his eyes heating the longer we stare at one another.

“Awesome.” I no sooner pat his chest than all hell breaks loose. Paige is in labor, like immediate-delivering-now-baby-between-her-legs-labor, and my parents are here, and 911 has been called. When I see Dory, an OB nurse that’s friends with Paige running up the stairs, Eloise and I follow right behind her.

It's like everything happens in slow motion and one hundred times normal speed all at once. One minute, Dory is telling me what to do and what to get, and the next there's a crying goopy baby who has just taken over a new section of my heart as her own and I'm snapping pictures, and crying at all the love, even from my parents and Tomas, and then the ambulance is taking Paige, baby Raegan, and Lukas to the hospital.

When I finally get a chance to breathe, I walk downstairs and right into Owen's open arms. Well, that was the plan, at the last second, he spins me around and presses his chest to my back and his hands on my lower hips. "Owen?" I question, my voice thick with emotion.

"I want to hold you, I swear. But you are covered in fluids of unknown origins."

Makes sense. "Ok."

"Why don't you get a shower and change, I'll help clean up down here. Then, I'll take you to the hospital?"

"Thank you, Owen, but I'm gonna stay here with the boys, and get the nursery ready for Raegan."

"Oh." He sounds disappointed. "Would it be alright if I stayed to help?"

I turn around in his arms, keeping a safe distance because of fluids, and look into his eyes. "You aren't ready to stop looking at me yet?"

He shakes his head with a grin. "Nope. Not yet."

"Thank you for the company."

"Don't thank me yet, you haven't seen my idea of cleaning."

Owen Reeves 3.

***Dani:** What should I wear tonight for our date? What's the dress code at Café Reeves?*

***Owen:** Lace bra and panties set, fish net stockings and garter.*

***Owen:** Yesterday was...insane. We can reschedule if you need.*

***Dani:** And let my bikini wax have another day to grow back in and waste these stockings I've been wearing all day? Never.*

***Dani:** See you at 6, handsome.*

***Owen:** You are a cruel mistress.*

***Dani:** In the best of ways, I assure you.*

Smiling, I pocket my phone and stare at the clock that hangs near the door to my office. I have about 35 minutes before I need to leave if I'm to be on time. As I start clearing files from my desk, making notes on what needs done, I let my mind wander over the past 24 hours.

I went to the baby shower yesterday to support my best friend and his woman. They've talked about Dani, of course, she's a big part of Paige's life, especially since she lives with her. She isn't just an ex-sister-in-law, she's her best friend as well, and someone who has been instrumental in helping Paige move on from her bitter divorce.

I've never been married myself, nor do I have children, but I've had enough cases over the last 16 years, Lukas' divorce being one of them, that I know no matter the circumstances, divorce is never easy. It can be amicable, it can be civil, but you are still severing a tie to someone you thought you loved enough to pledge yourself to in front of God, a judge, family, or friends. It's a failure in a lot of ways, and failure is often the most difficult thing for humans to accept.

Yet, even knowing the current divorce rate in Ohio and the United States, I can't help but feel that flutter of excitement deep in my belly when I think of Daniella Garcia. She opened that door yesterday and I swear, not to sound mushy or sappy, but it was like the sky opened up, the sun shined down, and suddenly everything made sense. I am 43 years old, I've dated, I've had a few relationships, but they ended, more often than not, as quickly as they started. Never have I felt an instant connection to someone as I did her. Our easy banter, the way she held her head high, the confidence that oozed from her every pore. I've met corporate women, socialites, girls-next-door, none of them were as comfortable in their own skin as Dani. It was easy to see she gives all of herself, wherever she is, without apology or reservations. No artifice, no game, no scheming.

And she made me hard as a fucking rock.

Hard enough that I'm willing to overlook her taste in 80's rock band lead singers.

This morning, I woke up in bed, alone, and reached out to the empty side wishing she was there. I miss her. Which is crazy because we just met. But I've heard so much from Lukas and Paige...she is more beautiful than I imagined. Intelligent, caring, funny, I'm in deep trouble and I can't even muster one iota of concern or fear about it.

She's so good with her nephews and the way she rallied around Paige when she unexpectedly gave birth was inspiring. Not enough that I'm going to change professions and become a midwife...midhusband? I've never thought about having kids, it wasn't something on the horizon, not even in my periphery. I quite enjoy being uncle to Lukas' and now Paige's brood. And my own brother and sister's kids when I get to see them.

I wonder if Dani wants kids. If she does, is that a deal breaker? I don't think so, but I'll have to ask her what she thinks. I'm not getting any younger and if I remember correctly, she's 27. Is her biological tock clicking? She was fairly pale when she returned from helping with the impromptu birth...but maybe that was because it was a shock?

Or fucking gross since she was covered in fluids. I suppress a gag just thinking about it.

“Have a good night, Carolyn.” I wave to my secretary as I drop off noted files.

“Wait!” I double back, raising an eyebrow at her. Carolyn’s been with me for more than 10 years and I can’t function without her. I chuckle when she proves me right, producing a gorgeous bouquet of flowers from beside her desk.

“Carolyn, they are lovely, but I don’t feel that way about you. And I think Rich may have a problem with it anyway.”

“Shut up and take the damn flowers. They are for your date tonight.”

I lean against her desk and cross my arms. “How do you know I have a date?”

“A woman never reveals her sources.”

“Lukas is a damn busybody. He’s worse than my grandma and her bridge club.”

“Might be, but he’s far handsomer.”

“I’m telling Rich.” She waves off my threat.

“Lukas called to update me about the baby and...”

“Then he spilled the tea. How did he know though?”

She and I say at the same time, “Paige.” I accept the flowers, giving her a kiss on her cheek and a heartfelt thank you. My nerves rise as I make the drive to pick up Dani.

With my heart in my throat and sweat on my palms, I fumble with the vase, stepping out of my car. At the front door, I hear the boys’ excited chatter and a few adult voices mixed in. I press the doorbell and wait with a smile.

Paige’s father opens the door, his expression stern. “Yes?”

I chuckle nervously, “Hello, Mr. Harper. Congratulations on your newest grandchild.”

“Hmm.”

“I’m here to pick up Dani.”

“Daniella.” He corrects me sharply.

“Right, is she—”

“What do you want with her?”

“Grant, stop it.” I relax a little at the sound of Dani’s exasperated voice. She laughs, “You aren’t my papa.”

“No, but he’s too busy unsuccessfully removing his head from his rectum.”

I watch the exchange like a tennis match, until Dani steps closer to the door and I take her in. Sweet baby Jesus. Her dark pixie cut hair is carefully mussed, a shiny gloss on her full lips, a long coat tied at the waist showing off a hint of her collarbone, fishnet stockings and glitter stiletto heels. I think I’ve swallowed my tongue.

“Have a good night, Grant.” She tells him, stepping up on her toes to kiss his cheek, then yells back into the house, “Call me, Eloise, if you need help with the boys!”

“She’ll be fine, I’m here.” Grant tells her.

“My offer stands unamended.” She winks, then sashays through the screen door and down the steps to the sidewalk.

“She’s a good girl.” Grant says on a sigh. “Most of the time. I’ll pray for you.” With that, he closes the door in my face. I shake my head and rush down to open the passenger door for her and help her in. My eyes glued to the expanse of her thigh as her coat widens slightly when she sits.

“You look...fuck, Dani, you look dangerous.”

“Why thank you.” Grabbing the handle, she pulls her door shut. I move quickly to my side, wasting no time starting the car and reversing out of the driveway. “How was your day, Owen?”

Small talk it is. Uh...how was my day...my day. Dammit, she licks her lips and I lose my train of thought again. I’m in my forties, not a teenager, get it together!

“My day was typical. Paperwork, paperwork, and more paperwork. I found it difficult to concentrate, I’ll admit.”

“Oh? Why’s that?” Her sultry voice does nothing to help.

“I thought of you quite often and it was distracting.”

“I can understand, I found myself in a similar situation.”

“Yeah?”

“I had trouble studying, kept rereading the same sentence over and over again.” She sighs like it troubles her, throwing her hands up, “It got so bad, I finally had to use my vibrator to thoughts of you just so I could finish my homework.”

I’m proud that I manage to keep the car on the road, however, my foot presses a bit harder on the gas. I bite the inside of my cheek to keep from replying, her chuckle filling the car. We make it back to my place in strained silence. The tension between us thick enough to choke me.

I want her. But I don’t want her to think I’m here to get laid. I genuinely like her, want to get to know her, but the way my cock is—

“Quit thinking so hard, handsome, and unlock your front door.” I help her out of the car, practically dragging her through the garage and into the kitchen of my home. She walks further into the house while I shut the garage door and lock the kitchen door behind me. I pull out the ingredients I need from the refrigerator to let them warm up before I start cooking.

“Would you like a glass of—Fuck. Me.” Dani stands in the middle of my living room, stiletto heels giving way to fishnet stockings clipped to garters that hang from her plum lace bodysuit. Her right leg is propped on my coffee table giving me a peek at the opening over her trimmed pussy. I forcefully lift my eyes up to hers, a sensual smirk tipping her lips, her hands dragging down her throat to run over her barely covered tits.

“I am rather parched.”

Dani 4.

I know what you're thinking. That Dani, she's a loose woman with a loose pussy and looser morals. She's a *whore*. Well, you'd be wrong on all accounts. I keep my shit tight with Kegels.

However, I am a woman with needs and desires, limited patience, and no artistic talent whatsoever to draw a roadmap to my G-spot. My first boyfriend in high school, lovely gent. Kind, sweet, attentive, smart, lousy lay. I had nothing to compare it to, but I knew there was better out there. I figured not cumming the first couple of times was common, but after we'd been sexually active for weeks and still no bell ringing south of the border...I knew we were better off as friends. As a graduation gift, I gave him a copy of "*The Guide to Getting It On*."

Another two boyfriends and zero male-induced orgasms later in undergrad, I realized that I have an awesome personality and a killer body, my oral skills are top notch, but I have more mental chemistry with people than physical.

At that point, I did some research, talked to a couple of professors, and discovered that we communicate with our mouths as well as our bodies, and I don't just mean hand gestures. The men I dated were exceptional confabulators, but quite illiterate physically.

Owen Reeves is another such exceptional confabulator, I enjoy his company immensely, and I am dangerously attracted to him. We have chemistry, we have almost an entire periodic table. Before I allow myself to fall deeper than I already have in the last 24+ hours, though, firsthand experience of the rod between his legs and what he can do with it is vital. It isn't enough to know whether it's tungsten, iron, or copper, I need to know without a shadow of a doubt that it can bring me to an epic conclusion.

I'm not greedy, I just don't want to settle for anything less than spectacular sexual chemistry. I can get a good

conversation anywhere; a good fucking is quite a bit more difficult to...*cum* by.

My explanation probably didn't make me out to be any less whorish. I wouldn't normally have sex with someone so quickly, but I've also never felt anything like this with another person. My skin tingles at just the thought of him, my pussy weeps at his scent, and his voice...God damn, his voice has my nipples hardening and my heart pounding.

Hence the lingerie.

He stares at me with his jaw slack and his chest heaving. His hot gaze running up and down my body, lingering on my perky tits and my crotchless panties.

"Owen?" I say his name a couple of times to get his attention. I trail my fingers around my nipples through the lace, then down my tight stomach to my eager pussy. "You said lace bra and panties set, fish net stockings, and garter. I didn't have a set, but I hoped my bodysuit would be an acceptable substitution."

"Uh-huh." His head bobs up and down rapidly as he agrees with me.

Biting my bottom lip, I crook my finger at him, "Then why are you all the way over there?"

He gulps, loudly, then stutteringly makes his way across the floor of his home. When within reach, I urge him to sit on the couch, then place myself between his spread thighs.

"Dani...Daniella...I didn't intend...I...dinner?"

"My, Mr. Reeves, I sure hope for your client's sake you are more eloquent in the courtroom." I tsk, bending at the waist, making sure my tits are in his face as I undo his tie and dress shirt.

"Yes." I shake my head with a snicker at his sex-fogged response. Men are simple creatures.

"So, is it all women who make you tongue-tied—" His mouth on mine cuts me off. It's not gentle, he doesn't ease me

into anything, he takes, and it sets my blood pumping and my cunt clenching.

“Just you. Fuck, Dani, you make all the blood rush south and it leaves me stupid.” His mouth drops to my right breast, his tongue teasing it through the thin fabric while he wrestles with his belt and pants. It’s a fight to keep my eyes on his lap, when his mouth does such deliciously wicked things to my sensitive nipples, but I don’t want to miss the big reveal.

“Oh shit.” What a big reveal it is. He wraps his right hand around the turgid length, coaxing more precum from the tip, his left-hand curling around the back of my neck and using his hold to drag me to him until I’m straddling his muscular thighs.

“So fucking hard for you, baby girl.” With an impish grin, I remove his hand from his erection and place it at the opening of my bodysuit between my legs. The fabric is soaked through and gives way easily when he dips two fingers beyond and circles my hole. “Is that cream for me?”

“You see anybody else?” I tease, pretending to search the living room. The hand on my neck moves quickly to my ass, the smack echoing loudly. “Now, we’re talking.”

Rising up on my knees, I hover above his cock. “Condom.” I chuckle when he fumbles with his pants to produce a foil packet. “Good boy.” Taking it between my fingers, I deftly rip it open and slide it smoothly down his impressive length. “Owen?” With heroic effort, he raises his gaze from where my pussy lips kiss his cock. “Listen up.”

His confusion morphs into pleasure when I take him inside my body, enveloping him in my heat and squeezing him with my inner muscles. My hands on his shoulders, I begin, taking my time to get used to the intrusion, it’s been a while, and just letting myself feel the bond between us snapping in place. He fills me so well, the broad head dragging along my delicate tissue, his lap cushioning me on my every descent.

“Dani...God, you are...breathhtaking.” He whispers reverently. Leaning forward, he maintains eyes contact with me while he takes my left breast into his mouth. His fingers

gently push the straps at my shoulders down, releasing me with a pop, so he can expose both breasts. “Baby girl.” It’s like he doesn’t know where to concentrate, his hands moving from my ass, up my back, along my shoulders, over my breasts, and down to my thighs. “Bounce for me.” His dark hungry eyes send a chill down my spine, his words a command. I find myself obeying without thought, taking him deeper, riding him faster...my arms rest behind me on his thighs, the feel of steely muscle an aphrodisiac on its own. His body is defined but not overly so, he takes good care of himself, manscaped, with a thin layer of hair on his chest. He’s beautiful as he raises his arms behind his head and leans back against the couch to enjoy the show. My hips swivel, my spine curves, my thighs burn, but I continue to ride him, slowly gaining speed.

“Tight. Wet. Heat. You’re gonna cum for me, Dani.” Before I can think to argue, his thumb is on my clit, his other hand on my hip and he’s taking over, he’s running the show, he’s steering our conversation and it’s fucking glorious. “Play with your titties, baby girl, need to feel you strangle my cock before I cum.” His fingers, his words, the dicking of a lifetime spur me on, I’m whining, whimpering as I approach my climax, my hands cupping my breasts more as an anchor than for stimulation. “Keep going, move those hips. Give it to me, Dani. Give me what I want.” The hand on my hip is suddenly on my throat, the slightest pressure intoxicating rather than scary. I know, I fucking *know*, he would never hurt me. Then he’s pinching my clit and rocking my body back and forth on his cock, grinding, and sending me over the edge.

I cum. I cum hard. Harder than I ever have before. Sorry, Jake Gyllen-hung, I might have to retire you after tonight.

Burying his face in my neck with a low groan, both hands on my hips now, he finds his release, filling the condom and fuck, if he doesn’t fill my heart and mind with all kinds of romantic nonsense.

“Dani.” I love the way he says my name, like I’m a surprise.

“Owen, your body is quite the sexual colloquialist. Lend me a t-shirt and shorts, and we’ll get to know each other better

while we cook dinner.”

Eyebrows waggling, he husks, “I’d say we’re quite well acquainted. My cock is currently softening in your cunt.”

“He is.” I pat his cheek and dismount gracefully, standing above him with a smirk. “Now, he’s not.” I look down at his condom covered spent cock, frowning. “Now, he looks sad. And like he’s drowning.” Walking out of the living room, toward his stairs, I look at him over my shoulder, “I’ll help you clean him up while you regale me with stories of youthful transgressions.”

He stands up, shaking his head, “This one time, I asked the ex-sister-in-law of my best friends’ girl on a date, and she wanted her *dessert* before dinner.”

Licking my lips, I add a little sway to my hips as I climb the stairs. “Hmmm. You should lock her down, she sounds phenomenal.”

