



SAVED BY THE *Marines*



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C&J NOVELS LLC

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TRIGGER WARNINGS



This book is meant for readers 18+. Some content may be unsuitable for some readers. For a full list of warnings, please visit <https://www.cathleencolenovels.com/tropes-warnings>

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CHAPTER 1



Bailey

“*Y*our father wants you to go get dressed for lunch.”

I flicked my sunglasses further down my nose and looked up at Jas over the rim. He was scowling down at me as I read and sunbathed next to the pool. I’d come home for summer break only to be told that I would be working for my dad for the summer and was jetted off to Colombia. My father was a U.S. Senator and I hated the idea of working in politics, but you didn’t tell my father no. I’d learned long ago to choose my battles with him.

I’d been surprised when three hunky Marines started following him around everywhere he went as soon as we got here. Imagine my irritation when they immediately began doing the same with me. Usually the Secret Service did that job when we were traveling. This time we had Marines. It was just another reminder of why I didn’t want to be here. There wasn’t ever any privacy.

Putting my book down, I lifted my arms over my head in a stretch. Jas’s scowl deepened, but I didn’t miss the way his eyes raked down my body.

He sure is easy on the eyes, even if he is always scowling. At least there are some perks to having them around.

“Tell him he can have his boring lunch without me.” Yeah right. There was no way I’d get away with ignoring an order

from my father, but this guy didn't know that. And there was just something about him—and the way he had been treating me—that made me want to annoy him. It didn't matter that we really didn't know each other. I just had to get under his skin.

Honestly, as soon as we'd gotten here it'd been a whirlwind of meetings and today was the first day I'd really had to relax. Spending my free time reading by the pool had unwound all the tight muscles the week had created within my body. Dad was up for re-election, and whatever his business was down here, charity or official government stuff, it was all to look good for the campaign. And it was my duty as his only daughter to help make him look good.

Jas flexed his jaw, and I had to remind myself that I had a boyfriend. Something about a man's jaw ticking like that reminded me of the men in my romance novels. It was sexy. Not that I was the free-spirited girl in those books who chased after men. I was more at home reading about their adventures than having any of my own.

It hadn't escaped my notice that the three men following us around were incredibly attractive. They were all tall, muscular, and had handsome faces. In fact, they all looked like they could be brothers.

"Spoiled fucking brat," he muttered, but I heard him easily. "Get up. Get dressed. And get your ass into that dining room," he growled.

My jaw dropped and I sat up, taking the sunglasses off fully now. "You can't speak to me that way." I stood up and glared at him. He'd just found the one button to push that got me to fight back. My temper. The man was tall so I had to tilt my head back a bit despite my height. I was five-eight, but he had to be six-four at least.

I wasn't sure what his problem with me was, but I wasn't going to just sit here and let him speak to me that way.

He took a step in closer until we were almost nose to nose—or nose to throat. "I don't have time for you or your little rebellions with your father. Make sure you're at that lunch, and dressed properly." He looked me up and down, indicating

that my bikini needed to be covered. I couldn't help but notice that he seemed to take an extra second while doing so. "Or we'll come find you, and dress you ourselves." With that he turned and started to leave.

I looked down at my hands, they were shaking. Not from fear, but from an odd mixture of irritation and excitement. I was tempted, for a second, to not show up. Just so that he *would* come hunt me down. *And dress me.*

Shaking my hands like I was drying them, I finally got the trembling to stop. Something about Jas just brought out a feisty side that wasn't typical for me.

"In your dreams Ranger Rick." I couldn't seem to help it. Every time I was around this guy the urge to needle him into responding was too intense to ignore.

That stopped him. His muscled back tensed up, but he seemed to shake it off and continued on, walking away from me. That took some self-control. Rangers were Army. Marines tended to fly off the handle when you called them anything Army related. I'd seen it before.

These guys, they didn't even try to blend in. They had on military style pants, tan t-shirts, and desert brown boots. I rolled my eyes at his back. It wasn't hard to tell what he thought of me. He'd said it out loud. He thought I was a brat. And fine, I acted that way toward him, but that wasn't who I was. Not when I was able to get away from this world and breathe.

I spent most of my time baking. Making grandiose desserts that would take hours of preparation, but melted on your tongue in an instant. I loved to read. To spend the quiet morning hours doing yoga. I hardly ever partied—though I liked the freedom of choosing to do so if I felt like it—and was a straight A student.

My business degree was going to go toward helping me open my own bakery. That was the life I wanted. Quiet, peaceful, not full of paparazzi constantly stalking me, trying to see what dirt they could dig up. No Secret Service, and no cranky Marines.

Deciding not to piss off Dad's bodyguards—this time—I went upstairs to get changed. My phone rang as I was deciding on what to wear.

“Amy!” I exclaimed when I picked up the phone.

“Girl! What the heck? I've been trying to get a hold of you for a week!”

“I'm so sorry,” I told her, my mind instantly going into overdrive. “Did you not get the rent check I sent? I can wire you money now...”

Her laughter set me at ease. “I got it. I just miss my roommate and wasn't expecting a quick voicemail that said you'd be staying in Colombia over the summer break.”

I'd met Amy my first year of college and we'd become friends almost instantly. We'd decided the next year to ditch dorms and move into a small two-bedroom apartment together. Two years later, it was still working well for us and now we were best friends.

She was the only person who knew who I really was. I had no secrets from her, so she knew all about my father. “Dad insisted,” I told her with a grim tone.

“He's not getting my vote this year,” she replied in disgust. “He bullies you.”

“Tell me about it,” I sighed, sitting down on my bed. “It's so much worse than that, Amy. I have no idea why we're here. He should be at home, campaigning for re-election. Instead, he dragged us down here and won't say why. I keep going to dinners and lunches. I make small talk with the wives of random businessmen, but I really don't get it. His last campaign he never left the state.”

“That's so weird.”

“It is. Oh! And even worse, he has a military security detail watching over us!”

“Really? Why?”

I rolled my eyes. “Every time I ask he brushes me off.”

“Look. I love you, but you have *got* to start standing up for yourself. You deserve to have the kind of life you want, not the one your father wants for you.”

No one else at college—other than Amy and Ted—knew me as Senator Michaels’ daughter. I was able to go to class, attend parties, work, do whatever I wanted without the constant reminder that I was a U.S. Senator’s daughter. That wasn’t the case whenever I came home, but especially not this time. I didn’t want to be here. Working for my dad for the summer was going to be miserable. Being away from the job I’d lined up at a local bakery and my boyfriend pretty much had me in a bad mood most days. We’d only been here a week, but I knew the days were going to drag by.

Being away at college had taught me so much already. I was blossoming into the kind of woman I’d always wanted to be, but my father hadn’t allowed. I’d refused to go to school where all the other stuffy politician’s kids did. Instead, I’d convinced Dad to let me strike out on my own. If he knew what I was doing while I was there he’d have me back home, shackled inside this world, in a heartbeat. At twenty-two years old I’d gotten just enough of a taste of the world, and all it could offer, that being back under my father’s supervision was stifling.

I’d needed to get out from under his watchful eye and heavy thumb and going to college had been the easiest way to accomplish that. The summer job I’d lined up at the bakery down the street from my apartment was nothing but a distant dream now. I was only supposed to be visiting home for a few days, but Dad ruined everything within the span of a few hours of me walking into his house.

“I’ll try,” I told her with a sigh. Standing up to my father wasn’t exactly easy for me. I’d always been a quiet, studious girl growing up and it was the same now.

Sensing my sadness, Amy changed the subject. “Are there any hot guys there at least?”

I laughed and shook my head at her question. “I have a boyfriend,” I reminded her.

“Don’t get me started on Ted,” she sneered.

Amy was not a fan of my boyfriend and through our long talks I’d come to realize why, but I was mostly happy in my relationship. “Mostly everyone I see is older. Fifties and up.”

“I mean they could make for a hot “father’s best friend” kind of affair while you’re there.”

I gagged, letting her know what I thought of that idea. We both loved romance novels, and she’d turned me onto some really spicy books, but that was not going to happen. “They’re not good looking,” I informed her. I sighed and admitted, “You’d like the Marines who are following us around.”

There was shuffling over the line, and in my mind I could see her sitting up with an interested look on her face. We’d had so many conversations since we met, I knew all her mannerisms and didn’t need to be there to see her doing them.

“Reeeally, tell me more,” she implored.

“Wolfe, Jas, and Kip.” I nodded even though she couldn’t see me. I knew she’d also know I was doing the movement.

“Well, hello boys. I’m going to need you to take pictures of them.”

“Absolutely not!”

“Oh, oh yeah. I will definitely be needing pictures.”

A knock sounded on my door, so I stood and crossed the room. Opening it, my eyes widened as I found Wolfe on the other side. “Hang on, Amy,” I told her. “Um. Hi.”

While I’d started snapping back at Jas—more to keep myself sane than anything—I still hadn’t spoken to the other two much.

He gave me a curt nod. “Your father sent me to check on you.”

My eyes widened and I gasped. “Shit! Amy, I completely forgot about a meeting because you distracted me. I have to go, okay?”

Her laughter peeled over the connection. “Good. Hopefully it pisses your dad off.”

That was easy for her to say. She’d never sat through one of Trent Michaels’ lectures. They were mundane and awful, not to mention they’d go on for hours. His ability to speak endlessly and say nothing was legendary, especially amongst the other senators. I avoided them at all costs.

“Love you, bye,” I told her and hung up. “I’m sorry, I’ll head down now.” I brushed past him, inhaling the woody scent of his cologne as I went.

“Ms. Michaels.”

I turned and faced him. “Please. Just call me Bailey.”

He blinked at me for a moment and I wondered if he’d ignore me. He seemed like the kind of guy who was all business all the time. “Bailey,” he finally said. “You might want to change.”

I looked down and heat spread over my chest and up my neck toward my cheeks. I was still in my swimsuit. “Right. I’ll be down in two minutes,” I called out as I ran back into my room.

Slamming the door shut, I leaned my head back against it. The man probably thought I was an idiot. His friend thought I was a rich brat. Who knew what Kip thought? If I was lucky I’d be able to keep my distance from them as much as possible.

I grabbed a skirt, blouse, and some shoes and threw them on in record time, putting them over my dry suit to save time. Pulling open the door, I hopped on one foot as I put on my second heel.

There was Wolfe. Still waiting on me. I frowned at him, unsure why he was still here, but there wasn’t time to ask. I headed downstairs with him on my heels.

CHAPTER 2



Bailey

Dad's guests hadn't gotten here just yet, so we sat and spoke in one of the smaller dining rooms in the embassy. It had more than one for occasions like this, so important meetings could happen and not be interrupted.

"Why are these guys following me around, Dad? Who are they?" I asked for the hundredth time in a matter of days. They bothered me. They were a distraction...and if I was being honest, sex personified. I wasn't the kind of girl to be panting after men, but something about them drew me whether I wanted it or not.

I'd grown up used to people constantly being around. Having secret service close by was one thing, but Dad only got assigned a military security detail when something was up. So even though he was staying quiet about who they were, I knew something was off.

He sighed and shot me a look. "They're Marine Force Recon."

"English please?"

Dad had been a Marine, but I hadn't been interested in learning much about his career, or following his footsteps into the military. The fact that I'd been born a girl was his biggest disappointment. He'd even told me once that if I'd been the son he'd prayed for I'd be serving out my time in the Marines

and then would go into politics afterward, just like him. My eyes couldn't have rolled any harder at the time.

He loved me, for the most part, but he never let me forget that I'd been born with the wrong equipment. That, plus his 'take no prisoners' approach toward raising me after Mom had died, made me a little resentful. I'd been in his sole care since I was seven. Losing my mom to a car accident had caused me to sink further into my shell. I wasn't the rebellious type, so I'd gone along with whatever my father wanted. And everything he wanted always benefited him.

That was why I avoided coming home at all costs. It hadn't been until I'd gotten some freedom that I realized I could be someone completely different. Anyone I wanted to be.

"They're the Marines version of Special Forces."

I frowned and gave him a worried look. "Why are special force units following you around? Us, around?"

"I'm only telling you this so that you start taking this seriously, Bailey. I've been receiving some threats."

My lips thinned out as the worry escalated. "What kind of threats?"

"The death kind," Wolfe rumbled as he walked into the room.

I glanced over at the tall dark-haired man. I wondered again if the three of them were brothers. They were all over six feet tall, muscle stacked on muscle, had tattoos, dark hair, and brown eyes. Wolfe had eyes so warm they could be melted pools of chocolate. It was anyone's guess as to whether Wolfe was his last name, or some nickname he'd been given. He certainly hadn't answered me when I'd asked that question. *Maybe it's because, if you're lucky, he'll devour you like a wolf.* Where the hell had that thought come from?

Despite the military uniforms, they didn't wear their name tags or Marine insignia. I hadn't thought much of it until now. I didn't know much about the military, but I knew that that was unusual. He'd introduced himself and his teammates on the first day we'd gotten here, but he hadn't said much else up

until a few days ago. That was when Jas and I had started sniping at each other. It was mutual annoyance at first sight.

“Are we safe here?” I asked, directing my question back to my father.

“That’s what we’re for,” Kip said as he and Jas walked into the room.

I kept my mouth closed. The last thing I wanted to do was start a fight right before Dad’s guests arrived. It was yet another boring meeting with his advisors and I wasn’t sure why he wanted me here for it. But I knew better than to skip it and arguing with his bodyguards right beforehand would earn me a boring lecture.

An amused look passed over Kip’s face at the mulish look on mine while Jas glared at me. I wasn’t sure what was perpetually stuck up his butt, but he and Kip seemed to be complete opposites. Kip was always grinning and Jas looked like the stick was lodged a bit too far for comfort. Wolfe seemed to be the peacekeeper and was the leader of their little group.

Dad’s advisors walked in and I stood up while he greeted them. He was running for re-election and all of his time had been focused on campaigning and what he needed to do to keep his Senate seat. At least until he decided to take this impromptu trip to South America.