I hear him start up the steps with a chuckle. I have no idea where I’m going, this isn’t my house and I’ve never been here, but I assume his bathroom and bedroom are up here since he hasn’t corrected me. “Yeah,” he says almost wistfully, “phenomenal, that’s a good word for her.”

Owen 5.

“I worked a couple of years as a registered nurse, saved up some money, then finally got off the pot and enrolled in the Nurse Practitioner Program at OSU.” Dani winks, “It pays when your bestie and sister-in-law is a respected instructor and NP in her own right.”

“Nepotism at its finest, huh?” I’m joking and I’m glad to see her easy grin, letting me know she understands that. I have no doubt that she earned her spot in their program fair and square.

“Mama and papa convinced me to give up my apartment and move home to save money while I was in school. I was able to quit my job so I could focus on school full-time to finish as fast as possible. It’s an intense program, so I’m happy they offered. But after everything with Paige and Tommy...I couldn’t stay there anymore.”

“And you’re happy at Paige’s?”

“Oh yeah.” Her eyes soften at the mention of her best friend. “Paige is...well, you know, she’s remarkable. No offense to my mama, but I want to be like Paige when I grow up, just maybe with less dirty diapers.”

I chuckle, “I don’t know if Lukas will ever be housebroken. But the good news is, I am.” She laughs with me, swirling her finger around the top of her beer bottle.

“So, how did you and Lukas meet? He said you represented him in his divorce.” I stir the pasta on the stove, my mind still whirling over the activities in the living room. While she helped me save my dick from “drowning,” she was kind enough to explain her reasoning for sex before conversation. It makes sense, I suppose, unorthodox as it is. If the sex is shit, then we might as well be friends.

However, the sex is anything but shit, it was spectacular, exhilarating, erotic, badass, and intense, to the say the least. Her confidence, control, and the way she works her body...

fuck, I've been at half-mast since we entered the kitchen, with her wearing only one of my t-shirts, her nipples teasing me from beneath the fabric. Her pussy welcomed me home and if I had my way, I'd never leave. Unfortunately, eating, sleeping, work...

"Owen?" Humor at my expense laces her tone and I can't even be mad about it. She's got me discombobulated and I'm loving it.

"Sorry. Well, I'm a few years younger than Lukas."

"Aren't we all." She jokes, causing me to snort.

"Lukas was my mentor at Ohio State when I was in law school. He'd graduated from there and volunteered from time to time. We became friends quickly and he was my first case when I graduated and passed the bar. I would have rather cut my teeth on something other than the end of his marriage, but his ex is a...well, frankly, she's a fucking bitch, so it was a necessary evil. He and the kids desperately needed her out of the picture."

"And you realized that you enjoy sticking it to shitty spouses and shittier parents. Is that why you've never married?"

I drop the pasta spoon on the stove and turn to face her, my jaw dropped. "Wow, you don't pull any punches, do you?"

"What's the point in throwing the punch, then?"

"Mercy?" I'm only half joking.

She shrugs. "I'm not one for pretense or bullshit. I'm direct and honest. Is that a problem?" Her voice is uncharacteristically quiet on the last question. Rounding the island of my kitchen, I spin her chair and step between her legs, my hands cupping her face as I bring her lips to mine.

"No, baby girl, its not a problem. It's fucking hot as hell."

"M'kay, good." She sighs in relief, then fuses our mouths together. I enjoy tasting her, teasing her with my tongue, her breathy whimpers. "I think the pasta is done."

“Hmm?” I query, trailing kisses down her jaw to where her shoulder and neck meet.

“The buzzer.”

“Oh, shit.” I’m in time to save the pasta before it boils over. In minutes, I have our pasta plated with the mushroom cream sauce, garlic bread, and a small salad. We take our seats at the kitchen table and dig in.

After several bites, I decide to answer her question from earlier. “I moved here for college when I was 18. I returned back west for breaks, but after my sophomore year, I pretty much stayed here. Took classes year-round. Worked.” She takes another bite, wipes her mouth with her napkin and gives me her full attention. “My parents have been married almost 50 years, had me, my brother and sister later in life. Everyone lives in Montana, my brother and his wife have four kids, my sister and her wife have two. I get back a couple of times a year to visit and we do a lot of video calls.”

“Wow. I know I’m not exactly on speaking terms with my parents and brother, but I can’t imagine living that far away from them. And definitely not Paige. If she and Lukas moved, I’d have to follow along.” We laugh, but I know she means it.

Smiling, I continue, “I grew up in a family where you find your one and your done. I’ve dated, I’ve had long-term relationships, but I haven’t found my one. No one I felt fit me like a key in a lock, that missing puzzle piece, the jelly to my peanut butter.”

Clearing her throat, she shifts on her seat, placing her hand on the table hesitantly. I take it, squeezing, reveling in the feel of her soft skin, the joy I feel from this simple act. “I understand how Lukas knew with just one conversation that Paige was the one for him. And I also understand why Paige hesitated, because someone so good is scary, hard to believe.”

“But I’m real. This...” I motion between us, “is real.”

“But you are real.” She repeats in agreement.

“There are no guarantees, Dani, in life. Only death and taxes. I can’t predict what will happen in a week, a year, a

decade, but I can promise you that there is no one I want to share my tomorrows with more than you.”

“It’s so soon, so quick.”

Shrugging, I nod to agree. “It is. Does it feel wrong? Or do you just think it’s too quick?”

“Think. It feels...wonderful. Like when you’re rising higher and higher on a rollercoaster and you know the drop is coming, but all you can focus on is the climb.”

“We drop together, Dani. You hold my hand and I’ll hold yours and we’ll ride it together.”

Dani scoots her chair back, strips my shirt off over her head and stands before me completely naked. Her body nothing short of magnificent. My tongue heavy in my mouth with the urge to trace her every dip and curve.

“Shit.” She curses, drawing my eyes up to her face. “I’m sorry, I don’t want to ruin the mood, but there is something we should probably discuss, it’s kind of important.”

“I’m not changing my mind about Hagar.” I scowl playfully.

“You will.” She waves her hand, “But that’s not what I was talking about.” Placing my hands on her hips, I pull her between my spread legs and run my fingers over the swell of her ass.

“What is it?”

“Umm...I don’t think I want children.” When I glance up at her face again, her eyes are squeezed shut, her features tight.

“Ok.” They pop back open at my response, her eyebrows rising to her hairline.

“Ok?”

I nod. “Yeah, ok.” Tracing the crease of her ass, I part her lower lips and tease her opening, using my other hand to manipulate her clit. “I was just thinking yesterday about how I’d never given any thought to kids; I love my nieces and nephews, I love Lukas’ kids and I’m sure I’ll love their kids,

but I'm comfortable not having any of my own." She breathes a sigh of relief, pushing my hands away from her, then dropping to her knees. Her hands make quick work of my sweatpants, pulling them down until my cock springs free.

"You're fucking perfect." She mutters before taking me into her mouth and rendering me speechless. She mentioned earlier that our bodies have their own ways of communicating. It would appear hers has quite a lot to say, and mine is ready to listen.

Dani 6.

Dani: Hey, you ok?

Audrey: Yeah, some stuff came up.

Dani: I've got notes for you, let me know if you need anything. I'm really good at picking up soup and dropping it off to front porches.

Audrey: Thank you, I'll let you know.

Placing my phone on the couch next to me, a ghost of a smile curls my lips as I stare into Raegan's sleepy eyes. She's only a few days old, but already she's made her mark on the world. I bring her head closer to sniff that baby scent and sigh in contentment.

I love my nephews and my niece. I have a big heart. But I've never really felt the pull to be a mother, myself. I enjoy being Tía Dani and spoiling the boys rotten, and since living with them, I've taken immense joy in disciplining them as well. I get the best of having kids without the stretch marks, prolapsed bladder, and the constant strain of never knowing if you're doing it right. How fucked up is it that the most important job on the planet has no Litmus test to determine your skill level before you've been doing it for at least 18 years. Until your kids grow up, its hard to say which way on the grading curve you're leaning. Did I fuck up? Don't know. He's graduated high school. College. Has a steady job. Alright, I crushed this parenting thing and then...BAM! He gets too drunk one night and kills a hooker after too much blow.

I mean, that's an extreme example, but still. I don't need that kind of interminable pressure. I'll leave that to Paige and Lukas. My brother is a prime example...parents raised both of us in the same household and he's a douche and I'm amazing. You never know.

"Xav! Get your face out of Elias' butt! Elias, pull your pants up!"

“I want to see the poop come out!” Xav whines and I bury my face in Raegan’s blanket and laugh silent tears until my eyes are leaking.

“ABSOLUTELY NOT! It’s not funny, Daniella!” Shit, I wasn’t sneaky enough. I raise my face and bite my bottom lip, engaging in a stare off with Paige. She finally sighs, shrugs, and smirks. “I’ll add that to the list of things I’d never thought I’d say.”

“So good. I’ve gotta text Audrey and Owen.” I’m just thinking of how to move the baby to get to my phone when Paige pins me with a hard stare.

“How is Mr. Reeves?” Her eyebrow is up near her hairline and the twinkle in her eyes makes me want to throw something at her.

“I believe he is quite well, thank you for inquiring.” I reply haughtily.

“You believe? Don’t you know? Were you or were you not canoodling with him until the wee hours of the morning?”

I hiss, “What the hell? Did you bug my phone?” Pulling the baby closer to me so her ear is against my chest, I cover her other with my hand. “How do you know we were... *canoodling*?”

She’s quite victorious as she says, “I didn’t.”

“You are evil.”

“Mommy isn’t evil. She’s an angel.” I roll my eye at my sweet, naïve nephew Elias while Paige awws and hauls him into her arms.

“Thank you, baby. I am an angel, aren’t I?”

“You make the good cheesy mac.”

“Men.” I scoff. “Easiest way into their hearts is through their stomach.”

“Nu-huh.” Eli says, contorting his neck to look down at his chest and then bending over so his face is in front of his pajamas. “Down the throat or up the butt.”

Snot flies out of Paige's nose, she snorts so hard, then chokes as she wipes it out of Eli's hair. "Where did you hear that?"

"Pop."

A giggle escapes at Paige's narrowed eyes. "Pop? Is that what they are calling Lukas?" She nods, pats his butt, and sends him out of the room to play with his brother.

"Owen. Start talking."

"Oh, honey." I feign a casualness I definitely do not feel and cross my right leg over my left, leaning back in the chair. "Owen and I did a lot of talking last night...he's quite fluent in body language."

"You did it, didn't you?" I just stare at her until she explains. "You sexed him up to make sure he could find your pleasure button without a GPS."

I shiver in revulsion at the use of "pleasure button." "Of course, I did. I've told you before Paige—"

She holds up her hands. "I know. I know. I've heard it before. And while I don't know that I agree...I can certainly understand how difficult a relationship would be without sexual chemistry." She says primly, avoiding my eyes and picking at invisible lint on her lounge pants.

"Ha!" Raegan stirs in my arms, so I pat her bottom until she settles. In a quieter voice I continue, "Now that you're getting the good fucking on the regular by a real man..."

"Speaking of that. Have you...have you spoken to your brother?"

"Go back. I want to talk about sex more."

"Dani. He's your brother."

"He's a fucking moron." I spit out.

"Tommy is hurting. He needs family. Support."

"He had family, a lovely family, till he threw it away for psychopathic pussy."

She shakes her head, a frown making her lips pull down. She gets that “mom” look and I know a lecture is coming, followed by guilt and other feelings and ugh. “Be that as it may, I’ve moved on, I’m happy. Happier than I thought I ever could be. I don’t wish him any ill will. He made a mistake.” She pushes on when I open my mouth to retort. “A big, fucking mistake. But he’s learning and growing up. You should have seen him at the hospital, Dani, after everything with Moon. Give him a chance to redeem himself, help him find the right path.”

“I’ll think about it.” Paige smiles like she won the Stanley Cup, then tilts her head to the side and that smile strains.

“Good. Think fast, he’s here to visit with Raegan.”

“I hate you.”

“No, you don’t.” I don’t. But I certainly don’t appreciate her underhandedness. Her...subterfuge! Yes, subterfuge. That’s a good word. She’s a subterfugist.

Paige gets up to open the front door and moments later, my brother hesitantly enters the room. Looking at him without the excitement of Raegan’s birth, I don’t like what I see. He’s drawn, almost gaunt, his eyes shadowed, shoulders slumped, gait uneasy. This is not my brother, this is a shell, a husk. And I cannot begin to express how seeing him like this pains me.

The bitch of it is, he brought it on himself. He was lazy and greedy. Though, in all honesty, I’d say his actions of the last half year are due in no small part to depression and an inability to articulate his needs. Dammit, I hate logic.

“Tommy.” I dip my chin in acknowledgement.

He meets my eyes briefly, then refocuses on Raegan in my arms. “Hey, Dani.”

“Well, come here and take your daughter, I think I smell a shit brewing and I’m not going to change that diaper.” He offers a small chuckle at my joke, his arms raising slowly to take his daughter. I stand for the tradeoff. “She’s beautiful, Tomas.” I whisper.

He rubs his hand over her soft head of dark hair, his eyes softening as he stares at her. “She is.” Once he’s sitting on the couch, he inhales deeply and lifts his head. My breath catches at the emotion that wells in his eyes. “I’m sorry.” His voice, so low, I can barely hear it. “I’m sorry, Dani.” He repeats louder now.

Scoffing, I tell him, “I’m not the one you need to apologize to.”

“Paige and I have spoken...at length and will continue to do so. And mama and papa. But you...Daniella.” He pauses, composing himself, and pulling Raegan closer to him. “I’m your big brother and all I’ve done your entire life is show you what not to do. I’ve been the best example of what to avoid. I’ve disappointed everyone, no one more than myself. I was foolish, rash, and chasing ridiculous dreams. Instead, I got tripped up by reality, hard. I’m sorry, Daniella, that I wasn’t a better brother to you growing up. That I let you down, that I brought mama and papa down with me. Raegan...” he looks down at his baby girl and smiles, “Raegan is my second chance. Her birth, the events that followed, all of it, was eye-opening and revelatory and the kick in the ass I needed. I’m... I’ve set up an appointment to see a therapist.”

“Wow.” I did not expect that. I figured he’d brush all this aside as a little mistake and continue oblivious as usual. “That’s...great, Tommy.”

He shrugs, “It was Paige’s idea, and I think it’s a good one.” He glances at where she stands leaning against the wall.

“You don’t deserve her, you never did.” The words come out before I can check myself. But I know I mean them.

He nods, his lips dipping into a thoughtful frown. “I know. But I’m hoping...I’ll be worthy of my kids, one day.”

“Well, fuck.” I groan, dragging my hand down my face and pinning him with a glare. “You make it difficult to stay mad at you. And believe me, I’d worked up a damn good mad over the last few months.” Paige and he chuckle. “Paige may be able to forgive you and move on, but we both know she’s a saint and I am not, so it’ll take me some time, Tommy.”

“I’m not going anywhere, Dani. I’m gonna be right here, working hard to earn my place in this weird hodgepodge family.”

“Ok.” We sit in silence for a moment, both of us lost in thought, watching Raegan begin to slowly wake up as she gives a big stretch.

“So,” Tommy grins, reminding me so much of when we were younger, shifting on the couch to lay the baby on his legs, “you wanna tell me about you and Owen?”

“No.”

He and Paige laugh at my succinct response. “I love you, Dani. I hope you know that.”

Rolling my eyes to fight the sting of unexpected emotion, I stand and dust off my pants, ready to play something with my nephews. “Naturally. I’m pretty fucking incredible.”

“And oh, so humble.” I flip Paige off and head down the hall to the playroom.

“Alright boys, Tía Dani wants to destroy something.”

“Yay! King Kong!” Xav yells.

Elias cheers, then says, “Tía must be having feelings.”

“Yay! Feelings!”

Owen 7.

Dani: *She's the devil in disguise.*

Owen: *haha She's your best friend.*

Dani: *There is still time for you, repent and sin no more. My soul cannot be saved, but yours can. Do not let her evil counterpart anywhere near you, or you too will be lost to the eternal flames of hell.*

Owen: *I really appreciate how levelheaded you are, no matter the circumstances.*

Dani: *She tricked me into making up with my brother.*

Owen: *I don't think she's the devil, I think she's a fucking saint. They're worse.*

Owen: *How did it go?*

Dani: *How do you think? She had us holding hands and singing Barney's, I love you before I could even blink.*

Owen: *Maybe, perhaps, just a thought...its not a bad thing to reconnect with your brother. I'd say he could really use his family right now.*

Dani: *Dammit, they already got to you. I enjoyed our brief but sexy time together, but alas, all good things must come to an end. Godspeed.*

Owen: *I'll pick you up after work, I'm getting hungry for dessert.*

Dani: *Yes, you are. A worthy pussy can always bring a man back from the brink of salvation. See you soon, handsome.*

Owen: *You misspelled Sexy Lawyer Man.*

Dani: *I was State Spelling Bee Champion for three years. I didn't misspell shit.*

Tossing my phone on my desk, I sit back with a chuckle. God, she's fucking amazing. Last night was epic. The sex, out

of this world. The conversation, prolific. The cuddling while we slept, life changing. I'm a little concerned how gone for her I am after little more than 48 hours.