Honestly, his campaigning was fine by me. It meant he was too busy to pay me much attention most of the time. I just didn’t understand why he’d put it on hold to be here. I had every intention of finding out. As his assistant I had his itinerary, and the trip was full of charity fundraisers and things that helped support bills he’d passed, and getting out and being seen was always important. But to be *here* doing that was what made no sense. We should be home, in America.

It was unfortunate he was forcing me to be here with him this summer. These kinds of events didn’t interest me. More than that, they were a way for my father to ensure that he had a say in everything I did. I shook hands with the men gathered

around my father, then stood back, wishing I was anywhere else.

I caught sight of the Marines moving off to the side of the room. They were hyper-vigilant. Their eyes missed nothing as they swept the room. I wouldn't speak the words aloud, and certainly not in front of Jas, but I did feel safer with them around. Knowing that Dad was getting death threats spooked me. I always put on a brave face, but every time this had happened in the past, I'd hidden myself away inside our estate at home. This time we weren't home and hiding away didn't seem possible with the events that had been scheduled.

I sighed and sat down at the table, placing the notepad and pen in front of me. We all waited as staff placed lunch plates before us, then left as quietly as they'd come.

"Thank you," I told the young lady who'd served me. She smiled warmly at me then hurried out of the room.

I'd take copious notes during the meeting today and be bored to tears, but Dad wouldn't be able to complain that I wasn't taking this seriously.

Listening quietly as they spoke, I wrote down anything that seemed to be important. It was hard not to let my mind wander back to my real life. My appetite had vanished, so I didn't touch any of the food on my plate.

Before long, the meeting was over and Dad was rushing his advisors off so they could catch their flight back to the US. The fact that they'd fly here for one meeting blew my mind. It was such a waste of time.

The entire meeting they'd tried to convince him that he was needed back home and had to focus on his campaign. He wasn't any more forthcoming with them as to why he refused to return than he was with me.

I waited for him to come back so we could go over my notes and discuss how the next few days would go. He walked back in with Kip following. I knew the other two would be following his advisors to the airport.

"Dad."

He glanced over at me as he walked to a liquor cabinet and poured himself a drink. “What?”

I looked over at Kip, but he was leaning back against the wall, arms crossed over his muscular chest, staring at the floor. It was his way of trying to give us privacy where there was none. His hair was a bit longer than the others and he had a five o’clock shadow dusting his face. I knew if he’d looked up I’d see gorgeous amber eyes, so light they were almost golden.

Focusing back on my father, I sighed inwardly. This was the last thing I wanted to do, but it was important. “You should really listen to them. You’re down in the polls. If you don’t go home and continue campaigning, you might lose your seat.”

He glared at me over the rim of his glass. “I’m perfectly aware of that, Bailey.”

“Then why are we here?” I asked in exasperation.

“I have-”

“Don’t feed me that line again,” I snapped at him.

He looked startled and I caught movement out of the corner of my eye. Kip’s head had snapped up. I didn’t look over, but a quick side peek showed that he had a grin on his face.

“Look. I understand that you’re under a lot of pressure, but you were the one who forced me to come this summer. Why would you bring me if you weren’t going to listen to my advice?”

“I need someone to take notes,” he snapped.

My teeth ground together as I fought to hold back the tears. This was the real Senator Michaels that most people didn’t get to see. In public, they saw a handsome, older, charming man. I got his real personality. Most of the time he was vindictive and just plain mean.

His sigh was loud in the silence, as though I’d inconvenienced him yet again. He played the victim card extremely well and I almost always ended up feeling sorry for him and was the one to apologize.

“I promised a close friend that I’d be here for his events this summer. His charities need my support. And besides, being here shows that I’m so generous, I would miss vital time campaigning just to help others. Shows my priorities aren’t to myself. It also shows that I’m not afraid of losing.”

My eyes narrowed as he looked down at his glass and drank from it. I knew every tell my father had. He may be telling the truth, but he wasn’t giving me the full explanation. Faking charity, even though he really was being charitable, just to sway the polls wasn’t a new trick. It just wasn’t a full explanation. I was surprised, however, that I’d gotten that much out of him, so I let it drop.

“What do you need me for over the next few days?” I asked, ignoring the hurt that always appeared in my chest whenever I spent more than a few hours around my father.

He listed off the various meetings and events he expected me to attend for the week. It would all kick off on Monday, which meant I had the rest of today and tomorrow to relax.

“Then if you don’t need me anymore, I’ll leave you to it.” I stood up and made my way to the door.

A large hand reached out and grasped my wrist, pulling me to a stop. “Wait here until my teammates get back,” Kip told me, his deep voice had a velvety smooth texture to it.

My pulse raced under his fingers and when he brushed his thumb rhythmically over it I realized he could feel it.

He was probably a charmer in most circumstances. Not that his charm would work on me. Much.

I tugged my arm away from him. “I’ll just be up in my room,” I replied. My eyes flicked back to my father, then landed on him again.

His full lips flattened out as he searched my expression. He must have read the need to escape in my gaze because he relented and gave me a nod. “Check in with me if you go anywhere else.”

“Thank you,” I murmured and hurried out of the room. My hand was on the staircase banister when hushed voices floated

across the room. I frowned, looking around. Knowing I should just go to my room like I'd said I would, I found myself walking down the hall.

I wouldn't consider it creeping, exactly, though I was walking a bit softer. The voices got a bit louder as I approached a door further back into the embassy. Dad wasn't the only one here right now, though I hadn't met many of the other businessmen and politicians who were here. I hadn't been interested enough to introduce myself.

Pausing by the door, I saw two men, heads bowed close together as they spoke about the documents in front of them on the computer screen.

"No one can find out about this, Peter."

The second man—I was guessing that was Peter—gave an aggravated sigh. "Stop worrying George. No one—" His head snapped up, as though he felt prying eyes on him.

I stumbled back from the door, but knew he'd seen me. It didn't take his dark glare to get my ass moving. I shouldn't have come back here. Turning, I hurried back out toward the staircase.

The breath was knocked from me as I slammed into someone in my rush to get away from that angry look. Peter, whoever he was, had looked like he wanted to strangle me for simply overhearing him.

"Are you okay? I didn't see you there." Hands wrapped around my shoulders and I looked up at the older man who was helping to steady me.

"Yes, I'm so sorry," I told him, giving him a weak smile. "I wasn't watching where I was going."

"Hard to do that when you're looking behind you as you run forward." His curious gaze tracked over my shoulder to see what I'd been running from.

I peeked over my shoulder and saw a movement as Peter went back inside the room he and his friend had been in. "I got lost."

“Well, allow me to help you find your way.” He held out his arm with a charming smile. “I’m James Shetland.”

“It’s nice to meet you Mr. Shetland. I’m Bailey Michaels.”

We were walking slowly and I noticed the small hitch in his step. Glancing up at him, I saw the smile flicker on his face. “Senator Michaels’ Bailey?”

“That’s right.”

“I’ve known your dad for many years.” He stopped next to the stairs and dropped his arm. “It’s nice to meet you, Bailey.”

“Nice to meet you, too.” I was too happy to be free to go to my room, so I didn’t ask him why I’d never met him before if he’d known my dad for so long. Maybe I had and I just didn’t remember. It didn’t really matter. I went upstairs and closed and locked my bedroom door behind me.

We’d been given the nicest suites in the embassy. They were huge and I loved the double balcony doors that opened up to my own terrace. Some people might be grateful for the chance to travel and be surrounded by opulence, but I was just tired of it. Dad had been dragging me around since I could walk and there was a short time—when I was about seven or eight—that I had fun with this. It was like being a princess. That feeling quickly faded for me as I realized all that came with living this lifestyle. It wasn’t for me.

I wondered what I’d just witnessed downstairs, but decided not to think about it too hard. If I was lucky I wouldn’t run into that guy again. Something about him just made me immediately uncomfortable. Putting him out of my head, I sighed and picked up my phone from the nightstand.

Sitting down on my bed, I pulled out my cell and pressed Ted’s number. The phone rang continuously in my ear and I laid back against the bed wondering why he wasn’t answering. I’d been trying to get a hold of him for a week.

Deep in my gut, I knew he was upset that I hadn’t come home. Amy had helped me realize that my father and Ted were made from the same cloth. Each of them tried to control

everything I did and when I didn't listen, they pouted and manipulated until I gave in.

I'd tried breaking up with Ted more than once, but every time somehow I ended up apologizing and the relationship continued. It baffled me how they managed to do that. Was I that much of a push over?

Standing, I went over and looked out the window when I heard a vehicle pull up. I watched as Wolfe and Jas got out of the black SUV lent to us by the embassy. Something told me these men weren't pushovers.

One day I hoped to be like them. Strong, confident, the kind of person who wouldn't take shit from anyone.

You can be like that now.

I bit my lip and shook my head. It wasn't that I never stood up for myself. I'd managed to go to the college I chose. When the time came, I would be opening my own bakery. It didn't matter what my father said. I stood up when things really mattered to me. The rest of the time, I just sort of gave in because it was easier in the long run. I needed to stop doing that. My life, my future, my choices, they needed to matter to me. They did matter to me.

Starting today I am going to start standing up for myself.

The promise rang in my ears and my chest tightened as I thought about all that keeping it would entail. It didn't matter. I was done with being my father's doormat. I was done with letting everyone else dictate the direction of my life. I was just *done*.

CHAPTER 3



Wolfe

Bailey was still up in her room and had been all afternoon. She'd ignored the senator's order to come to dinner, which had pissed him off. He'd spent the entire meal fuming silently, but others staying at the embassy had been nearby so he hadn't made a scene.

It made me wonder what he'd be like if they hadn't been there? I had a feeling I knew and it didn't make me like the man any more. Didn't matter. I didn't need to like him. We just had to complete our babysitting mission and make sure he stayed alive while he was here.

His reactions sure made me understand his daughter's quiet ways. She was fucking gorgeous. Tall and thin, with aristocratic features. Her dark hair and sparkling green eyes were hard for a man to resist. And did I mention that she was *gorgeous*.

I knew that was the reason Jas was having a hard time being near her. He kept grumbling to himself that she was a spoiled brat, but from what I could tell she was anything but the stuck up rich kids we all knew from our pasts. I'd been watching her closely over the last week and she went out of her way to be kind to anyone who was around.

The staff fucking loved her. I'd heard the maids talking about her when they thought I couldn't understand Spanish. Nothing I had heard had been anything but glowing. Except

for the things Jas said. It was the only way he could stay focused on the mission and not be distracted by her.

It was late and I was patrolling the house, while the others checked around outside. It was likely overkill, but we were bored to death. I'd never admit it to my teammates, but this assignment was a joke. Watching over a senator and his daughter wasn't in our job description. I had no idea why we were here.

The day my Colonel had pulled me into his office to tell me what we'd be doing on this mission it'd blown my mind. It was completely out of the ordinary, something he'd admitted to while he'd broken down the expectations for the job. It wasn't like I could turn it down, though, and Jas was angry enough for the both of us, so I tried to make the best of it. The senator was a former Marine, and he had a lot of pull. If he wanted Marine Force Recon bodyguards, he'd get them.

At least we had the benefit of watching over a beautiful woman and not just her father. Something crashed in a nearby room as I walked through the foyer. There were more people staying here than just the Michaels, but that didn't mean we wouldn't keep this place locked down.

I shoved open the door of the drawing room, hand on the butt of my pistol. Freezing when I saw Bailey on her back on the floor, I searched the room for any threats.

Her laughter echoed around the room and my eyebrows shot up as I realized she was drinking Scotch...straight from the bottle. She must have tripped and fallen.

Removing my hand from my weapon, I shut the door behind me and walked over to her side. She stared up at me with a smile plastered on her face.

“Hi there.”

My lips twitched and I had to force myself not to smile. “What are you doing?”

“Drinking,” she slurred. Holding up the bottle, as though to prove her point, she grinned up at me.

My dick hardened as I stared down at her. Her wavy hair was spread around her and her plump lips were a deep pink and glistening from where she'd missed some of the Scotch.

I grabbed the bottle from her and she glared at me.

“Don't mind sharing, but that's mine.”

The embassy kept all of its liquor cabinets full for its guests, but I had a feeling her father would be pissed if he knew she was down here. I'd had Kip do some research on her and her father so I knew at twenty-two she was at least old enough to drink.

I glanced at the label on the bottle and let out a low whistle. “You know how to pick some fine Scotch.”

“Tastes gross,” she informed me. “Just like stupid Ted. Always tastes like an ashtray.”

Who the fuck is Ted? Out loud I asked, “What?” I knew better than to try to reason with someone who was drunk, but it just slipped out.

“Leaves me nasty voicemails for leaving with my dad. Asshole Dad makes me leave when I could be baking. I try calling ashtray Ted and he doesn't answer. But this.” She waved at the bottle I'd set on the table. “That answered.”

Reaching out a hand, I grabbed hers and helped her to her feet. She stumbled and her body slammed into mine. I wasn't going to try to put together her ramblings. Better to get her out of here.

I ground my back molars together as her curves pressed against me while she found her footing. Jesus. I was acting like a kid who couldn't control his raging hard-on. Drooling over one of the marks we were supposed to be protecting wasn't a great idea, yet my eyes had been following her everywhere she went since the moment she'd stepped off the plane. I hadn't missed the fact that Jas and Kip were doing the same.

She patted my chest and thanked me before weaving her way toward the door. She was giggling and muttering to herself as she went.

Shaking my head, I stared up at the ceiling. Why me? Why was I chosen for this particular assignment? She was every dirty fantasy ripped from my head and plunked down in front of me and now I had to act like a cool detached bodyguard. If I didn't the other two sure as fuck wouldn't and then we'd be in deep shit. Something told me Senator Michaels wouldn't be thrilled to find out the Marines sent to protect them were lusting after his daughter.