My phone chimes with an incoming video chat. Sitting up, I smile into the camera and greet my parents, Rose and Evan Reeves.

"Hello, there."

"Son." My dad offers me a chin dip in greeting, meanwhile my mom gets up close to the computer.

"You've met someone."

I splutter, staring at her in horror. Can she see I've had sex? I look down at my clothes, already knowing that I'm put together properly. I don't have a condom hanging out of my pocket and my hair is combed. I sniff my armpits then shake my head as dad laughs. It's not like they can smell her on me through the video. And I showered...after giving it to her one more time this morning.

"It's all over your face, son." Dad teases, but mom nods.

"It is. Your eyes...wow, honey, that's wonderful. Tell me all about her."

"Maybe I didn't—"

"I've known you for 43 years, Owen, you don't think I know my boy? Don't know when he's lying?"

"It's disturbing that you can tell I've had sex." Now, my mom splutters.

"I did NOT say anything about sexual intercourse, young man. All I said was that you met someone. And we just spoke to you a few days ago, you were heading to Paige's baby shower, how could you have—"

"Mom." I put up my hands in surrender to get her to stop. "Her name is Daniella Garcia; she is Paige's ex-sister-in-law. And she's...damn incredible."

"Is that because you got to know her or because you *got to know her*?" I chuckle at my mom's change in tone.

“She’s 27, an RN in the Nurse Practitioner Program at OSU, never been married, no children, smart, witty, and passionate.”

“Of course, she’s smart, she likes you. At least enough to —” Thank God, my father puts his hand over my mom’s mouth.

“I really like her. I...I, shit.” I hang my head with a sigh.

Mom claps, “Oh! I hear wedding bells!”

“It’s a little early for that. Hell, it’s early for how I feel about her. She’s like an obsession and it’s only been a couple of days.”

Dad waves me off, “When you know you know.”

“Isn’t that a bit cliché?” He raises a brow at me, and it’s like looking into a mirror. I am the spitting image of him, same height, same build, same everything. The only difference is his face has a few more lines on it than mine.

“Clichés exist for a reason.” I shake my head at his answer.

Mom sits forward, a serious expression on her face, “Owen, I knew with one look that your father and I would spend the rest of eternity blissfully happy together. And one look at Babs Wellington in the fifth grade, I knew that she and I would be mortal enemies until the day Satan called her home.”

Dad and I share a wince. “Mom, she died several years ago, maybe tone down the—”

“And may she roast in the bowels of hell where she crawled up from in the first place.”

Looking at my father, I ask, “Is she where I get my bloodthirst in the courtroom?”

“Of course not.” He says vehemently, while nodding his head up and down from where he sits behind my mother.

“When can we meet her?”

“Soon, mom, I promise. She and I are finding our footing, but we’ll visit soon.”

“You better. I love you and I want you to be happy, Owen. However, only if I approve of your woman.”

“Ha. Ha. You’ll like her, I promise. Hell, you’ll love her almost as much as I do before dinner is finished.”

“Text me the dates when you’re coming and if she has any food restrictions and I’ll get everything ready.”

“Will do. Love you both.”

“Love you too, son.” Dad waves and mom blows me a kiss, then he reaches forward to disconnect the call.

Back to work.

About 20 minutes later, my phone pings with the group chat between my siblings and their spouses.

Ryan: *Picture proof, or it didn’t happen.*

Kelly: *If you need any tips on pleasing your lady, Emily would be more than happy to give you pointers.*

Emily: *I would in fact not be happy to do that because... ew.*

Kelly: *Do you want to be responsible for the downfall of his relationship with his lady love? How can you be so selfish Emily when you have the gift of tongue?*

Ryan: *Why do we include Kelly in our chats?*

Tiana: *Because she’s your sister*

Kelly: *Oh, thank you, Ti, you’re so sweet.*

Tiana: *Regardless of how perverse she insists on being in our conversations.*

Kelly: *I typed too soon.*

Owen: *And this conversation is exactly why it will be a cold day in hell before I introduce any of you to her.*

Ryan: *Not cool man. We’re delightful.*

Kelly: *If she can’t handle the Reeves’ family fire, then she should get out of our...kitchen?*

Emily: *I’m ashamed to be married to you.*

Kelly: *Isn't the first time. Won't be the last.*

Owen: *Not afraid you'll scare her off, I'm afraid she'll join in.*

Tiana: *Oooh, you've thrown the gauntlet. Now we have to meet her. When are you bringing her to mom and dad's?*

Owen: *On the fifth of Never in the year two thousand and fuck you.*

Tiana: *I've put it in my google calendar and sharing it with everyone. See you then!*

Bubbles appear, but thankfully someone knocks on my office door.

“Come in.” The door opens and I drop my head back on my chair and glare heavenwards. “Seriously?”

“Are you thanking the almighty for giving you such an amazing friend?”

I turn my glare to Lukas and purse my lips. “Something like that. To what do I owe the pain...I mean, pleasure?” He smirks, dropping down into one of the chairs in front of my desk. “Shouldn't you be with Paige goo-gooing and ga-gaaing over the baby?”

“I was, but Dani came home, and Paige was planning on meddling, so I didn't want to be within punching range of Dani when she realized what was happening.”

“Smart man.”

“Occasionally, my brain cells are good for something.” He knocks on his head, then stares at me.

“Dude, you look exhausted, but...happy.”

“I am exhausted, babies are a lot of work. But damn, she's precious.” The dark circles under his eyes can't compete with the grin on his face.

“How's Paige?”

“Fucking amazing. Did I tell you how Raegan slithered out of—”

“STOP!” I say forcefully, I already punched him once in the hospital when he started spewing that shit. “I’ll punch you again.”

He shrugs off my threat, “So, you and Dani?”

“Yup.” I answer with a grin of my own. “You got a problem with that?”

“Nope.” He says quickly. “Age difference doesn’t bother you?”

“We’re only 16 years apart and she’s incredibly mature and grounded.”

Lukas nods, “Makes sense, girls mature faster than boys.”

“Explains why the age difference between you and Paige work.”

Running a hand through his hair, he shifts on the seat. “Yeah, I’m enjoying this brief reprieve from the Nerf wars she and I have with the boys.”

“The boys too rough?” I’ve played with Xavier and Elias a few times and they are great little kids.

“No.” Lukas winces, his hands going to his crotch, “Paige keeps nailing me in my balls.”

I stare at him for a few seconds, blinking. “You two are so weird.”

His grin grows broader and brighter. “I know.” Clearing his throat, he sits upright, “You and Dani serious?”

“Yes.”

“Good, don’t want to kick your ass for messing around with Paige’s best friend.” He thinks about what he said and then corrects himself. “I mean, kick Dani’s ass for messing around with my best friend.”

“Aw, we’re best friends?” He ignores my mocking tone.

“You thinking wedding bells and the pitter patter of little feet in the future?”

“Yes, to the wedding. No, to the little feet.”

“Really?” He seems surprised.

“We talked—”

“You already talked about children? Its been like two days.”

“It seemed pertinent to have that conversation between her riding me on the couch and sucking my soul out of my balls in the kitchen after dinner. You know in case we weren’t in the same place in life.”

“Well, fuck.”

“Yes, that’s what we did. Four times before I dropped her off this morning.”

He flips me off, then sits back and thinks over what I’ve said. “Can’t imagine not having my kids, hell, even Paige’s feel like mine, I’m excited to do it all over again.”

“That’s great for you. Both of us are content to be kick ass aunt and uncle to however many kids our siblings pop out. And while you are changing diapers and checking homework, Dani and I will be traveling the world and fucking whenever, wherever we want.”

“True.” His eyes light up, and I stifle my chuckle at his expression, “I bet you would have to replace your furniture a lot less than us, and you’d never know the misery of scooping an entire roll of toilet paper out of the commode.”

Dani 8.

“Like that, baby girl. Fuck, what your pussy does to me.” Owen’s hands slide up my ribcage and cup my aching breasts. His fingers play with my nipples, my hips swivel, and a moan escapes me with every shot of lust sent to my pussy.

I feel the heat of him at my back, my legs spread wide around his waist, my hands on his thighs to hold me up as I rise and fall on his hard length. This is the best way to wake up in the morning. Better than any cup of coffee or energy drink. Just me and Owen, our bodies joined, our combined scents filling the air and our sounds of pleasure filling our ears.

“I’m close, O.”

“I know you are. I can feel your cunt gripping my shaft.” One of his hands glides to my upper thigh to hold me in place. His feet planted on the floor beside his bed give him the leverage he needs to fuck up into me, taking my breath with each punch of his cock.

“YES! OH, FUCK YES!” I shout, my legs trembling, my heart racing, my vag tapping out. Owen grunts, his rhythm stutters, then he’s filling me to the brim with his seed and it stirs something inside of me. No that’s not right, he fills in the cracks and makes me whole.

“Dani?” Shaking my head, I turn to Audrey, shoving this morning’s escapades and revelations to the back of my mind to deal with later. My friend and classmate is visibly distraught, pale, and clutching the hand of a little boy.

“Audrey? What’s going on? Sit down.” I urge her onto the bench next to me. I’m outside on campus, enjoying the day between classes. Audrey missed all last week, and yesterday. “I have notes for you...but...”

“I need more than notes.” She says exasperatedly, pulling the little boy closer to her side and kissing his temple.

“Tell me what you need.”

“I need a Sexy Lawyer Man.” She shakes her head and laughs darkly, “I don’t even care if he’s ugly with food stains on his shirt as long as he knows what he’s doing.”

I take a peek at the boy, and it clicks that this is her nephew, Nolan. He is staring off into the distance, his body curled into Audrey’s side, hands wrinkling her shirt where he’s holding tight.

“Why don’t we go to my house, well, Paige’s house. She’s home with the boys and the baby. Nolan can play with Xavier and Elias while we talk.”

She looks down at her nephew and sighs. “I don’t know that he’ll play with them...he’s...we can try.” She finally concedes. Pulling out my phone I shoot a quick text to Paige to let her know I’m coming home early with company, and I might need her man. Then I shoot a text to Owen that I need him on standby with a brief, albeit vague explanation.

“Did you drive?” I ask her, knowing she only lives a few blocks from campus.

“No.”

“Alright, come with me, I have car seats in my car for the boys, so Nolan will be safe.” The boy is eerily quiet on the drive to Paige’s house. Audrey isn’t much better, sniffing, and wringing her hands in the front seat.

I notice with relief Lukas’ car in the driveway. “Paige’s fiancé is here.” Audrey nods curtly, then helps Nolan out of the vehicle. Once inside the house, Paige and Audrey exchange greetings, I introduce Nolan and Audrey to Lukas, then Nolan to the boys. He doesn’t say a word, but I’m happy to see a spark of life in his eyes at their presence.

“Nolan.” Audrey says quietly, crouching down to his level. “I’m gonna talk to Dani and her friends. Can you go play with Xavier and Elias? They have so many toys, I bet you’ll have fun.”

He glances between Audrey and the boys, then at each of the other adults. His shoulders slump, but he nods his

acceptance and follows my nephews to their playroom. As usual, they are both chatterboxes, anxious to show off their favorite toys.

“She’s beautiful, Paige.” Audrey gushes over Raegan, her excitement subdued.

“Thank you. Would you like something to drink? Water? Soda? Juice? Wine? Scotch?” Audrey chuckles at Paige’s attempt at a joke and asks for a soda. In the living room, we all take our seats, Lukas with a pad of paper in his hand as well as a pen poised to take notes.

“Aud, honey, what’s going on? Where is your sister? Why do you have Nolan?” I do not expect the tears that splash from her eyes, nor the sobs that wrack her body. Changing my seat, I sit next to her and draw her into my arms as she breaks apart. I look at Paige and Lukas over her head, at a loss of what to do.

“Dani! I don’t know what to do! God, I can’t believe...this doesn’t happen in real life...I can’t...God dammit!” She screeches. I hold her, letting her get it all out. After several more minutes, she sobers enough to relay one of the most heart-wrenching stories I’ve ever heard.

Through stutters and timeline jumps, Audrey explains that her brother-in-law Sam Schnell is estranged from his family. They live an hour from here, but since before Sam went into the service, he ceased all communications with them. They are criminals and druggies and the worst kind of people. He wanted nothing to do with them, and certainly not after meeting Laura and having Samuel Nolan. Months ago, his brother William, contacted him by letter, saying that he’s unhappy with the distance between them, misses his big brother. They’ve been in contact since. William asked to come stay with them for a while, he wanted to get away from the family, start fresh somewhere new, have the kind of life that Sam had built for himself. Laura convinced Sam to give him a chance. A few of weeks ago, William came to stay with them, and for about a week everything was great. The brothers were awkward around each other at first, but quickly found common ground. William spent time with Nolan, helped

around the house, was kind, and even funny. He suggested he watch Nolan one night so Sam and Laura could have a date night. Sam reluctantly agreed, and he and Laura went out to dinner, but he was anxious to get home.

She pauses here and it doesn't take a genius to figure out this is where things went wrong. My heart is pounding in my ears, and my stomach turns knowing that this doesn't end well. But I hold her, stroking her hair, lending her my support so she can continue as Lukas takes copious notes and Paige feeds Raegan.

“When they came home...Sam heard whimpering from upstairs...he rushed up, Laura on his heels, and...” and it takes everything I have not to vomit. Paige weeps silently, hovering over Raegan, her eyes trained on the hallway leading to the playroom. Even Lukas takes a moment to compose himself.

Sam found his brother raping his 7-year-old son. Without hesitation, he pulled his pocketknife, grabbed William by the hair and stabbed him in the neck. Once he separated William from his boy, he dropped his brother to the ground, and stood on his neck. Instructing Laura to wrap Nolan in his blanket, Sam knelt down, whispered something, then applied pressure until he crushed William beneath his booted foot.

He picked up the bundled mass of his crying son and carried him to their vehicle. While Laura got into the backseat and cradled Nolan, Sam called 911, explained what happened, the house would be unlocked for them to retrieve the body, and that he would be at the hospital with his son. The dispatcher told him to stay put, but he refused, saying his son needed medical care and hung up.

An hour later, his son was being treated, a rape kit performed, and he was given a sedative to calm down. The police came in hours later, made a show of arresting Sam. Audrey had arrived to help Laura by then, and listened as they threatened action against Laura before taking Sam in. He didn't resist, just told Laura to find a lawyer, he loved her, and then he shouted to his son that he loved him too.

“I heard about this.” Lukas says when Audrey takes a breath. “He took a plea deal, didn’t he?”

Audrey nods, “Last week, his appointed lawyer convinced him and Laura to take plea deals, since she had been charged with several crimes as well. Said Sam would serve a maximum of 36 months and that Laura would serve no time at all. But the prosecutor and the judge...” a quick indrawn breath, “they said a bunch of stuff I didn’t really understand, and then suddenly my sister and brother-in-law were being taken away. Sam would serve decades and Laura years. The lawyer managed to at least get me emergency custody of Nolan. But I don’t know what to do, something happened, and it isn’t right, none of this makes any sense. He was protecting his son! Why...I don’t understand...why?”

Lukas meets my eyes, his are bright with righteous indignation and fury and I am reminded once again why Paige is involved with this sexy lawyer man. But when he opens his mouth, he reminds me of my own sexy lawyer man. “Call Owen, tell him to get here right away.” I nod, patting Audrey, then standing up to move to the kitchen. I can hear Lukas asking her questions, while I wait for Owen to answer.

“Hey, baby girl—”

“Owen, we need you to come over right away.”

“Dani? What’s going on, I got your text earlier.”

“It’s so bad, Owen.” I whisper, my voice catching. “Lukas requested that you come here to meet with my friend. She needs help.”

“Ok, I’ll be there in thirty minutes.” He takes a deep breath, “Dani? Are *you* ok?”

I shake my head, “I don’t know that I’ll ever be ok after what I just heard.”

“I’m on my way.”

“Thank you.” We disconnect and I stand at the kitchen counter for several long moments, my hands braced on the cool, smooth surface while my mind races and my stomach churns. Fuck. What a fucking mess. Nolan. Sam. Laura.

Audrey. Their lives have been turned upside down in such a painful way, I can't imagine...I'm going to help them, in any way I can. With new resolve, I walk back into the living room, resume my seat next to Audrey, and take hold of her hand.