I caught up with her and steadied her again as she started to fall. When she began to slip down toward the floor like she was melting, I let out a curse and lifted her until she was over my shoulder. "Let's get you upstairs."

She pounded on my back with her fists, but her complaints were all under her breath. Even in her drunken state she clearly didn't want to be caught.

Her father was an asshole to her, so it wasn't surprising. I'd just stepped out into the hall when my radio clicked and the senator spoke.

"Wolfe. Meet me in the upstairs den. I want to go over the plan for Tuesday's event."

"Copy, Sir," I muttered into the radio, wishing I could toss it out the window.

Jas chose that moment to walk by and he paused with an eyebrow up as he took in the picture of me standing there with Bailey thrown over my shoulder. His gaze dropped to where my hand was on her ass. I was just trying to steady her, but honestly the feel of her beneath my palm made my fingers itch to squeeze her curves.

"What did I miss?" he asked, mouth kicking up in one corner.

"I have to go speak to the senator." I walked over and handed Bailey over into his arms.

She swayed against him as all the blood rushed back to her head. She blinked at me, then up at him, then shook her head.

"I'm not babysitting a drunk-"

“I’m not going with him.”

They glared at each other and I pinched the bridge of my nose. “Jas. Do your job. Get her upstairs. Put her to bed. Make sure no one sees her.”

I made my way to the space the senator had set up as a makeshift office and tried to rein in my impatience as he went over the security plan again and again. There were only so many times we could go over it. I already had it committed to memory. My focus kept straying to Jas and Bailey. It hadn’t been a good idea to send him up to put her to bed. I should have called Kip over to do it.

Once I was finally released, I made my way directly to her door. After a soft knock, I poked my head inside. Jas was sitting next to her bed, reading a book and she was sound asleep.

A grin formed on my face. “I didn’t tell you you had to stay here with her,” I whispered, keeping my voice low so I didn’t wake her.

He glared up at me and shrugged. The book in his hand had some half naked guy on the cover and I snorted out a laugh. He flipped me off, set the book down, and walked out of the room.

Moving over to Bailey’s bed, I smoothed her hair away from her face. She looked like a fucking angel lying there. My teammates snored like they were sawing logs and certainly didn’t look celestial when they slept, but somehow women always managed to.

I left her alone, nudging the wastebasket closer to her bedside in case she woke up not feeling well. Forcing myself to leave her side was harder than I thought it would be. This woman was getting under my skin and I knew it was a bad sign because if she was catching my interest it wouldn’t be long before Jas and Kip were goners for her.

We didn’t need the kind of trouble dating the daughter of a U.S. Senator would bring. Not with the kind of lifestyle we

led. I made my way downstairs, determined to keep distance between us.

* * *

THE NEXT MORNING, we all met up in the dining room for breakfast. Bailey was a little pale, but didn't look too much worse for wear considering what she'd been up to last night. Even better was that she hadn't been discovered by her father.

Something about her put up my defenses and I wanted to protect her, especially against him.

"What are your plans for the day, Bailey?" her father asked.

Her eyes flashed up to mine, then away. "I'm just going to hang around and read."

Senator Michaels sneered into his plate of eggs, but didn't mention anything else.

I ate slowly, watching everyone at the table. Some new politicians had gotten to the embassy yesterday. Nothing was out of the ordinary, but if I didn't watch what everyone else was doing I'd end up staring at the woman across from me the way Kip was. Kicking him under the table, I shot him a pointed look when he jerked as my boot smashed into his shin.

He was barely eating, eyes glued to her. He lowered them and got busy with his food. I bit back a sigh. A whole summer of tip-toeing around this girl, trying to act like we weren't interested, was going to be hell on us all.

At least her father's schedule would keep us all busy. We got up as a team and left the table once breakfast was done. I was hoping to escape before the senator called me back to go over more of the same plans. I was going to gouge my eyes out with a knife if I had to keep going over the same shit over and over.

"Wolfe."

I hesitated when Bailey's soft voice called out to me. Waiting for her to catch up, I gave the other two a satisfied smirk when I saw the envy on their faces. Jas flipped me off and walked away. Kip followed after him, but his eyes kept tracing back toward Bailey.

"Thank you," she said as she walked up.

She was in a pair of jeans and some kind of flowy blouse today and I had to work to keep my eyes on her face. The soft material settled just right against her tits and showed the outline of them perfectly. It took all my self-control not to reach out and touch her.

"For what?" I grunted.

"For taking care of me last night. I appreciate you not letting my father find me like that." Her cheeks heated and she licked her lips, causing me to shift my stance or risk having my erection show. "I don't normally drink like that or anything. I just..."

"You don't want to be here."

She looked up at me in surprise. "No. I don't."

I nodded, but didn't say anything else about that. "Be ready by noon tomorrow. There's some kind of lunch thing your father is having us go to."

Her smile was slow, but beautiful. "Thank you. I have the schedule. I'll be ready."

She turned and walked away and my self-control broke a bit as my eyes strayed down to her ass as she moved across the room. I was in such deep shit. We all were.

CHAPTER 4



Jas

My back teeth ground together as I tried to pretend I wasn't watching Bailey. She bothered the piss out of me. Sure, she was beautiful. Long flowing waves of dark hair and gorgeous green eyes were hard enough to miss, but she also had a pretty face and a deceivingly curvaceous body. Seeing her in that little swim suit out by the pool had me struggling to tuck my instant boner away before she spotted it.

Inwardly, I scoffed at myself. Getting hard over a twenty-two-year-old spoiled brat. What the fuck was wrong with me? If I was being honest, I'd been taking my shit mood out on her ever since we'd gotten here a couple weeks ago. Other than the pool and the night she'd gotten drunk, we just sort of stayed away from each other. She'd give Wolfe and Kip smiles and speak with them, but she avoided me like the plague. That pissed me off, too.

I'd been pissed ever since we'd gotten reassigned to babysitting duty. We were an elite unit trained to deal with terrorist threats and here we were watching a senator and his spawn. It was downright insulting. Senators were supposed to travel with Secret Service as their babysitters. Having Marines guard him, let alone Force Recon, was way beyond normal.

Wolfe and Kip didn't seem to mind. My eyes strayed over to them. Wolfe had his usual stoic look on his face while Kip looked bored. Anger kept me spooled up, preventing boredom

at least. I knew part of the reason they weren't angry like me was the gorgeous woman we were watching. They both seemed fine to trail after her day in and day out. I had to admit she made the scenery more bearable. If we'd been stuck watching a bunch of old men we'd all be miserable.

I'd been on a team with these two men for so many years we knew how each other thought. Wolfe glanced over and arched a dark brow. It was his way of telling me to get over it and do my job. Most people mistook the three of us for brothers, but we weren't actually related. They were the closest thing I had to family, though.

Leaving behind my alcoholic parents had been easy once I'd hit eighteen. The only one I kept in touch with was my brother. He'd raised me and had only left to find his own happiness once I was old enough to fend for myself.