Owen 9.

Her voice. Fuck. We haven't spent a lot of time together, granted, but I've never heard her sound like that. And I don't ever want to again. It haunts me as I drive slightly above the speed limit to Paige's house.

I park on the street, running up the sidewalk. Lukas greets me at the door, his expression drawn, his eyes blazing with fury.

"Dude, what's—"

"Before you go in there...did you hear about the man who killed his son's rapist? About two, almost three weeks ago?"

I nod, remembering the case. It wasn't mine, but I know I was shocked when he plead guilty. His wife too, I think.

"His son and sister-in-law are here. It's fucked up, man, and I think it's going to get worse. I don't have the time or resources to help her, though I wish I did. She needs someone well versed in these types of cases."

"I'd have to hear the details before I commit, but..." I recall how distraught Dani sounded on the phone and know I will do anything to help her friend.

"Can you call your friend in Steubenville...I don't remember his name."

"Sebastian Davis. I can call him, but he doesn't deal with ___"

"Didn't he assist that guy—"

"Yes. Uh...Kellan...Kanan...Keenan! Keenan Kohlman." I snap my fingers when I finally place the name.

"Call him now and get Kohlman's contact info or have him call you. We're gonna need him." Pacing the length of the porch, I call an attorney friend of mine from southeast Ohio, right across the river from West Virginia, in a small town. We met years ago at a conference and hit it off immediately.

“Davis, Davis, and Maguire, how may I help you?”

“Esther?”

“Yes...Owen Reeves, is that you?”

“Yes, ma’am.” I confirm with a smile, Esther is a delightful older woman who has been secretary since before Sebastian finished high school. “How is my favorite beautiful woman today?”

“Charm will get you everywhere, young man. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“Believe me, the pleasure is usually all mine.”

“Oh, is everything alright?”

“I’m afraid not. It doesn’t involve me, but I do need to speak with Bash, if he’s available.”

“For you, I’ll make sure. Give me a moment, Doe is here for a late lunch.”

“Is that what the kid’s are calling it these days?” She giggles, placing me on hold. A minute later, Bash is on the line.

“Owen, what’s going on?”

“Hey, man. How’s the wife and little dude?”

I can hear his smile, “Growing like a weed. The little dude. Not my wife.” He chuckles and I join in. “Doe is keeping me on my toes and Cashel is just...fucking amazing. You should give the wife and kids thing a try, 5 stars, I highly recommend.”

Thinking about Dani, I tell him, “I’m on my way to the wife thing.”

“I forgot, you’re the esteemed ruler of Uncledom.”

“Damn right I am.” Taking a deep breath, I get to the reason for my call. “I need a favor.”

“Anything, you know that.” His lack of hesitation is comforting.

“I don’t know the details yet, but Lukas Vulakovich called me over to meet with him and a potential client. He says its too big for him and not in his wheelhouse. But he remembered your connection to Keenan Kohlman.” Bash sucks in a harsh, quick breath.

“Fuck.” I concur. “Yeah, I can give him your number and tell him to call you ASAP. It’s bad?”

“Like I said, I don’t have all the details, but Vulakovich wouldn’t have sounded the alarm unless it was necessary.”

“Yeah, ok. I’ll reach out to him right now. Knowing him, he’ll probably be in contact within the next hour or two.”

“Thanks, Bash. I appreciate it. Dani’ll—”

“Danny? You pitching for the other team now?”

Laughing, I correct his assumption, “No. Daniella is Lukas’ pseudo sister-in-law, it’s a convoluted story, but she and I have started dating and...”

“And I’ll be expecting a wedding invitation shortly. Doe is gonna be beyond thrilled to see you wifed up. Better stock up in milk-duds now.”

“I will.” I look up at a noise from the front door, Dani stands with her arms across her stomach as if she’s holding herself together. Swallowing hard, I finish up my call, “I gotta get in there, thank you, Bash.”

“No problem, expect his call soon.”

As soon as I hit the button to disconnect the call, Dani is pushing the screen door open and running into my arms. Tears track down her cheeks as she buries her face in my chest. I hold her tight, as close as possible, unsure what’s upset her, but knowing I’ll do anything to fix it.

“Shh. I’m here, we’ll deal with it together.”

“Thank you for being here.” She sniffles.

“Anytime you need me, I’m right there, Dani.” She nods but doesn’t speak. Inhaling deeply, she squares her shoulders, wipes under her eyes, and takes my hand. Inside the house, I

hear Xav and Eli laughing down the hall, such a rigid dichotomy to the oppressive somber mood in the living room. Lukas sits on a recliner, facing the couch, where Dani's friend, Audrey, who I recognize from pictures on Dani's phone, sits amongst tissues littering the seats next to her. I hear noises from the kitchen and assume Paige is in there being Paige and getting more refreshments or baking a cake. She makes taking care of other people a fucking art form.

“Audrey Baker, this is my boyfriend, Owen Reeves.” I preen a little before getting myself under control. Her calling me her boyfriend sounds good...fiancé...or husband would sound better.

“Audrey, I've heard a lot about you. It's a pleasure to meet you.” I extend my hand as I stride across the living room. “Though, I gather different circumstances would be preferred.” She gives me a faint smile, holding onto my hand like a lifeline. I indicate the couch, “May I?”

She hastily clears Mt. Tishmore, and I take a seat next to her. “Thank you for coming.” She whispers hoarsely.

“Would you like Lukas to fill me in...” She nods, her eyes moving to Lukas to plead for help. He nods and relays her story, referencing his notes a few times. I hold out my hand to Dani, who's been leaning against the wall, happy that she takes it instantly. I pull her into my lap and use her as a distraction, so I don't throw something.

“I'll need to contact their attorney and requisition the files from court to review. Are you able to keep Nolan or do we need to find alternative care for him?”

She shakes her head adamantly, “He's not going anywhere. I've got him. It's tight, but I can handle it. I've already spoken to my professors about bringing him to campus—”

“Bring him here.” Paige says from the doorway, startling us all. Lukas eyes her for a moment, then nods. She starts speaking again to forestall Audrey's refusal. “I'm home for the next several weeks on leave. He needs a comfortable environment, interaction with other children, he needs to see

what normalcy looks like, not a daycare or hiding in the back of a classroom. Audrey, let me help you and him. Please?”

Audrey scoffs, “You are pleading to watch my nephew?” She shakes her head and turns to Dani with wide eyes. “She is a saint.” That breaks the tension in the room, Lukas and I nodding our heads in agreement. Audrey wipes her hands on her thighs several times, her shoulders rigid. “Thank you, Paige, I think I’ll take you up on your offer. You know my class schedule since it’s the same as Dani’s.” Audrey dips her chin at Paige, shifting in her seat to meet my eyes. “Are you able to help my brother-in-law and my sister?”

I shake my head but reach out to grab her hand. “I am going to do everything I can, but I’m waiting to hear from a colleague who is more experienced in this type of case. What I heard throws up several red flags, including gross misconduct. I can assist, but he’ll run the show, if he agrees.”

She sighs, “And if he doesn’t?”

I squeeze her hand, smiling at my girl when Dani places her hand over mine and Audrey’s. “He will, but let’s talk to him before we borrow any trouble.”

Dani 10.

“Keenan seemed...intense.” I say, burrowing further into Owen’s side in my bed, my arm and leg slung over his boxer-clad body. His long arm cages me in, his hand cupping my ass cheek. He laughs at my assessment, his chest rumbling with the sound.

“That’s one way to describe him.” With his intake of breath, my head moves up and down. “I’ve never met him personally, but Bash, Sebastian Davis, worked with him on a case and the man knows his shit. He’s rock solid. Made more interesting based on his affiliations.”

“Affiliations?” I lean up on my elbow so I can look down at Owen. His handsome face shadowed by the light of the bedside lamp, the miles of tan skin burnished gold as we lay over the covers.

“He’s a member of the *Congressionals MC*. Actually, he might be an officer.”

“An MC?” The abbreviation swirls around my head, “Like a motorcycle club?”

“Exactly.”

“Aren’t they usually...criminals, themselves?”

“Some are. But like with anything, there are extremists. Bankers, lawyers, doctors, store clerks, criminals can be found anywhere if you look hard enough. The *Congressionals* live on their own terms, but they operate within the law as much as possible. They save lives, they protect people, and they’ve helped law enforcement on more than one occasion.”

“Huh.” I did not expect that. “But he’s the right man for the job? He’ll get Laura and Sam out?”

“He’ll do everything he can to get to the bottom of what happened, just like I will, and fight with any means necessary to get them out.”

“They shouldn’t be in prison. Owen, he was trying to protect his son...”

“I know, baby girl.” His hold tightens as he urges me to lay back down. “What I don’t like is that the prosecutor filed charges at all. If Sam had made it in front of a jury, he would never have been convicted. Anyone would be hard pressed to find a jury who wouldn’t pat Sam on the back and buy him a drink for what he did.”

“That’s what I thought.” Kissing his pec, I rest on my chin so I can look up at him. “I’m glad she decided to spend the night. She was exhausted and so was Nolan.”

“Poor kid fell asleep while the boys were waging all out war against the evil giant baby Booger Nose Jones.”

I snort, then echo his laughter at how ridiculous my nephews are. “That stupid doll.”

“The doll is fine, the fact that is what they picked for a name is what’s stupid.”

“He felt comfortable enough to let his guard down. Audrey said he hasn’t slept well since it happened, and when he does sleep, he’s tormented by nightmares.”

We’re quiet for a while, both lost in our own thoughts. I’m not sure who makes the first move, but suddenly we’re kissing, moaning, gasping as we devour one another. After everything I’ve heard today, the emotional rollercoaster, I just need to feel good. Feel connected to him. And he seems to be of like mind. Surging over me, pinning me to the mattress, Owen stares deep into my eyes, his hand cupping my cheek gently, my name whispered as if a prayer. Our lips meet again and its hungry and desperate but oh so tender.

Naked, we rub against each other, writhing as our bodies say what we can’t put into words. Settling between my spread thighs, he suckles at my nipples, his right hand exploring the depths of my pussy, bringing me right to the brink only to back off before I fall. I whine, my hands clawing at him, but he shushes me and does it again. And again. The fourth time, he removes his fingers and slides his cock to the hilt nice and

slow. I thought my orgasm would have faded as the others, but when he fills me the tension in my lower belly snaps and I soar, my mouth open on a silent cry of ecstasy.

Owen drops down until we're flush, his face buried in my neck, his hips pumping, driving his cock in and out, branding me just as his whispers of devotion and pleas of forever. When he finds his release, my eyes water, and my soul weeps with the joy of it all.

"In perpetuity." He mumbles right before taking my lips again, fusing our mouths together. He stays inside me, rolling us to our sides, until well after he's softened. Our eyes barely blinking for fear we'll miss something as we trade short kisses and long kisses, sweet kisses and passionate kisses.

I see his eyes become heavy, knowing sleep is imminent. Caressing his face, my fingers rasping through his short facial hair, I close my eyes, whisper against his soft, swollen lips, "In perpetuity.," and fall asleep in the arms of the man who owns me body and soul. Forever.

Owen 11.

“How are you and Nolan holding up?” I step around my desk and sit in the chair next to Audrey.

“I’m fine...I’m...I don’t know what I am. Angry. Confused. Worried. Angry. Did I mention angry?” I chuckle lightly, patting her hand where it’s clutching the armrest.

“All of those are valid and justified. Do you need a therapist? I have some people that we refer to during especially acrimonious separations. And even the ones that are amicable.”

“Thank you, Mr. Reeves—”

“Owen.” I correct her immediately. I don’t stand on formalities, even if she wasn’t a close friend of my girlfriend.

“Owen. Nolan is going to be seeing someone that Paige suggested, actually.”

“Saint Paige...beating me to the punch.” She laughs at my joke, thankfully. “And you?”

She sits upright in her chair, her brow furrowing in confusion, “Me?”

“Yes, you. Audrey, your entire family has suffered a tragedy. No, you weren’t directly involved, but you are now. Your sister and brother-in-law are in prison, your nephew was violently raped and assaulted, and you are his guardian until further notice. The fact you are sitting in my office not in hysterics is surprising.”

Sagging, she flits her gaze to me then down to her lap. “Hysterics usually happen at night after Nolan is asleep. Between his nightmares.” She perks up slightly, “But Paige and Lukas and the boys and Dani have been an immense help. He doesn’t say much, but when he’s around Xavier and Elias...Nolan is...less heavy? Does that make sense? Like a weight is temporarily lifted from his tiny...” she snuffles, “little shoulders.”

I move to my knees at her feet, taking her hands in mine and squeezing them. “He’s a strong boy, shouldn’t have to be, shouldn’t know that about himself at the age of 7, but he is strong. In one fell swoop, he’s lost everything...his innocence, his parents, his home, his security. You are working so hard, doing everything you can to bring that back to him.” She opens her mouth to respond but she is interrupted by a voice at my doorway.

“He’s right, Miss Baker, though his delivery would be just as profound if he wasn’t touching you.” We both snap our attention to the dark figure who enters my office. Audrey gasps, wrenching her hands from mine and covering her mouth. I merely shake my head and stand up, stretching out my hand. “I was informed you had a woman.”

With a smirk, I say “I do indeed have a woman, Mr. Kohlman. My Daniella is Audrey’s friend. But message received.” His grip is firm, maybe a touch too firm, and his eyes only hold mine for a moment when he dips his chin in acknowledgement before he ignores me completely to address Audrey.

“Keenan Kohlman.” He scoots the other chair close to hers, takes her hands away from her mouth, and holds them in his own as he takes his seat. “I wish like hell we could have met under other circumstances, pet, though I have no doubt this will be but a speedbump on our journey.”

Audrey melts a little in Keenan’s presence. I’ll admit I do too, and he isn’t even talking to me. Man is intense. And handsome. I shake my head, leaning back against my desk and watching their interaction.

“Our journey?” She parrots back after several seconds where her cheeks blush and her eyes stay glued to the magnetic man commanding all her attention.

“We’ll get to that a little later. Right now, I’d like to get down to business. I reviewed the basic details of the case and aside from my disgust with the perversion of our legal system, I am confident I can rectify the atrocities against your brother-in-law and sister.”

Audrey inhales sharply, “You can get them out?”

“Yes.” I suck in my own breath at his conviction. In medicine and law, its best to never promise anything.

Kohlman, turns to me, “Do you have a conference room with video capabilities?” I nod. “Good. I’d like to connect with my team back in Independence and have them hear everything in real time and straight from the source.”

“Independence?” Audrey snorts, then quickly tries to cover her mouth again, but Kohlman has yet to release her hands.

“I’m based out of Independence, Kentucky, pet.”

She nods her head absently, “And your team?”

Kohlman’s back goes ramrod straight, an infectious grin takes over his dark features, as he explains, “The Congressionals Motorcycle Club, of which I am lawyer extraordinaire.” I bite back a laugh when he releases her hands and spreads his wide, wiggling his fingers.

In the fifteen minutes it takes us to relocate to my conference room, gather beverages and establish a secure link to the clubhouse back in Kentucky, Audrey hasn’t said much, just keeps mouthing the words “motorcycle club” and wiggling her fingers like Kohlman did. And when she isn’t doing that, she says “pet” in different inflections. I think Keenan might have broken her or short circuited her brain.

The effect he has on her is only temporary it seems once we get started. She cries but holds herself together rather well as she recounts the details as she knows them to complete strangers, yet again. They ask her question after question. Confer between themselves. Review court documents and police records. And I realize, I’m not really needed. Kohlman is a one-man show, with an entire clubhouse of backup dancers. I feel like the guy that got pulled up from the audience at one of their concerts and doesn’t know the words, so I just stare dumbly at the spectacle before me.

Kohlman is charismatic, wicked intelligent, confident bordering on arrogant, and a million miles ahead of me. I’m man enough to accept that. I want to be him when I grow up...

even though I'm pretty sure I'm older than him. He's like the Michael Jordan or Sydney Crosby of law.

"You live in a one-bedroom apartment near campus, is that correct?" One of Kohlman's people asks. I think his name is Wilson.

Audrey confirms, "Yes. Right now, I sleep on the couch and Nolan sleeps in my bed. I...I sometimes...when he has nightmares, I lay with him, or he comes out to the couch."

Kohlman asks directly, "Are you comfortable there? We can relocate you—"

She holds up her hand, "No, please, you all are doing so much for us already, and honestly, I don't want to move Nolan again. It's a lot of change for him." Kohlman nods in acceptance, but the way his jaw firms and his eyes harden tell me he doesn't like it.

"I will give you a list of numbers to call should you need anything, including mine." She blushes again and I can't wait to tell Dani all about it. That makes me sound like a 13-year-old-girl...and I don't care. Dani will be happy for her friend. To the men and woman on the screen, Kohlman tells them, "I'll be setting up here," he looks to me for permission which I agree to without hesitation, "so I won't be back for a while. Pierce, get me on the visitation lists for both Laura and Sam, and I want to speak to the original officers on scene, not the ones that arrested Sam."

"Got it, Lincoln." The call is disconnected, and heavy silence hangs in the room. Kohlman for the first time looks unsure of himself, or maybe its embarrassment. "Go ahead."

Audrey clears her throat, "Why did he call you Lincoln?"

"That is my road name. I had no hand in picking it."

"Is it because of the Emancipation Procli—" I start then stop; unsure I want to continue down that line.

Kohlman, thankfully, starts chuckling. "You'd think that was it, right, me being Black and all? But no. He was a lawyer, I'm a lawyer...and..."

“And?” I prompt him when he stalls.

“And he and I are the same height, 6’4”, I went to college and law school at Northwestern in Illinois, and I wrestled in high school and college. I was pretty good.”

“Ok?” Audrey is as confused as me.

“Abraham Lincoln was enshrined in the National Wrestling Hall of Fame and supposedly had three hundred victories. Which is also my record between high school and college. And you know, Lincoln Lawyer.”

There is a moment of stunned silence as Audrey and I process this unexpected bit of information. Her shoulders tremble, then she snorts giving way to laughter that wracks her entire body. I can’t hold back and join in, resting my head on the table and my hand over my stomach. The levity of this moment appreciated.

Kohlman scoffs, and loudly begins to gather his belongings. “He was also a very honest man, and so am I. And you two are assholes.”

Audrey squeals, waving her hands in front of her face. “Yes, we are, Honest Keen!”

Dani 12.

“Paige, I put the laundry away in Raegan’s room. Tell her to quit shitting in her onesies or I’m gonna nickname her Skids.”

“You will do no such thing!” Paige spits out vehemently from behind me. I turn and give her a Cheshire cat grin. She smirks, “Lukas has already started calling her Dookie Drawers.”

Laughing, I take Dookie Drawers from her mother’s arms and bring her head to my lips for a gentle kiss. “I like it. How about you, DD? Do you like Dookie Drawers?” Raegan gurgles, stretches, grunts, then explodes in my arms. My eyes snap up to Paige just in time to see her run down the hall.

“NOT IT!”

“Come on, DD. Why you gotta do your Tía dirty like that?”

I’ve just finished changing the squiggly worm when my phone rings. Magically, Paige appears in the doorway once the disastrous diaper has been disposed of, taking Raegan from the table so I can answer the call.

“Hey, Aud—”

“D-d-dani.” Her voice wobbles, barely getting my name out as she cries into the phone.

“Audrey, what’s wrong?”

“They’re gonna take him away!” I’m down the stairs, grabbing my purse from the hook, and out the door in seconds.

“I’m on my way. Is someone there?”

“No, they...I got...”

“I’m on my way, Audrey. Take a deep breath. Good. Another.” After a few moments she’s calmer, but still emotional.

“I’m sorry, I just panicked, I shouldn’t have called you—”

“Well, that’s a load of horse shit, isn’t it? Of course, you should call me. Though you could have called a few minutes earlier, then I wouldn’t have had to don a hazmat suit to change Raegan’s diaper.” She gives me a light chuckle, but I’ll take it. Anything to get her out of whatever panic she’s worked herself into. “I’ll see you soon.”

“Thank you.” Audrey whispers into the phone and my heart breaks for her. Despite traffic, I arrive about 17 minutes later. Barely putting my car in park before I’m rushing into her apartment building. She opens the door before I can even knock, and I immediately pull her into my arms and hug her as tight as I can.

After another couple of minutes, she leads me into her apartment and over to her couch/bed. She points to the table where a stack of papers sits, her finger trembling as if she’s expecting them to come alive and attack her. Although, once I skim the contents, I understand her reaction.

“What the ever-loving fuck?” I’m aware enough not to scream and yell, Nolan must be in her room. “Is this for real?” She shrugs, her eyes welling with new tears. She glances briefly at her closed bedroom door and sags onto the couch next to me.

“What am I going to do? I can’t lose him. Laura would be...they are awful people, Dani!”

“I know. Did you call Owen or Keenan?” She shakes her head. “Ok. I’m going to take pictures and send these over to Owen. Then we’ll figure out your next steps. You aren’t alone in this, Audrey. You have help, so let’s use it.”

“Ok. I know you’re right. I should have called them. I just...you were my first thought.”

I give her a side hug, “I’m a badass, I know, but unfortunately, I’m not a badass with a law degree.”

“I guess even superheroes have their limitations.” Chuckling, I spread the papers on the coffee table and snap photos. Owen will need the originals, but at least this way he

can look at them while I call him. I send them, then press the button to talk to him.

“Hey, baby girl, I just got a text from you.”

“I’m at Audrey’s. I sent you pictures for now. Sam’s family has petitioned for full custody of Nolan, and they are suing Laura, Sam, and Nolan for wrongful death.”

“Uh...I can see that. You’re with her?”

“Yeah, I just got here.”

“Nolan there?”

“Yeah, he’s...” I trail off and look to Audrey.

“He’s taking a nap.”

“Ok.” Owen says, having heard her. “Stay put, give me 5.”

“Take a breather, Audrey. He’ll call me back shortly.” She nods, leans back against the couch, and closes her eyes. I can’t imagine she’s been sleeping well, not just because she’s on an old couch. Dark circles ring her eyes, and her haphazard ponytail and lounge clothes bely how exhausted she must be.

While we wait, I take a look around her place and decide to clean the kitchen first. I’ve just finished filling the dishwasher when my phone rings. Audrey’s rings at the same time, and I chuckle. Owen told me that he sensed something between Audrey and Keenan. Given the way her lips tip into a soft smile and her cheeks blush when she looks at the caller id, I’d say he is right.

“Hey, handsome.” Owen sighs heavily after my greeting.

“Hey, baby girl. How are you?”

“Worried. Nervous. Hungry. A little horny.” His laughter rumbles down the line, sending shivers down my spine. I miss him, which is silly since I saw him this morning, but still.

“I can help with two out of four right now, and another later tonight.”

“Can they take him, Owen? What judge would grant them custody to a boy they’ve never met?”

“Not a sane one, that’s for sure. Keenan, his team, and I are working on it.”

“Thank you. I’m gonna stay here, for a while at least, I don’t want to leave her alone right now.”

“That’s a good idea. I’ll call you later when I’m finishing up at the office.”

“Ok.” Those three little words hang right there on the tip of my tongue. I don’t know what’s holding me back, but I can’t force them out. His hesitancy makes me think he feels the same.

“Ok.” We hang up and I finish cleaning the kitchen while Audrey hums her responses to Keenan. At one point, she chokes on nothing and pulls the phone away from her ear, stares at it with wide eyes, then puts it back to her ear.

Suppressing a giggle at her expense, I remain in the kitchen until she’s done. I find chicken breast in her fridge, a frozen squash medley in the freezer, and potatoes in her itty-bitty pantry. While she holds the phone in her hand long after she’s hung up, I cook dinner for the three of us. Yes, I’ve invited myself to dinner, no, I do not think it’s rude.

When she finally emerges from her Keenan Kohlman induced fog, she joins me, helping me plate the food. Nolan peeks out of the door, no doubt smelling dinner, and slowly tiptoes to the bistro table in her kitchen.

After several minutes of Audrey asking Nolan questions, only to receive nods, head shakes, or grunts in response, I decide to break out the big guns. Plus, we’re almost done eating anyway.

“Alright, Nolan, I have to ask.” His entire body stiffens visibly in the chair, Audrey shooting daggers at me. I wink at her, then say to Nolan, “Booger Nose Jones is the stupidest name for a baby doll, right?” It takes him three seconds to lose his composure and curl in on himself in a fit of boyish giggles.

“Seriously?” Audrey asks, and for a second, I’m not sure if it’s his reaction or— “They named it Booger Nose Jones? Is it a presidential assassin, using three names? Is it a gangster like

Ice Pick Willie?” That makes Nolan laugh harder until he falls out of his chair. I’m quick to join him on the floor, kneeling next to him and slapping my hand off the floor.

“One. Two. Three! Ladies and gentlemen, he’s out for the count!”

Nolan sits up, wiping tears from his face, some of the light in his eyes dimming as he tells me, “Daddy and I watch wrestling.” He turns to Audrey, “Will we...do you think he’s watching it where he is? I don’t want to miss it!” Moving back from my spot, I give Audrey room to scoop her nephew into her arms and rock him.

“No, sweetie, you aren’t missing anything. Your daddy loves you so much, that’s your thing to do together. He wouldn’t share it with anyone else.” Nolan nods absently, tracing his fingers along the collar of her shirt.

They whisper back and forth, and I clean up from dinner. I boop his nose when they stand up and tell him, “You wanna play a game?”

He shrugs, “Aunt Auddie doesn’t have any games.”

“Do you know how to play any card games?”

He thinks about it for a moment, his nose scrunching up adorably. “Go Fish.”

I wave him off. “That’s for little kids. I got a game for you.” I go to my purse by the door and retrieve my deck of cards I always carry with me. “Audrey, we need candy or pennies.” She gives me a strange look but starts toward her bedroom for something. She turns around and screeches when I say to Nolan, “All right, kid, the name of the game is Texas Hold ‘Em.”

Owen 13.

“She kicked you out?” I ask Dani between kisses. Her lips are so fucking soft and bitable. I nibble on the bottom one until she pushes me back against the wall of my foyer.

“Something about 7 years old is too young to know about poker and gambling and how to hold a cigar.” A laugh escapes me despite what she’s now doing to my neck with her tongue.

My grunt of pain gets her attention.

“Owen? What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, keep going. Just got a kink in my neck from sitting at my desk all day. It’ll go away or I’ll die, but as long as you keep kissing me, I don’t think I mind.”

“I’m not into gross abuse of a corpse.” She shakes her head, detaching herself fully from me. I groan, holding out my hand to bring her back. She takes it with a wicked grin and leads me to the couch in my living room.

Before pushing me down on the soft cushions, she urges me to remove my shirt by practically ripping it from where it’s tucked into my dress pants, then attacking the buttons. I can’t help my easy smile watching her. She’s always beautiful, gorgeous, but she’s breathtaking with her need for me. She stops me when I start on my belt.

“Sit down.” I slowly lower myself to the couch, while she moves to the foyer to retrieve her purse. Digging in it, her eyes light up triumphantly. She rounds the couch and stops when she’s behind me. A click, then a soft floral scent. I jolt when her hands touch my bare shoulders, stunned by the cold lotion. However, I quickly melt into the couch as she continues to explore my neck, shoulders, upper chest, and back, kneading and tickling, rubbing and soothing. I groan at tender spots, moaning as she works them out, and laugh when she focuses on sensitive spots. Then her expert hands move up my neck, into my hair, massaging my scalp and I think I’ve reached nirvana.

In a husky voice, she asks, “Does that feel good?”

“Uh-huh.” I answer eloquently, speech beyond my capabilities at the moment.

She tsks as if my answer has displeased her. “That was still semi-coherent, and we can’t have that.”

A whimper fills the air when her hands leave me, my entire body slumping forward, missing her touch instantly. My eyes snap open when I feel a tug on my belt buckle. I can only stare as she undoes my pants and shimmies them down with little cooperation from me. Not that I don’t want to help her free my cock, but I find it difficult to human at the moment.

“Oh my.” She gasps theatrically, shaking her head. “All the tension I helped release has fled south...you must be in so much pain...my poor baby.” My lips tip slightly. “How about I just suck all that stress right out of your body? Would that help?”

“You’re the devil.” I whisper. She grins with a wink.

“Well, this devil is about to go down to...Georgia?”

I bark out a laugh. “Stop talking. And suck my pain away.” And she does. God, does she suck. She also licks, fondles, strokes, and flicks. Leaning my head back, I let her take care of me. Daniella Garcia is the most amazing creature I’ve ever met. And she’s mine. I knew it the first time I saw her. I knew it with the first words out of her mouth. All that wit, and sass, and intellect, and drive, and passion. All mine.

“Pull your tits out.” She does this Houdini-sorceress-type shit and presents her perky tits to me without removing her mouth from my dick or her shirt. I play with her nipples, tugging and thumbing them until she’s writhing on her knees before me. A dirty, filthy lightbulb clicks on in my head. I move my right foot, dress shoe and all, and slide it between her legs, the top of my foot butting up against the heat of her pussy. Her hips shift instinctively, then again, and in seconds she’s riding my foot, mewling around my cock.

My balls draw up tight, and I know I’m close. I drop my chin down, my eyes glued to where her pretty pink lips stretch

around my girth, I card my fingers through her short hair and hold her tight.

“You gonna swallow my cum? Or do you want it in your pussy?” She shakes her head after my second question, her tiny hand squeezing my cock while the other grips my hip. “You want me in your belly?” She nods. “You wanna take my stress away and swallow it down?” Nods again. “You gonna cum too?” Nod. “That’s a good girl. God, you are such a good girl.” I buck into her mouth, unable to remain passive anymore, my need to cum too strong to ignore. She takes it, moving with my thrusts, her eyes widen as the first volley explodes from my dick, then they narrow in pleasure as she swallows again and again, her own hips moving faster and faster. The high of my climax begins to fade. She rips her mouth away, wiping my cum that’s dribbled out and rubs it into her tits as she ruts against my foot. Dani’s small body jerks, a low groan escapes her mouth, her fingers pinching her nipples until they’re so dark red it looks like it hurts, then she collapses into me, her head resting just inches away from my spent dick.

My fingers play idly with her hair while we both come down. She starts to giggle, and it is the happiest sound I’ve ever heard. “I fucked your foot.”

“Sort of.”

“Ok, Mr. Semantics, I dry-humped your foot.”

“Yes, yes you did. Though I doubt it’s very dry down there.” I know I have a smug grin on my face.

“You are a dirty old man.”

I shrug, not really gonna argue with that one. Once I know I have my strength back, I hoist her up into my arms and carry her to my bedroom and into my bathroom. I dirty her up one more time, this time with me inside her, then we wash each other clean and fall into bed.

My face buried in her neck, my body aligned with hers, I fall asleep with a satisfied smile on my face, my heart full and my balls empty.

Owen 14.

“I thought you were taking time off?”

Lukas scoffs over the phone. “I did. I am. I just had to come in for a few things that needed my signature, then Attila the Office Manager locked the door and won’t let me leave.”

“Are you calling me to send assistance?”

“No, I’m just calling to chit-chat.” I snort at that. He’s the worst when it comes to gossip.

“Oh yeah? About what?”

“Well, did Dani tell you that her parents have been calling her, but she won’t answer the phone or return their texts?”

I think back to the few times her phone rang or chimed with a message and she scowled at the phone, whispering obscenities in Spanish, then got back to whatever she was doing. I asked her if she needed to answer it or call them back, but she made a point to walk to the closest window, check the sky and then tell me that it didn’t look like hell had frozen over yet and she didn’t see any pigs flying, so no.

“Yes, I am aware of that. She’ll speak to them in her own time. They were awful and Paige might be able to move on, just like with Tommy, but Dani isn’t ready. Though, she has texted back and forth with Tommy, mostly memes. But I think that’s their preferred form of communication.”

“Yeah, Tommy does better when using pictures...he’s like an ancient Egyptian communicating through hieroglyphics.”

“Or a preschooler.”

Lukas laughs, “Yeah, that too.” He pauses, then asks, “I don’t know that I’ve mentioned this, and I won’t ever again, but...I’m really happy for you and Dani. It never occurred to me before, except seeing you two together, it makes total sense.”

“I’m gonna ask her to marry me.”

“No, shit, really?”

“Yes. Not yet, we haven’t said we love each other yet, but...I know where I want it to go, where it has to go. I can’t imagine a tomorrow without her.” He’s silent for a long time. Too long. “You are already texting Paige, aren’t you?”

“This is too juicy not to share! Are you kidding me?” There is so much excitement in his voice it actually brings a smile to my face.

“Hey, Lukas.”

“Yeah, man?”

“Thanks for sending a client my way so you could bone her. It’s changed my life...for the better.” Before he can respond, Carolyn rushes into my office, waving her arms.

“PICK UP LINE ONE!”

“Gotta go.” I tell Lukas and quickly press the button for line one.

“Hello?”

A rush of air comes over the line, then in a whisper, I hear Dani, “Two men. On campus. They threatened Audrey and I after class. We’re hiding in the lab on the second floor of Newton Hall, uh, east side. No, west. Shit. I don’t know directions.”