I'd spent every holiday over at Wolfe's parents' place with my brother in arms since I was assigned to this unit nine years ago. Wolfe was thirty-three, three years older than me, while Kip was only twenty-eight. Despite our ages our team was one of the best. That's what we'd been told when we'd been handed this assignment. The senator had asked for us specifically when he requested a detail to watch over him and his daughter during their summer in Colombia.

Kip winked at me, a grin playing across his lips and I shook my head. He was always so fucking happy. We could be hip deep in a firestorm of shit and he'd be smiling. It was annoying as fuck. Despite that, I loved the asshole. Both of them. Just like I knew they felt the same for me.

My eyes drifted back over to Bailey. She'd stepped off the plane in a full on rant, railing at her father about not wanting to be here. It had pretty much cemented my feelings about her. She was a spoiled, rich brat. Even though she'd been mostly quiet and contained after that first meeting, it'd stuck with me. The weeks that had passed had been pretty quiet and calm and I hoped they'd stay that way. We didn't need anyone stirring up trouble.

She lifted a hand to her mouth, smothering a yawn. My eyes remained glued to her lips after she went back to scribbling on the notepad in front of her. They were red and plump and had me shifting my stance to once again hide my hardening dick because all I could think about was her wrapping them around my cock.

She was too fucking young and I didn't even like her. Why couldn't I seem to get her out of my head? I moved my hands down to cover the front of my BDU pants just in case any of the senator's asshole advisors happened to glance over. Tucking my hard-on up under my belt would draw too much attention.

I needed to keep my mind off the gorgeous woman sitting only a few feet away. To distract myself, I listened to the men droning on about how Senator Michaels would win his seat in the upcoming election.

It did the trick, causing my errant dick to soften. I don't know how long we stood there, didn't bother to check my watch, but it felt like hours. Every one of these meetings, every event, felt like they took an eternity to conclude. They were boring as fuck.

Eventually, the men stood up, leaving Bailey sitting at the table as Senator Michaels escorted the men out of the embassy.

Wolfe passed by. "You watch her. We'll be right back."

Great. It was like he fucking knew the filthy thoughts running through my head and it was his way of tormenting me. Kip was on Wolfe's heels as they followed after the men.

Silence spread between us and I was back to gritting my teeth as she flipped through her pages of notes. Her handwriting was a loopy scrawl that looked like she'd practiced for hours as a kid.

Sure had a different childhood than me. There hadn't been mansions and pools and tutors in my past. I'd been lucky if there'd been bread and some peanut butter for me to pass off as my dinner.

Every one of my muscles tightened as she stood up. Her eyes landed on me and I had to shove the appreciation for her beauty far down so I could allow my irritation to remain on the surface. She was probably used to men fawning over her. I certainly wasn't willingly adding myself to that list.

She blinked at me in surprise as I scowled at her. "We seem to have gotten off on the wrong foot." Her soft voice flowed over me like honey. "Maybe we could start over?" There was a hopeful look on her face.

That was goddamned dangerous. Allowing any sort of amicable feelings for her to build inside of me would only lead me further toward temptation. "Why?" Her face fell and I had to bite back the urge to apologize. Instead, I doubled down. It was very apparent—even to myself—that I was being a major dick to her, but I didn't have any other choice. She was too fucking alluring. "I don't need to be friends with a brat like you."

"Jasper!" Wolfe barked.

Shooting Wolfe a dark look as he strode back in, I shrugged my shoulders. "What?"

Before he could respond, peals of laughter echoed around the room. I looked back over at Bailey in shock. She was holding her stomach, bent over at the waist, laughing so hard tears were forming in her eyes.

"What the fuck is so funny?" I growled at her.

"Bro..." Kip muttered, giving me a confused look. "Why are you in such a pissy mood?" He'd said it quietly, though I doubt she'd have heard him through her laughter.

Fury was building as I watched a tear slide down her cheek. She thought she had the right to laugh at me?

"Jasper," she gasped when she caught Wolfe's questioning look. He always introduced me as Jas—because I hated my fucking name and this was why. "Your mom must have hated you."

I had to get out of here before I pulled her over my lap and showed her what I did to little girls who didn't know their

fucking place. “I’ll go check the perimeter,” I snarled at Wolfe as I stalked past him. He kept his mouth shut, proving why he was the team leader.

My eyes darted around as I looked for any perceivable threat as I stepped outside. I might want to throttle Bailey—preferably while I fucked her—but that didn’t mean I wanted her to get hurt. Anyone who wanted to land a solid blow to Senator Michaels would take a serious look at his daughter. Getting to her would do damage in multiple areas of his life. His reputation and whatever blackened organ he had inside his chest. The damage to his reputation would probably bother him more than the loss of his daughter. I hadn’t missed the dismissive nature in which he treated his daughter. None of us had.

It wasn’t any of my business. My job was to keep him and his daughter alive, nothing more, nothing less. Especially nothing more. The sooner this was over the sooner we could get back to our usual missions. My eyes flicked up to the room she was staying in. As I watched, her light turned on. A shadow moved across the drapes that she had drawn. At least she kept things like that in mind. The more she did to keep herself safe, the easier our mission would be. Still, I almost wished she’d open up those curtains so I could see her undress.

I’d been right before. That meeting had gone for hours and the sun was slowly sinking down in the sky. Wiping all thoughts from my mind, I began doing a sweep of the embassy. I had a feeling keeping busy was going to be the only way to preserve my sanity through this.

My boots crunched lightly in the gravel as I patrolled the eastern edge of the compound. The last rays of light were coloring the sky. I didn’t hear Wolfe approach, but the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. Looking over, I watched as he stopped next to me.

He was a quiet bastard. I’d asked him once how he managed to sneak around so efficiently. He’d just grinned and told me when you’re the youngest of ten boys you learned to be silent or you’d get your ass handed to you in hide and seek.

The Wolfe brothers still played that game—and had added me and Kip into the mix the first year Wolfe had brought us home for the holidays—and he wasn't kidding. They didn't just play hide and seek. The rules were you got a pummeling if you were found and you couldn't fucking fight back for a whole sixty seconds.

“What's got your panties in a wad, Jas?” he asked, stopping next to me and lighting up a cigarette. Usually on missions he refused to smoke. It could give away our position. But this wasn't like any other mission we'd ever been on.

Watching over a pampered politician and his daughter wasn't exactly dangerous. At least not that I'd seen. It made me wonder if the death threats were real or if the senator was a pansy ass. Granted he was a Marine, but I didn't know much about him. Didn't give a rat's ass. Wolfe had looked into him, he was the thorough one.

I shrugged in lieu of speaking. There was no way I could tell him what I was thinking—imagining doing—not when it had to do with one of the people we were here to protect.

“She's gorgeous.”

Glancing over, I saw him watching me with amusement written all over his smug face. “Who the fuck cares?”

“If I had to guess, Brother,” he said, taking a drag from the cigarette before blowing the smoke out, “I'd say you.”

“Fuck off, Wolfe,” I muttered, looking back out past the fence that surrounded the embassy. I should have gone in at least an hour ago, but I didn't feel like occupying the same space as her, even if it was a massive building.

“It's not like Kip and I haven't noticed,” he said with a chuckle. “I've also noticed you're more surly than usual.”