“Dani! Take a breath.”

“Sorry. Campus police are on their way I think, someone called them as we ran into the building.”

“Shit.” I stand up, grabbing my cell phone and checking my pocket for my keys. “I’ll call the police and Keenan, I’ll be there in 20 minutes, do not move.”

“Ok.”

“I mean it, Dani. DO. NOT. MOVE. Until I get there.”

“Got it.” I’m about to hang up when I hear her voice again, “Owen. OWEN!”

“Did they find you?” My heart is about to beat right out of my chest, my leg muscles twitching with the need to move.

“No, not yet. Call Paige and Lukas, she has Nolan, warn them, please! And...I love you.”

My eyes close as I take in her words. Even said under duress, I know they are true. “I love you too.”

“Hurry.” The line clicks in my ear.

I run out of my office, past Carolyn’s desk. “I’ve already called the police; they are on their way.”

“Thanks!” I’m in my car and out of the lot in moments. Through my Bluetooth, I call Keenan.

“Kohlman.”

“I don’t know the details, Dani called me, she and Audrey were accosted on campus by two men who were looking for Nolan. They’ve hidden themselves in one of the labs of Newton Hall. Campus police and Columbus police are on their way. I’m about 20 minutes out, less if traffic cooperates.”

“Jesus.” Kohlman mutters, then barks, “I’m...I’ll...I’m taking a shit.”

“Well, pinch it off and hurry the fuck up!” I disconnect the call. My hands white-knuckle the steering wheel as I press harder on the gas. I’ve never been a reckless driver, but I’ve never felt this urgency before. I run through all the different scenarios on my way and none of them are good.

If Sam’s family has escalated beyond legal means...but why? Why is it so important to have Nolan with them? Sam made sure they never had any contact with his wife or child. Was William really breaking away from the family, or was it a ruse to get Sam back in the fold?

How far are they willing to go?

That’s the question that unnerves me the most.

“What’s going on?” Lukas answers on the first ring.

“Call Paige and the kids. Two men came after Audrey and Dani on campus demanding Nolan. You need to go home.”

“Fuck.” I hear him moving. “I assume you are going to Dani. Please keep us posted and have Dani call Paige to let her know she’s alright.”

“Will do. Be safe!”

“You too.”

I get as close to Newton Hall as I can. There are police cruisers and campus police vehicles blocking most of the entry ways. Stepping out, I’m surprised to see Keenan gesticulating aggressively at a cop.

“Kohlman!” I holler, jogging over to join him. “How did you get here so fast?”

“My hotel is only a few blocks away.”

“Oh, where are the girls? Are they still inside?”

“I was just telling your friend here,” the cop points his finger at Kohlman, who growls in return, “that we’ve secured the building. The suspects fled before we were on scene. Ms. Baker and Ms. Garcia are still inside the lab. They won’t come out until Owen Reeves speaks to them.” The cop sighs and looks up at me with narrowed eyes, “Please tell me that you are Owen Reeves, Mr. Sexy Lawyer Man?”

The fact that he calls me that, means that Dani or Audrey did, and that means they are safe. All the tension leaves my body at once and I place my hand on Kohlman’s broad shoulder to hold myself up.

“I usually just go by Owen.”

“Thank God. You can head in if you want, or just call them. There are officers waiting outside the lab to escort them down. We can get their statements then.”

I pull out my phone and call Dani. She answers before it even rings. “Owen? Are you here?”

“I’m here, baby girl. Unlock the door and let the nice police officers bring you and Audrey outside. Keenan and I are waiting by the main entrance.”

I hear her relief when she says, “We will be right out.”

A few minutes later, the doors open, and Dani and Audrey come running out. I take a second to see that Audrey has tear tracks on her cheeks, her eyes are red, and she's pale. Keenan meets her and lifts her into his arms, and I leave them to it as Dani leaps into the air, wrapping herself around me like a koala bear. I catch a glimpse of her face and it is nothing like Audrey's...my girl is pissed.

She starts mumbling in my ear, "*Pinchi pendejo cabrón. Me cago en sus parientes muertos!*"

Well, that was certainly...creative? Scary? Ball-shrinking?

"Ms. Baker? Ms. Garcia? We'd like to take your statements, while everything is fresh."

I set Dani on her feet, and see Keenan do the same to Audrey, albeit reluctantly. We exchange a look over their heads, then focus on the police officer.

"My name is Officer Yeager. Would you like to sit down?" He points to an empty picnic table. "Or something to drink?"

"Yes, thank you. Some water." Dani answers after a nod from Audrey. We follow the women and officer to the table. He calls out for someone to get them bottles of water. Another man joins us, this one wearing a suit and tie. About my age, a little older, kind eyes and friendly smile.

"Hello. I'm Detective Munson."

"Daniella Garcia, Audrey Baker. And this is Owen Reeves and Keenan Kohlman."

Detective Munson eyes us both for a moment, "Are you the boyfriends?"

Keenan and I answer, "Yes.," while Audrey answers, "My lawyers."

Munson chuckles, takes a seat across from Audrey and Dani and pulls a note pad out of his breast pocket. Officer Yeager already has his pen and paper ready. "You've already contacted a lawyer?" He turns to Yeager, "I thought they were the victims?"

"They are."

“Detective, are you familiar with the Samuel Schnell case?” Munson swallows hard, his eyes narrowing on Keenan.

“Yes. I am.”

“Ms. Baker is his sister-in-law, and current guardian of his son Nolan. His parents have filed for sole custody of their grandson. A grandson they have never met. And that Mr. Schnell took great steps to ensure never did. They have also filed a wrongful death suit against Sam, his wife Laura, and their son. We are handling that in court; however, it would seem the grandparents have lost patience with the legal system.”

Munson moves his gaze to Audrey. “Is that what happened today, Ms. Baker?”

“Yes.” She answers quietly. Keenan runs his hand over her head, letting it rest on her shoulder, while Dani grabs her hand and holds it tight. “Dani and I had just finished class. We were at that tree,” she points to a tree about thirty feet from the entrance, “when two men came up to us and blocked our path. They didn’t introduce themselves, but they knew me. They demanded I take them to Nolan, that he belongs with his rightful family. I told them no. Dani and I tried to walk around them, they moved. We turned around and that’s when they grabbed us.” She pauses, leaning her head on Dani’s shoulder. I move behind Dani, grateful that she rests her head on my stomach, needing some contact with her. I do not like that someone touched her. It makes me...violent and twitchy. Not something I’m familiar with.

Keenan on the other hand, curses, takes a step back and runs his hands over his face and the top of his head. Twists it side to side, cracks his neck, then steps back to comfort Audrey. She reaches up to put her hand over his on her shoulder.

“Dani screamed, nearly blew out my eardrum, but it drew attention. When the men looked around at the crowd that was gathering, Dani grabbed my hand and dragged me into the building, up the steps and into the lab. She locked the door and barricaded it. While I curled up in a ball and cried. I was

useless. What if he'd been with me? What if they find us when I'm out with Nolan? How can I protect him?"

"Shh." Dani hushes her, wrapping both arms around her friend. "You will do what needs to be done. Aud, you are stronger than you think."

"You are." Munson agrees. "You two ran to safety and called in reinforcements. We have some surveillance footage from the buildings and a few people have forwarded videos from their cellphones. Would either of you be able to describe the men who confronted you?"

They both nod, then begin describing the men in detail, Dani even noticing tattoos and a few scars. Munson gives us each a business card, and with a handshake to both he and Yeager, they set off across the yard.

"It isn't safe here, Audrey, I'm taking you and Nolan back to Kentucky with me. You'll be surrounded by—"

"No." Audrey whirls around, interrupting Keenan with a raised hand. "No, I can't leave Laura. And I don't want to uproot Nolan. Again. It's too much for him. He's only been in Columbus for a short while."

"Pet, I understand this is hard—"

"I don't think you do, Honest Keen Lincoln." Audrey stands up, apparently finding her backbone. Too bad she's decided to use it against Kohlman.

"Pet..." He warns dangerously, but she doesn't listen, stepping up to him, pointing her finger at his chest.

"He was raped! Watched his father kill the man who did it. Then watched as the police arrested his father and mother. He's lost everything that he knows. I'm all he has right now. And I'm barely holding it together. I can't be another person to leave him or make life harder than it already is."

"Pet." Kohlman says softly, wrapping his arms around her and drawing her into his chest. I lift my arm so Dani can snuggle into my side as we watch this little tête-à-tête. "Better to make life harder than have no life at all if they come back."

“Owen?” I lean down to Dani so she can whisper in my ear. “Can they stay with you, us, at your place?”

“I don’t mind, Dani, but I don’t know if that’s enough.” She lifts a shoulder as if she agrees, then clears her throat loudly.

“Stay with us at Owen’s place. His house has plenty of room.” Kohlman and Audrey blink several times as they stare at Dani with open mouths.

“I don’t want to put you out, Owen, you’ve done so much for me already—”

“Audrey, you aren’t putting me out. If anything, you’re scoring me points with my woman. How can she resist someone as charitable and altruistic as me?” I smile when Audrey splutters a laugh.

She turns big, round eyes on Keenan, and I see the moment he cracks. If he’s pursuing her, which is pretty obvious, he’s gonna have to find some armor against those eyes.

Dropping his forehead to Audrey’s, he inhales deeply, before exhaling slowly. “I’ll agree,” he begins, like he has a fucking choice, sap, “but I’m calling in my brothers for protection. Until we get this settled and find a way to neutralize Sam’s family, I want round the clock security for you and Nolan.” He rocks his head to the side to look at Dani. “And that goes for you too, banshee. They’ve seen you.”

“Banshee.” I muse. “Huh. I like that. Banshee.” Dani pinches my side in retaliation.

She acts quite put-upon, but I know her. And I know this has rattled her. “If you want to assign sexy ass biker men to follow me around all day and night, who am I to argue?”

“My woman, that’s who. Argue. Fucking argue.” I growl in her ear, making her laugh.

“Alright, lets get out of here. We’ll go back to your place, pet, and pack, then pick up Nolan from Paige and head over to Owen’s.”

I take Dani's hand, leading her toward where I parked. "How about Dani and I pick up Nolan and dinner, and meet you at my house?"

"Thank you, Owen." Audrey rushes over to Dani and engulfs her in a hug. Their bodies tremble with emotion as they cling to one another. "Thank you, Dani."

"Ain't no thang." Dani says thickly, waving off the emotion and her friend.

"Hey, Owen." I meet Keenan's dark eyes as we separate to find our vehicles. "Do you have towel warmers in your bathroom?"

I scrunch up my nose, "No, why?"

"I'm just wondering how much I'll be slumming it when I cancel my hotel reservation."

"Slumming it?" I question, my stomach dipping when I realize what he means.

"See you soon, roomie!" He waves me off with a flourish and a smarmy grin.

I help Dani into my car, buckling her seatbelt for her and taking her lips in a harsh kiss. "Do you still love me?" She whispers against me, her eyes searching mine.

"Of course, I do. Why would that change in the last hour?"

"Because your house is about to be invaded by three people, one of which seems prissy."

"I love you more because you offered your heart and my home for protection to someone in need. I love you even more because you were so strong and brave, and you did what had to be done to save yourself and your friend. And I love you exponentially more because you referred to Keenan as prissy and I can't wait to tell him!"

"Tattletale!"

Dani 15.

So...I may have underestimated the impact of having a few additional people in the house. And several large, burly men in leather on bikes outside.

Namely, the noise. The constant flushing of toilets. The revving of motorcycle engines. The television. The whining.

“Owen. Honey. Dear. My love. I need you to shut the fuck up for like 5 minutes.”

“Oh, really?” he snarls, snapping my textbook shut and getting in my face. “You need me to shut the fuck up? In my own house! How about you show Nolan where the volume button is on the remote...again. Or remind Keenan that no self-respecting man needs to take that long in the bathroom, I don’t care if he had a rectal prolapse and has to stuff it all back in; rinse it off in the shower and be quick about it. Oh, I know. Why don’t you tell Big, Bigger, and Biggest out there that not everyone enjoys the deafening roar of an engine at 6 in the fucking morning!”

All of those are valid points. Each and every one. I can’t argue even if I wanted to because seeing him all menacing and angry is hot as fuck. I twist my hand in the front of his shirt and pull him to me until we are centimeters apart. “I will but not yet.”

He rolls his eyes but doesn’t move away. “Why’s that?”

“Because we need all that noise to drown out my screaming when you stuff me full of your cock and ride me hard.”

“Uh...” he’s taken aback at my change in direction. “Ok. Yes. That’s good.” My fist still holding onto his shirt, I pull him behind me towards his bedroom. When we walk past the living room, he pats me on the ass, “Wait a minute.” He rushes over to Nolan, who is sitting on the couch, completely engrossed in whatever is on the tv, while Audrey studies in the recliner with noise cancelling headphones. He crouches low

and whispers something to Nolan, points to the remote and then jogs back to me. Hands on my hips, Owen guides me down the hall and into his bedroom, where he shuts the door with his foot.

“What did you say to him?” I ask, even as he swings me around and pushes me face first into the door, his warm body blanketing me from behind as he reaches around me to twist the lock.

I shiver in delight when he runs his nose up the length of my neck, nipping at my ear. “I showed him how to increase the volume.” God, I love this man. Taking my wrists, he raises my arms above my head. “Do not move.” I nod in agreement, my breath already hitching in anticipation. We’re both strung tight and in need of a release. Warm hands trail down my arms, across my shoulders, down my back, and around to my breasts. Even through the fabric, his touch lights me up. My pussy throbs and my nipples ache.

He makes quick work of pushing my t-shirt and bra until they are bunched around my elbows. Kneeling, he drags my yoga pants and underwear down, biting my right ass cheek playfully. I have seconds to relish the firm grip of his hands on my butt, before he spreads me open and dives in. My back arches as pleasure shoots up my spine, my nipples grazing the door. He licks me from asshole to clit, moving my legs where he wants them, so he can devour me.

My orgasm builds so quickly, I barely have time to bite my bottom lip to keep from crying out too loud. It’s bad enough the guttural groan that escapes is loud enough to drown out the sounds of *Captain Underpants* in the living room.

Owen snarls and snaps at me as he rises up behind me. He pulls my hips causing me to stick my ass out. He leans in close, and I can smell my arousal that coats his face. “This should keep you quiet.” He brings my panties up to my mouth, and while I roll my eyes, I do bite down on them. “Fuck, that’s hot.” Men, so simple. “How about we let our bodies do the talking.” It’s a rhetorical question, as he drives inside me in one smooth, swift motion, punching the air from my lungs. He fills me so well. Bracing my forearms on the door, I let my

body absorb the impact of his manic thrusts, my ass cushioning him, my pussy welcoming him home.

“So good. Dani, I love you. Love this pussy. My pussy. Never want to leave. Better every time.” His mouth never stops. Praising me. My body. My vagina. My tits. My heart. He cups my breasts, his fingers teasing my nipples, stoking the fire that burns in my lower belly. “Yeah. That’s it. I feel it. Squeeze harder, baby girl. Choke my cock.”

Letting the panties fall from my mouth, I drop my head back to stare into his lustful eyes, seeing my own want and need and love mirrored. “I thought...you said...our bodies... would do...the talking?” I tease him, doing my Kegel’s to bring him over the finish line.

“Can’t help it, banshee. You fucking drive me mad. Now scream for me.” His right-hand darts down to my pussy, his fingers manipulating my clit, his teeth in my neck, it all becomes too much, that fire gets too hot, and I let it consume me.

The only thing louder than my screams is his roar of completion.

Owen 16.

“Explain that again?” I ask, rubbing my forehead and trying to make sense of what Wilson is saying over the video call.

“The Schnell’s of Moraine, Ohio have their hands in just about every business, new or old, in the small city outside of Dayton, not to mention government offices. Orville Schnell, Sam’s father, has a pretty lengthy rap sheet, however, about 10 years ago, he suddenly turned over a new leaf from drug dealer to reputable businessman.”

“Bullshit.”

“You are correct, Owen, it would appear a bull has shit and to the untrained eye or deadened olfactory nerves, that heaping pile of shit would be unnoticeable.”

I lean forward, meet Keenan’s eye for a moment then focus on Wilson. “Ok. So, the Schnell’s are dirty. Presumably, they have friends in high places. Is the judge and district attorney in Columbus dirty too? Is that why they charged Laura and Sam and then sentenced them to the max?”

Pierce raps his knuckles on their conference table, “That’s where it gets tricky.”

“Tricky how, Pierce?”

“Financials are clean for the Columbus officials. However, we came across some emails—”

“Legally?” I interrupt, my eyebrow quirked as I wait for his answer.