“Because we shouldn't be here. This isn't our fucking job.”

“Yeah,” he replied, a hard note in his voice. “It is. Because we were fucking ordered to do this.” He shifted until he was standing in front of me. “I get it. I'm not thrilled to be babysitting either, but I know how to follow orders. Suck it up,

Marine, and deal with it. Maybe then this won't be a miserable summer for us all." He flicked the cigarette away. "Or don't. I have to admit, it's hilarious watching you two claw at each other."

"It's kind of hot," Kip added as he walked up. "Not you," he said, disgust twisting his face when I narrowed my eyes. "Her. Watching her get all fired up. I like the way her tits bounce when she gets pissed and starts breathing harder. I hope you fight with her every day."

Wolfe rubbed his forehead. "Jesus you two are worse than goddamned teenagers." He pointed at Kip. "Don't. Touch. The. Daughter." He exaggerated each word and shook his head when Kip expressed his disappointment. "And you," he continued, pointing at me. "Stop being so damn mean. You should have seen her face after you stormed off."

Guilt pinched inside my chest. It wasn't exactly her fault I was acting this way. I just couldn't seem to stop lashing out at her. I nodded and stuffed my hands inside the pockets of my pants.

Wolfe took my nod as agreement and turned around to go back inside. Kip followed after him, leaving me outside to finish cooling off.

CHAPTER 5



Bailey

Sighing, I flipped my blankets back and sat up in bed. Light filled the room as I flicked on the bedside lamp. I'd been tossing and turning for hours. It was a mixture of guilt and anger that was keeping me up. I felt bad for laughing at Jasper. A snort of laughter slipped out before I could hold it back. It was just funny to me to see a big buff Marine with such a posh English sounding name. Especially one who was as surly as a mule.

I was angry because I felt so guilty. He didn't deserve my emotions. He'd started this whole thing between us. I really wasn't sure what I'd done to make him hate me this way. Worse, I didn't know why I cared and wanted to fix it.

It doesn't matter, Bailey. Forget about the ornery gorgeous man. Men. All three of them fit that description. Well, maybe they weren't all ornery, but they certainly were fine specimens.

Giving up on sleep, I grabbed my cell phone and headed downstairs. I'd tried calling Ted, but he hadn't answered. I'd successfully managed to stay away from Peter so far. There'd been a couple of times when he and his friend had been at breakfast, but otherwise we'd avoided each other. My guard had slowly dropped.

As my foot came off the last step, I heard voices coming from the same room as before. Not this time. I knew better than to go snooping where I didn't belong. I glanced back

down the hallway then shook my head and turned toward the kitchen. My gasp was loud in the quiet building when someone grabbed my shoulders, anchoring me in place.

I looked up into Peter's angry face. My stomach shriveled as I took in his handsome features. His good looks were ruined by the perpetual scowl that always seemed to be fixed on his expression. "I'm sorry."

"What are you doing up this late?"

Blinking, unsure of why he cared, I stuttered, "Couldn't sleep."

"So you thought you'd go poke your nose in where it wasn't welcome?" He arched a dark brow. The man was probably around thirty years old and I had no clue what he did, but he had an air of importance.

"No," I snapped, jerking myself out of his hold. "I wasn't spying on you the other day."

"Sure looked like it."

I sort of had been so I didn't argue further. "Look, I'm sorry. I didn't hear anything. Even if I had I'd never say anything."

"I'd assume Senator Michaels' daughter would know how to keep her mouth shut." He leaned forward until his face was in mine. "Make sure that you do."

My stomach soured and I swallowed hard at the threat. Without another word he walked upstairs. I debated on what to do. My thoughts of getting something warm to drink to help me sleep didn't seem like such a good idea anymore, but I didn't want to head up those stairs after him either. He might think I was following him. I decided to hide out in the kitchen for a while. Hopefully Peter would be gone by the time I went to bed. The kitchen was deserted and I didn't bother to turn on the lights as I entered it.

Light bathed me as I pulled milk out of the fridge and searched the cabinets for some powdered hot chocolate and a mug as I hit Ted's number on my phone.

“Bailey.”

My heart sank. My name had come out full of anger and disappointment. Seemed I was affecting everyone that way these days. “Hey,” I replied. “Sorry I haven’t been able to get a hold of you over the last few weeks.”

He didn’t respond. The silence was heavy over the connection. I hated when he acted this way. It honestly reminded me too much of my father. Ted was only two years older than me, but he treated me like a kid half of the time. Unfortunately, he made the other half good enough that I doubted myself and stayed even though deep down I didn’t like his controlling ways.

“I don’t understand why the hell you’re in Colombia.” Now there was a slight whine to his tone.

“It wasn’t my choice, Ted.”

“You couldn’t have told your father no?” I could see him pinching the bridge of his nose the way he always did when he got into this kind of mood.

I could hear laughter and music in the background, though it was muffled. “Are you at a party?” I asked, trying to change the subject.

“We’re hosting.” He was in a fraternity that was really socially active. I shouldn’t be surprised.

Never would I have imagined dating a guy like him. I’d stayed away from frat guys for the first couple years of college. Then one day Ted had walked across the cafeteria and started chatting me up. I’d been stunned and thrilled that he was interested. He was so handsome in that blond Greek God kind of way.

“I bet that’s fun.”

“You’d know if you were here like you’re supposed to be. I told you not to listen to your father.”

Supposed to be. Is this my life? I go where these men tell me to?

Sighing, I stirred my hot chocolate. My eyes had once again adjusted to the dark. “I told you, I didn’t have a choice. If you don’t stop giving me a hard time, then I’m not going to call you at all, Ted.”

“Fine by me. If you won’t do as you’re told, then as far as I’m concerned, we’re through.”

My jaw dropped as he hung up on me. I stared down at my cell long enough that the light flicked out. There was enough ambient light around that I wasn’t fumbling around in the dark as I poured my drink into my mug and went to sit down at the table.

Guilt pricked at my consciousness because I was sitting here and instead of being upset, all I felt was...relief. An unexpected smile was forcing its way onto my face. Was I glad Ted had dumped me? Was my satisfaction at all related to three hot Marines? I picked up my mug, enjoying the way the hot liquid warmed my skin.

“What are you doing up?”

Yelping, I jerked as the deep voice cut through the silence and solitude. I cried out as scalding hot chocolate slopped over the rim of the mug and down the back of my hand.

Wolfe hissed out curses as he flicked the lights on, blinding me. My eyes clamped shut for a few moments, then I slowly opened them as they adjusted.

He’d already made it across the room by that point, though I hadn’t heard him coming closer. He pulled up a chair and sat next to me. Taking my cup and setting it aside, he pulled my hand closer so he could inspect it.

I was just grateful it was him and not Peter. Or Mr. Shetland. I’d found him watching me more than once since we’d met. Why did politicians have to be so creepy?

“It’s fine. You don’t have to-” I stuttered to a stop as he dropped my hand and whipped his t-shirt off. My jaw dropped as I stared at his muscular tanned chest. His arms bulged as he took my hand again and wiped at it with his shirt. My fingers itched to trace the tattoo that decorated his skin.