“We came across some emails,” Pierce ignores me, “and it seems Judge Pflug in Moraine pleaded with the Columbus judge to be as merciless as possible. Suggesting that Sam is a military trained weapon, who killed his brother in cold blood, harmed his own child and staged the rape kit at the hospital. He kindly explained that William Schnell was a beloved citizen of the great city of Moraine, and he will be terribly

missed, especially by the various charities he spearheaded, including one he started for underprivileged and foster children.”

“And the judge bought it?”

“Hook, line, and sinker. The fact that Sam’s lawyer agreed to a plea deal so quickly, he figured Sam thought he’d get off lightly. He couldn’t throw out the deal completely, but a nudge to the prosecutor from the right people, had him demand the maximum sentence allowed.”

“Fuck.” I grunt, dropping my forehead to the table. “This is...this is fucked up from beginning to end.” I lift my head quickly, a gut-churning thought entering my mind, “Those charities...did William—”

“We’re already ahead of you, man. It’ll be dealt with.” I decide its best I don’t know how and leave it alone.

“Why do they want Nolan?”

Pierce, Wilson, and Fields shake their heads. Fields is the one that answers, giving me a gruff, “We’re still trying to figure that out.”

I turn to Keenan, “Do we have a date yet for the appeal?”

“Not yet. Still waiting.”

I drag my hands through my hair. “Probably dragging their feet on principle.”

“Keep searching, brothers, find anything and everything you can on anyone involved, even the fucking janitor of the courthouse. I want as much ammunition as we can get our hands on to get Sam and Laura out.”

“Got it, Lincoln. We’ll let you know when we have something.” We say our goodbyes and disconnect the call. Keenan and I stare at one another in silence for several heart beats.

“We better get started on the Writ of Habeas Corpus, because I don’t doubt for a second our appeal will be denied. How did your visits with Sam and Laura go?” Keenan inhales sharply at my question.

“Not good. Laura is barely hanging on, and Sam looks like he’s been a few rounds with Mike Tyson.”

I jump up from my seat, my hands slamming into the table, “Someone bit his ear off?”

Keenan looks at me like I’m stupid, “No. Bruised and battered, but both ears are intact.”

Heart in my throat, I ask, “Your people know what they’re doing?” Thankfully, he doesn’t take offense to my question.

“Absofuckinglutely. No one else I’d rather have at my back, on my bike or in a courtroom. The scales of justice move slowly, you know that, but we’ll figure this out and we’ll get that family back together. Whatever it takes.”

“I... I just... this isn’t my kind of law, you know. I deal with irate husbands and trophy wives. The most violence I’ve ever experienced on the job was my car being keyed. And Dani...”

“I know, man. I know. But this is what I deal with on a regular basis. Trust me and my brothers to do the job. And that includes keeping Dani, and Audrey, Nolan, and you safe.”

“It’s not me I’m worried about.”

Dani 17.

“Aren’t you hungry, honey?” Audrey asks Nolan after watching him play with his food for the last couple of minutes. He has these moments, these bursts of energy, then falls despondent the next.

“When is mommy coming home?” Aud sucks in a harsh breath, blows it out slowly, then wraps her arm around his slim shoulders.

“Mr. Owen and Mr. Keenan are working on it.” He nods, but it doesn’t seem like he understands. And honestly, I don’t either. This whole situation is fucked up and I’m having a tough time myself. I can’t imagine what is going through his young mind.

“What if I say I’m sorry? Will she come home?” Despite the public location, Audrey loses her battle against the tears and draws him into her lap awkwardly.

Movement to my right catches my eyes. Shit. I turn my head left to right as if I’m just looking around, not letting my gaze settle on the figure of a man I know well. The face of the man who threatened your life tends to stick out in a crowd. One of the men who attacked us last week on campus is standing near the bar of the restaurant, maybe twenty-five feet from us. I scan once more, my palms sweaty and my heart pounding when I can’t find Nixon or Mac, the two Congressional MC brothers who are with us today. Shit. Shit. Shit.

I lean in close to Audrey and Nolan, keeping a bright smile on my face, letting my hands move about wildly like I’m telling a story. “Audrey, Nolan, I need you to listen to me. One of the men from last week is standing at the bar. I don’t see Mac or Nixon. No, Audrey, don’t look around, focus on me. Audrey!” I growl her name to get her attention. Nolan stiffens in his aunt’s arms, and I hate that this is happening to him. “You two are going to hold hands and head down the narrow hallway on the other side of the bar to the bathrooms, there

should be an exit there, if not, double back and go through the kitchen. If anyone asks, tell them that someone is following you and you're scared but keep moving." I drop my purse on the table and start digging through it, still smiling. Discretely dropping my key fob on the table, I meet Audrey's wide eyes. "Get in my car and drive. Once you're on the road, call Keenan and do whatever he tells you. I'm going to distract him so you can get out."

"No, Dani, don't—"

I glance at Nolan then turn hard eyes on Audrey. "You keep him safe; you understand?" She just stares at me, mouth gaping and eyes watering. "Audrey, this is that moment where you need to sac up and do what needs to be done."

She nods absently, blinks, then straightens her shoulders. "Right. Sac up. Got it. I still don't like—"

"Aud, I'll be fine. They don't want me." I have no idea if that is true, but she doesn't need to know that. "Nolan, be good for Aunt Audrey and do exactly what she says, do you understand?" He nods, a tiny whimper escaping as a tear falls from his troubled eyes. "Good man. Can you show me your pee dance?" He giggles, just a little and jumps off Audrey's lap. "That's an excellent pee dance." I praise him as he bounces on his feet and crosses his legs.

Aud laughs at his antics, though I know she's terrified, stands up and takes his hand. She leads him around the bar, and I watch the goon's head swivel to keep track of her. Fuck. Showtime. I pull out two twenties to cover lunch, throw them on the table, and stand up.

"HEY!" I shout, my eyes trained on the fucker. "YOU! Are you following me? Why are you here? Did you not scare me enough last week?" I walk right up to him, swallowing down my fear at our height difference, not to mention he outweighs me by one hundred pounds at least. I poke his chest and raise my voice again. "Who do you think you are? Scaring young women and stalking them!" People are looking, watching, recording, and the big guy looks around nervous,

but the fury in his eyes promises retribution if he ever gets a hand on me. Time to go. “STAY AWAY FROM ME!”

Spinning on my heel, I leave through the front doors of the restaurant, and rush down the sidewalk. As I pass an opening to an alley, big meaty hands reach out and draw me in. He frog marches me down the alley, his hand over my mouth. Next to a recycling bin, I find the crumpled body of Nixon, one of the brothers assigned to protect us. I stop struggling, my hands lift as if to check his pulse, but I drop them uselessly to my sides. His head...there is no way he's still alive. Bile surges up my throat and saliva pools in my mouth. Halfway down the alley, goon number two pushes me roughly into the brick wall, my head banging into the rough exterior. I look up and lose the battle, throwing up all over the other man from campus. His meaty hands grab my arms to hold me in place. I struggle, looking to the opening of the alley, ready to scream, but I see the man from inside barreling down on us.

“WHERE IS SHE? WHERE'S THE BOY?” Goon number two yells in my face. When I don't answer, he shakes me violently, my teeth clacking from the force.

“Her car is gone.” Number one informs us. I breathe a sigh of relief that she and Nolan got away, hopefully Keenan can get them to safety. Forearm to my throat, my vision darkens at the edges, number two inches from my face, his eyes wild and his lips curled in a sneer.

“Where are they going? Tell us where the bitch and the brat are! Our bosses won't be too happy if we don't bring them home.”

“Not. My. Problem.” I rasp out, my body feeling heavy.

“It is now.”

Sirens sound in the distance. I don't know how much time has passed since I made the scene inside, but I'm grateful to whoever called the cops. At least, I hope they are heading this way.

I smile, as much as I can, when they both register the sound as well. I start to relax, knowing help is on the way...

Unfortunately, it isn't here yet.

Owen 18.

“Owen.” Paige’s voice stops my pacing. I spin and barely have time to lift my arms to catch her as she hurls herself into my arms. Her sobs are my undoing and I join her, unleashing all the emotion of the last hour.

That call from Keenan...pulling up to the restaurant and finding two ambulances driving away...the blood in the alley that I could see from the sidewalk...the body covered with a sheet...

I don’t remember how I got to the hospital. It was like I blinked and was suddenly screaming at a receptionist or nurse to tell me where Dani was. Security had to hold me back from barging into the emergency room. Finally, they convinced me to wait in a private waiting room, with a security guard stationed outside the door, and a doctor would be in when Dani’s family arrived.

When I’m able to pull myself together, I release Paige into Lukas’ arms and meet my friends eyes. “How did you know...?”

“Keenan. We called Julietta and Nicolas. They should be here—”

“Where is he?” An accented voice booms from the hallway. “Out of my way.” A man several inches shorter than me and considerably rounder strides into the room. His eyes pass over Paige and Lukas, then settle on me. I brace myself for a punch, a verbal beatdown...but instead I’m engulfed in a bear hug. A moment later, someone embraces me from behind and I’m sandwiched between Dani’s parents as they speak rapid fire Spanish.

Julietta releases me and pushes Nicolas out of her way. Her hands come up to cup my face, her eyes staring into mine intently. “She will be alright, *hijo*.” Paige splutters and when I glance up at her, she gives me a thumb’s up. “Our Daniella is strong.”

“Of course, she is. She saved the boy and his Tía. Our girl is a hero.” Nicolas boasts.

“Have you talked to the doctor?” I’m almost afraid to ask.

“We just came from him; nothing she can’t recover from.” I sag into the nearest chair and rest my forehead in my hands. New tears, happy tears, relieved tears, fall anew. Julietta and Paige rub my back as I fight to regain control once again.

“Mama, papa.” Tommy walks into the waiting room, his own eyes red rimmed.

“She is going to be all right.”

“Oh, *gracias a Dios*.” He and Lukas exchange handshakes, he gives Paige a pat on the shoulder, then hugs his mom and dad.

“What are her injuries?” Paige asks.

Julietta takes a deep breath, “She has a concussion, cuts, scrapes, and extensive bruises. Two broken ribs, but no internal bleeding.”

My phone rings. I look down at the display, answering quickly. “Keenan—”

“We are taking Audrey and Nolan back to Kentucky. I’m leaving Buck and Fillmore with you and Dani for a while, to make sure she’s safe, to keep an eye on Mac, since he’s going to be in the hospital for several days, at least. Nixon...uh...fuck, Nixon didn’t make it. So, when the police are finished, they’ll bring him home for burial.”

“Kohlman, I’m sorry—”

“We all are. But this is a risk we take.” He pauses, clearly choked up. “This is quite personal now, Reeves, so it’s best that you remove yourself from counsel. I’ll take it from here.”

“Kohl—”

“Just take care of Dani and yourself. I’ll have Audrey reach out to Dani when its safe.”

He disconnects the call without waiting for me to respond. Julietta and Nicolas come over to sit next to me again. I look

between the two of them. “How do you not hate me? Your daughter is in the hospital because—”

“Because she can’t resist doing what’s right. Protecting that little boy, after everything he’s been through, that was her priority.”

“But I should have—”

“Do you love her?” Nicolas asks, interrupting me.

“Yes, sir, I do.”

“Then get used to wanting to wrap her in bubble wrap and hide her away from the world but you don’t because you know she’d knee you in the cojones and leave you gasping for breath even as she tells you she loves you too.”

A bark of laughter sounds from my chest, then another, and soon, I’m leaning back in the seat laughing my ass off because he has described his daughter perfectly.

“Owen, do you mind...would it be alright, if Nicolas and I saw her for a few minutes when she wakes up?”

I rear back at her request. “Ma’am, you are her parents, that isn’t up to me.”

“She isn’t fond of us right now, as you know. But it is your choice, you are her future, *hijo*, you protect her heart, even from us, if you think it’s best.”

Paige sniffles in Lukas’ arms, while Tommy watches me with interested eyes.

“I think you two...actually, the three of you, should see her first. I’ll be staying with her while she’s here, but after everything she’s been through, I think seeing her mama and papa would do her some good. And her big brother.”

“She hates me.”

“She loves you, Tommy. That hasn’t changed.” I turn to Julietta. “Same with you and Nicolas.” She leans on my shoulder and cries, her arms wrapping around mine.

A thought occurs to me, “Paige, Lukas, where are the kids? Raegan?” Lukas chuckles, kissing Paige’s head.

“Lily and Eddie are with them.”

“And that’s funny?” He nods his head up and down rapidly.

“Babysitting Xav and Eli is the best birth control on the market. And as soon as Raegan drops a load in her diaper, I have no doubt that my children will be researching chastity belts.”

Dani 19.

I hiss in pain when the bed stops moving. I need to sit up, but it's killer on my broken ribs and my bruised abdomen, even though the automatic bed does the heavy lifting for me. I'm one giant bruise from head to toes. I bet if you looked at my hair under a microscope, each individual strand would have its own hematoma.

No, that isn't possible, but don't begrudge me my convalescent whimsical fantasies.

"Banshee, you've got to lay down. Why are you sitting up?"

"We're sticking with banshee? I liked baby girl." Owen sits on the edge of my bed and rests his hand on my blanket covered thigh.

"I'll call you those too, but I don't know, banshee fits you."

I purse my lips in thought, "What about Valkyrie? That's badass."

Owen shakes his head as the door opens, "No." We turn to see Buck and Fillmore. I smile as best I can at them, my smile broadening when they step aside and I set my eyes on Nolan and Audrey, Keenan bringing up the rear.

"Hey! Are you ok? What are you doing here? I thought you left!" Audrey loses it at my questions, tears cascading down her face as she rushes over to me and lays her head down on my chest. I pat her head, shushing her. "Hey, now. I'm alright. Just a little extra color. And awesome news, I've broken my first bone. Well, two actually."

"I'm so sorry!" Audrey wails. Keenan comes over and gently extracts her from my bed, holding her up in his arms and whispering in her ear.

Nolan hangs back by the door, his eyes wide as he stares at his aunt. He glances at me, and I give him a broad grin,

crooking my finger. “Hey, little man. How’s it going?”

“Thank you.” He whispers. “Thank you for letting us get away. I’m sorry you got hurt.” I look to Owen and nod my head at Nolan. He shakes his head at me, but obliges, giving the boy a hoist onto the bed. He rests his head on my shoulder and cries silently. Despite the pain in my ribs and everywhere else, I hold on as tight as I can to Nolan.

“I’m so glad that you weren’t hurt. Thank you for helping your aunt. Your pee dance was the best I’ve ever seen.” He giggles quietly, wiping his eyes and nose on my hospital gown.

“They insisted on seeing you before we leave.” Keenan tells me, looking back at the doorway. “We’re waiting for a few more brothers to escort us home to Kentucky.”

“When will you be back?” Keenan grimaces, while Audrey wipes under her eyes.

“We won’t. At least...not for a while.” She answers, fresh tears filling her eyes.

“You do what you have to do, Audrey. You keep you and your family safe.”

“I can’t ever thank you enough, Dani, for everything you’ve done for me and Nolan. And our friendship. I wouldn’t have made it this far without you and I’ll always be grateful that you helped me up when I tripped that first day of class... after you laughed at me.”

“It was too funny not to.” I laugh, sniffing and wiping my own eyes.

“Lincoln.” A deep voice says before knocking on the open door. Three more men, all big and beautiful enter, making the room seem smaller. Owen and I glance from one to another with wide eyes. I peek at Audrey and see she does the same until Keenan growls at her and covers her eyes with his hand. While she bats him away, Nolan slides off the bed and slowly walks to the newcomers.

“Polk. Carver. Clay.” He reads the names off the patches on their leather cuts. “You ride motorcycles too?” They all

smile at him and nod. “I helped my daddy wash his; I can help you too if you don’t want to do it yourself. I’ll be really careful.”

Polk reaches out and roughs up Nolan’s hair affectionately. “You hear that, brothers, looks like we got a junior prospect in our midst.”

“What’s a prospect?” Nolan asks, standing on his toes with excitement. My heart clenches at the sight. Boy has been through too much.

Clay squats down so he’s closer to Nolan’s level, “A prospect is someone who wants to be in the club. But before he can, he has to earn our trust and prove his loyalty. You think you can do that?”

Nolan nods his head so fast and so hard it’s a wonder it doesn’t roll right off his shoulders. Clay does the same thing to Nolan’s hair as Polk as he stands up.

Carver, who bears a striking resemblance to Keenan, holds out his fist for Nolan to bump, which he does enthusiastically. “Welcome to the Congressionals MC, Nolan.”

“Oh. Um.” Nolan looks back at his aunt, then shrugs. “I want to go by Sam if that’s ok?” Audrey nods with a watery smile, her fist to her mouth, Keenan’s arm around her shoulders. She leans into his side watching her nephew.

“Sam?” Carver repeats, standing with his legs shoulder width apart, rubbing his chin. “I like it. Strong name. You serious about helping us, prove your loyalty and earn our trust, you’ll be president one day, kid. I guarantee it.”

“Knock, knock. Hello—oh. What have we here?” My nurse today is in her mid to late twenties and far too flirty with Owen for my liking. However, right now, she appears to be enamored with the leather-clad men who have taken over my room.

“Is that my pain meds?” I ask, dipping my chin at her hands.

“Yes, and your shot.” She winks at me, and I turn my head to roll my eyes.

Owen sits up straighter, “What shot?”

“Dani, we’re gonna head out.” Keenan steps forward, bringing Audrey with him. They both give me gentle hugs, and Nolan comes up and kisses me on my cheek. Polk gives him a fist bump for knowing how to work the ladies, which earns a glare from Audrey. Their trip to Kentucky should be fun.

“Stay out of trouble.” Audrey whispers to me.

“Not bloody likely.” Owen mutters.

I wave to everyone as they go. Buck and Fillmore assure Owen and I that they will be outside the doors if we need anything.

“My, my, my.” Nurse Ashleigh titters once the door is partially closed.

“My shot? And pain meds?” She jumps as if I’ve startled her.

“Right, sorry.” Owen hands me the cup of water while she pops the pain meds into a little paper cup and scans them into the system. Once I’ve swallowed those, she pats my hip. “Turn on your side for your shot.”

Owen is staring at the needle in her hand like it’s a machete. “Owen, it’s my birth control shot.”

“Birth control shot.”

“Yes.” I smile at his unblinking stare. “Not a fan of needles?” He shakes his head. “Guess it’s a good thing you aren’t the one getting the shot everything three months.”

“Every three months?”

“Are you going to repeat everything I say?”

“All done.” She pats my hip again and I whip around to look at where she places the bandage.

“It’s done?” I didn’t even feel it and usually it hurts when it goes in the muscle.

“Yup. I’ll be back in a few hours for another dose of pains meds. You should be discharged tomorrow morning if all goes well with your concussion check.”

“Ok, thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” She says absently, her eyes already focused on the door. “I’m just gonna see if either of those young men need anything.”

I close my eyes in the ensuing silence, needing a moment. Owen takes my left hand in his, pressing a kiss to my knuckles. “I love you, Daniella Garcia. So damn much. I was so scared when I got that call. I...thought...when I pulled up and saw the sheet over the body...I thought.” I lift my left hand free when he drops his head to my lap, carding my fingers through his hair.

“I know. I was...I’ve never been so terrified in my life. But...seeing Nolan and Audrey, knowing they got away...I’d do it again.”

“I know you would, banshee. I won’t stop you from doing what you think is right. Just maybe, try not to give me a heart attack.”

“Owen. How can you ask that of me?” He lifts his head and meets my eyes. I grin, obnoxious and toothy, “You’re so old. That’s like asking the sun not to rise.”

He scowls, “How was your visit with your parents? Tommy?” Sighing, I push at his forehead to put distance between us.

“Ambush much?”

“Dani—”

“Thank you.” My voice is hoarse with emotion. “Thank you for knowing what I needed and seeing to it. Mama’s hug was better than any drug they could give me.”

“In perpetuity, banshee.” I pucker my lips and tap them with my finger. He leans up and obliges with a soft, tender kiss that melts my heart and turns my bones into mush.

“In perpetuity, sexy lawyer man.”

Owen 20.

Standing at my kitchen window, I look out at the view of my backyard, but don't see anything. Nothing of the lush grass, or furniture, the grill...all I see is the ambulance driving away, the body with the sheet over it. All I can feel is the sorrow and anger and gut-wrenching pain of profound loss.

I thought she was gone. For several long life-altering minutes, I was alone on this Earth, and nothing, I have never felt so empty. When I was notified that she was en route to the hospital, banged up, but breathing, I sank to my knees in the dirt and grime of the city sidewalk and cried.

I don't know how it happened, or when, or if there was a specific moment that she became vital to me, but she is. She is everything to me and I can't fathom living in this world without her. That brief glimpse was enough to give me nightmares.

"Owen?" I whirl around, my heart in my throat at the sight of Dani standing sleep rumped in the doorway of my kitchen.

"What are you doing out of bed? Come on, I'll take you back. Your soup is almost ready." That's a lie. I haven't started it yet. I came into the kitchen to do just that and got lost in my memories.

"Owen, I love you, you know that right?" I nod, stepping closer to her. My hands settle on her hips, but her hands on my chest prevent me from moving closer. "Good. That's good. So, when I tell you that you need to chill the fuck out, know that it comes from a place of love."

I smile at her, my eyes taking in the bruising that's turned a nasty yellow, the reduced swelling in her left eye, and the pillow creases on the right side of her face. "No."

"No?" She rears back with a wince. "You can't just say no. I'm fine, you dragged me back to your lair to convalesce and I have, but you're hovering and it starting to piss me off."

I lift my shoulder casually, “Don’t care.” Her growl is adorable. I lean forward and kiss the tip of her nose.

“Owen Reeves—”

“You did the right thing, Dani. I won’t argue that. You did what you had to do to protect Nolan and get him and Audrey to safety. But you’ll give me however long I need to reconcile the fact that I thought you were lying dead in an alley with the fact that you are alive and bitching at me for caring. Now, back to bed.”

“Owen.” Her eyes soften immediately, her hands coming up to gently cup my face. “I’m sorry. I didn’t—” I kiss her lips to quiet her.

Sufficiently dazed, I scoop her up in my arms, careful of her ribs, and stride back to my bedroom. I lay her down in the center of the bed, position myself between her thighs, pull down her panties, and spread her wide. Looking up at her, meeting her eyes over the swell of her breasts, I grin.

“Be a good girl and relax while I kiss and lick it all better.”

Dani 21.

Owen and I hold hands over the center console of his car. We're on our way to Paige and Lukas' for dinner, an invite for more than food. An invite to settle into a new normalcy, and I'm grateful to Paige for extending it.

The last few weeks have been a roller coaster. High highs and low lows. I've cried more than I ever have in my life, but I've also smiled and laughed more too.

Sitting in class and lab, seeing Audrey's empty seat is difficult, even on the best of days. I know from Keenan's reports to Owen, that Audrey is well and adjusting to life in Kentucky. But the joy over her blossoming relationship with Keenan is overshadowed by the darkness that still shrouds her family.

I pray every day that the Congressionals MC is able to bring about closure and peace. Especially for Nolan, excuse me, Sammy. I smile to myself remembering the spark in his eyes at the hospital when he talked about helping with the bikes. Perhaps his time with the motorcycle club will fan that spark into a flame and bring him back to life.

I have spent some time with my parents. Mama and papa came over several times while I was healing, and while they fed me, we talked. About my future with Owen, their pride in my actions, and their sadness over their own regarding Tommy. They are working to rebuild the relationship they severed so brutally with Paige and have been accepting and kind to Lukas and his kids. It helps that Tommy is seeing a male therapist that he is not sleeping with and that specializes in emotional trauma instead of happy endings.

And Owen. My Owen. My Sexy Lawyer Man. Since my assault, I haven't been able to stop watching him. He's a magnificent human being, a gorgeous man, but his heart... fuck, I love his heart. And he tells me all the time that I own it. Just as he owns mine.

“What are you thinking about over there?”

“Just wondering if being good looking is a requirement for the bar exam?” His bark of laughter is music to my ears, and I enjoy the squeeze of his hand.

“Not a requirement.” He tells me once he’s calmed down. “Just a coincidence that I happen to fit the bill.”

“Well, yeah, but I was thinking about Lukas and Keenan too.” He growls and my nipples tingle in my bra.

“Why?” I love teasing him, its so fun.

“What are the odds that Paige, Audrey, and I, three incredibly attractive, damn-near perfect women, find three lawyers who are attractive enough to snag us?”

“*Attractive enough?*” He checks his mirrors, then takes a sudden left turn.

“Where are we going?” I ask, looking through the rear window and trying to figure out what’s happening.

“I’ll show you attractive enough.” He growls again and this time my pussy tries to answer the call. An empty warehouse looms on our right and he quickly pulls into the lot and drives around back. Throwing the car in park, he unbuckles his seatbelt and gets out. I sit confused until he wrenches my door open and drags me out. I’m in the backseat in a flash, straddling his lap, while he pulls the neckline of my top down to expose my tits.

It takes me a minute to catch up, but when his teeth bite into my left nipple, I jump into action. His pants are undone and pulled down enough for his long, thick erection to slip free, bobbing in the air between us. Hand on the back of his head to hold him against my breast, I rise up on my knees, thankful I wore a skirt, pull my panties to the side, and sink down on his cock. His groan of pleasure vibrates through my nipple. Head thrown back, I ride him as hard and fast as I can, until my thighs threaten mutiny as they burn. But the throb of incessant need in my core won’t let me quit.

Sensing I’m flagging, Owen holds me around the waist and pulls me up and pushes me down, again and again and

again, fucking me from below. I'm screaming moments later as an orgasm crashes into me, stealing my breath and flooding his lap.

"Yes. Fuck yes. That was so fucking hot. I'm gonna cum. I'm gonna fill you up." He hunches over, resting his head between my tits, his body spasming, his cock jerking inside me. With a final grunt, he relaxes against me, trailing soft kisses along my sternum and up my neck. Our mouths fuse together, and everything is just...glorious. Perfect. As it should be.

"We're gonna be late to dinner." I whisper. His body shakes with laughter.

He sits up, his right hands tracing my cheek, tucking my hair behind my ear. "Marry me."

"Is this because I squirted?" I ask with a smirk. "I've never done that before, and it might not happen again."

"I'll take my chances, banshee. And no, not because you squirted. You are...you bring...I am whole when I'm with you. I refuse to live in a world where you aren't in my bed, in my house, in my car," he chuckles, "because you are always in my heart. In my soul."

"You want to marry me?" He nods with a cautious grin. Like I could say no to this man. "I want to marry you too." I tell him, pressing my lips to his, then pulling away. "You better text Lukas we're gonna be really late. You need clean pants, and my body needs to converse with yours again."

Owen's eyes light up with a slight sheen, "I'll tell him we can't make it. I have a feeling our bodies are gonna be talking all night long."

Owen 22.

Three Months Later

On my side, I press a soft kiss to my wife's bare shoulder. My wife. I love saying that. Thinking it. Knowing it. Two days after I proposed and we missed dinner with Paige and Lukas, I took off work, went to Paige's and packed up Dani's belongings while Paige laughed her ass off and Dani was in class. We married 25 days later. We only waited that long because Julietta, Paige and Paige's mom Eloise insisted they needed time to get things together, and my family needed to make travel arrangements.

I just needed Dani and my signatures on a document in front of a judge. I was vetoed. And like the best fiancé in the world, Dani sucked my cock until my brain was a pile of goo leaking out of my ears as consolation. I'm hoping to be vetoed more in the future.

My hand sprawls over her stomach, her own hand joining mine with a squeeze. I inhale deeply, bringing her scent into my lungs and calming some of the storm that's brewing in my chest.

"Are we gonna talk about the elephant in the womb?" She snickers at my pun, rolling slightly on her side to face me, her itty-bitty-teeny-weeny-baby bump between us.

"I don't know what kind of shenanigans your ancestors got up to, but mine never mated with a pachyderm. And there's nothing to talk about. I've let myself go. Since you put the ring on it, I figured I didn't need to stress about my appearance anymore. Food is good. Especially when you pair it with other food and ice cream."

"Bullshit."

She scoffs, her eyes lit with humor and hesitation. "If you can't love me at my worst, you don't deserve me at my best."

I ignore that little nugget of feminism, and ask, “How do you figure it happened?”

Dani narrows her eyes in frustration, “I think it was that fucking nurse that was distracted by sexy biker men, she didn’t administer my shot correctly. I didn’t even feel it. I’d bet my purse allowance that she injected my fat not my muscle.”

“We’re gonna circle back to ‘purse allowance.’ That can mess up its efficacy?”

“Yeah. It can.” She sighs and I’m not sure how to read her. We’ve both been tiptoeing around this subject for the last 5 weeks since she started showing signs. Her breasts were my first clue. Sore, but bigger, fuller, and mouthwatering. Then, one night at dinner, she politely excused herself so she could vomit, then came back and finished dinner like that was normal. I kept waiting for her to bring it up, but I’m thinking she was waiting for me to do it. Chicken.

“So...” I begin, placing my arm over her hip and settling it on the small of her back. I scooch closer while drawing her near. “We’re having a baby?”

With the same enthusiasm I expect someone to approach an audit by the IRS, she says, “Yeah, we’re having a baby. You ok with that?”

I kiss her forehead, then her nose, then place a lingering kiss on her lips. “Yeah, I am actually. You?”

She stares at me for a several seconds, then a slow smile begins to transform her face, and suddenly she’s glowing. “Fucking ecstatic. Didn’t expect to feel that way, but I do.”

I’m so fucking happy. We talked at the beginning about not wanting kids, but since the moment I suspected, I’ve done little else but picture her getting rounder, nursing our child, playing with them, reading to them, being a mom. Not to mention, all the things I want to do with them too. Teach our boy how to be a good man. Or teach our little girl that she should never settle for less than she deserves...which is everything. And when I picture the three of us cuddled in bed watching a movie...

I release a heavy sigh of relief and roll to my back, “*Gracias a Dios.*” She’s up and straddling my hips, her hands reaching down to caress my jaw, the heat and adoration and love in her eyes almost too much to witness.

“I love it when you speak Spanish.” She murmurs before kissing me hard.

“Uh...mi permite ir al bano?”

“Mr. Reeves, I’ll let you use the restroom once you’ve satisfied me.”

Grinding her down against my hard length, I give her a boyish grin, then flip us so she’s on her back and I’m hovering over her, “I’ve seen you eat, Mrs. Reeves, and my bladder can only wait so long.”

Epilogue – Dani

18 Years Later

Tommy: *Ceremony is over. Paige would have texted you herself, but Lukas pulled her aside and they aren't as hidden as they think they are. We'll be there in 45 minutes.*

Dani: *Jealous?*

Tommy: *Lukas does look fine for a man of his advanced years, but no. Besides, I said 45 minutes since I'll be finding somewhere to pull over to ravage Gloria.*

Dani: *I'm surprised a man of your years can still get it up.*

Tommy: *Rude. Do I need to remind you how old your husband is?*

Dani: *Nah. He reminded me before we came over to set up for the party.*

Tommy: *Ew.*

Dani: *You're ew.*

“Everything looks great, banshee.” Owen comes up behind me as I look over the decked out back yard of Paige and Lukas' house for Elias' law school graduation party. He molds his hands to my tits, his erection digging into my back.

I laugh as I tilt my pelvis forward to break contact. “I don't want any more kids, Owen. 5 is way more than the zero we agreed upon.”

“I know,” he groans, his lower body chasing mine, making my laughter turn into giggles, “but you look so fucking hot when you're pregnant, and your tits are ripe and leaking.”

“And my vagina is spewing...”

He drops his head to my shoulder, his arms falling to my hips. “Why do you have to make it gross? I was being sweet.”

“Because I love you.” I tell him, turning around in his arms and looping mine around his neck. Almost twenty years together and he’s still just as handsome. *Bastardo*. More salt than pepper, but he rocks it.

“That’s not true. If you loved me, you’d give me another baby.”

“I do love you, which is why I haven’t chopped off your balls and served them to you for dinner.” I wink at him with a wicked smirk, “There’s still time.”

Clutching his chest, he gasps theatrically, “You wound me.” He rubs his nose along mine before stealing a kiss. With a heavy sigh, he continues, “You’re right, I guess. Five is enough. Christmas is expensive between our kids and our nieces and nephews and Paige and Lukas and our extended families.”

I nod sagely, “We know a lot of people who like to have sex.”

Owen perks up a bit, “Besides, just think, in a few years, we’ll probably have great nieces and nephews and then grandbabies.”

Palm to his face, I shove him away and check my empty wrist. “Oh, look at the time. I believe our perpetuity clause has just run out.”

With a growl, Owen crowds me back against the island of the kitchen, dipping his head to nip at my neck. “Never.” He says harshly into my ear.

I hate when he’s right. Reaching down to rub him over his shorts, I manage a firm hold through the fabric of his swelling cock. He groans, his panting breaths tickling my skin. “No, sexy lawyer man, I’m not done with you quite yet.”

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Thank you for reading! I hope you enjoyed this book as much as I enjoyed writing it. Please take a moment to leave a review on Amazon or submit your rating on Goodreads.

-xoxo Mirrah