He was being gentle and was completely focused on his task. Which was good for me since I was still staring and there might have been a bit of drool. Not wanting to get caught ogling him, my eyes darted down to our joined hands. His fingers were strong and capable as he searched my skin for any marks. He showed my hand the same intensity that he had when he was on guard duty. Daring my hand to show any sign of injury.

“You’ll be fine,” he declared.

I would have been if he hadn’t started touching me. My heart was racing and my belly was doing flips. It was ridiculous. I didn’t react this way to handsome men. I’d been around plenty and I’d always just ignored them, too caught up in my school work and future plans to give them the time of day. Now I had three who kept catching my eye.

Each of them had a uniqueness that drew me to them. Wolfe was just so...caring. It made me feel safe and protected whenever he was around.

“What are you two doing?”

I groaned. It was a soft sound, but Wolfe heard it. His lips quirked upward and there was amusement in his brown eyes at my reaction. All of them had brown eyes, but Wolfe’s were the color of the liquid inside my mug, chocolatey and sweet.

Jasper’s on the other hand were so dark they were like a midnight sky. It was often hard to tell if they were brown or black. I looked over at him. He was lounging in the doorway to the kitchen, one large shoulder propping him against the frame. His arms were crossed over his chest as he watched us like a cat watching mice.

“Nothing,” I told him.

“Why’s his shirt off then?” He jerked his chin at Wolfe.

Somehow, I’d forgotten about that. My eyes dropped down and followed the tattoo on Wolfe’s chest down over those covering his bicep. I flushed as both men watched me do it. My gaze darted back over to Jasper. “I-” My cheeks heated more as I tried to figure out why I was so flustered.

“I startled her and made her spill burning hot chocolate over her hand,” Wolfe said, taking pity on me.

My brows pinched together as an emotion crept into Jasper’s eyes. He’d taken two steps toward us before he seemed to realize what he was doing and stopped. “Is she okay?”

Irritated that they were now discussing me like I wasn’t here, I interjected. “I’m fine.” That couldn’t have been worry in his eyes. Could it? Why would he care? I was just the brat he was being forced to guard.

He cleared his throat and stepped back. Wolfe rose and put his t-shirt back on. There was a wet spot on it from where he’d wiped my hand, but he didn’t seem to care. “Jas, take her back to her room. I need to go do a perimeter sweep.”

Wolfe left without another word. Jasper and I watched each other warily. A sharp noise cut through the silence, making me jump again. Thankfully, I hadn’t picked up the hot chocolate again.

I frowned down at my phone, then groaned when I saw Ted’s name.

“You gonna get that?”

I’d been planning on ignoring it, not wanting to talk to my boyfriend—ex-boyfriend—in front of Jasper. There was a challenging smirk on his face though and I didn’t want to give him the satisfaction.

“What, Ted?” I asked as I put the phone to my ear.

“I’m sorry, Bay,” he whined into my ear. “I was drunk and... I don’t really want to break up.”

“Well I do,” I told him. He sounded drunk now. He’d sounded stone-cold sober ten minutes ago. I was willing to bet my little nest egg of money I had squirreled away that he had been. He was only regretting things now that he’d shot-gunned enough beer to make him less of a sociopath. Amazing how quickly he became a blubbering asshat.

“Aw don’t be like that, babe.”

“Don’t call me babe, Ted. We’re done.”

“You stupid bitch!” He yelled it so loud, I jerked the phone away from my ear.

A strong hand yanked the phone out of my hand and I watched with wide eyes as Jasper spoke to my ex. “Don’t call her again.”

“Who the fuck is this?” The fact that I could hear him screaming over the line told me just how pissed Ted was.

“Her new boyfriend. Don’t call her again,” he repeated, then hung the phone up and handed it back to me.

I wasn’t sure what to say, so I remained quiet. That was twice tonight that Jas seemed to be looking out for me. It was weird because usually he was pissed at me.

“Let’s get you back to bed. You shouldn’t be running around the embassy at night.”

I didn’t argue. Instead, I stood and followed him back upstairs. It crossed my mind that I should tell him about Peter, but I was determined just to deal with it by myself. I’d just avoid him and everything would be fine. He’d delivered his threat and I’d heed it. Everything would be fine. When we reached my door, I let him go inside first and search the room before stepping inside. “Thank you.”

He looked over at me. “Just doing my job.”

We both knew I wasn’t thanking him for searching my room, but neither of us commented further. We both also knew that it was more than just doing his job.

He paused at the door, looking at me over his shoulder. “Sleep well.”

His smokey baritone drifted over me then the click of the door signaled that I was once again alone. Angry Jasper I could handle. The man who’d just looked at me like he wanted to eat me? I didn’t know what to do with him. All three of these men had me tied in knots. It wasn’t fair to be feeling certain ways for all three of them. I shouldn’t feel anything for any of them.

Giving myself a stern talking to, I slipped into bed. I was determined not to dream of them. It wasn't right and I needed to banish them from my thoughts. I knew I wouldn't succeed.

CHAPTER 6



Kip

“*M*orning, Beauty,” I said as Bailey came down the stairs.

She blinked at me, pausing on the last step as she tried to figure out my nickname for her. It shouldn’t be so hard to figure out, but there was a blush slowly creeping up her neck, so I took pity on her.

Glancing at my watch, I held my arm up as though she could see it from where I was standing. “Sleeping Beauty.” She just continued to stare at me. “You slept in late.” I had to bite back my grin. It was fun keeping her on her toes.

“She had a rough night. Leave her alone.”

We both glanced over as Jas walked into the room. Now we were both silently staring in shock. Since the moment she’d stepped off the plane he’d been a moody asshole. Now suddenly he was being nice and looking out for her?

“What the fuck happened last night?” I asked, a smirk creeping over my face. Wolfe had been quiet this morning, too. I regretted being the one to go to bed early while these assholes did whatever they’d done last night.

“Nothing.”

I watched as Jas walked out the front door, then turned back toward Bailey. My brow arched up as I noticed her

blushing harder than before. Next time I wasn't going to bed. I apparently missed shit when I did.

“What's on the agenda for the day?” I asked, changing the subject.

Bailey sighed and gave me a rueful smile. “Shopping.”

My face fell as I studied her. “What?”

“Sorry, but we have to go to a fundraiser tonight and something tells me you guys don't have anything for a black tie affair. Can't have you three standing out, well, standing out more than usual.”

She wasn't wrong about that. Wearing civilian attire while on duty was not a part of our job. Ever. This whole assignment was not a part of our normal mission type. I made a mental note to talk to Jas and Wolfe about this later. “Wait, we're shopping for us?” That thought disgusted me even more.

She nodded and looped her arm around mine as she began dragging me toward the door. “Yup. You know the other guys' measurements, right?”

“Measurements? No. Why?”

She shook her head and just kept dragging me out toward a car that was waiting for us.

I remembered myself long enough to open the door for her, then panic set in. My eyes darted around the compound, looking for Wolfe. This wasn't in my job description.

Bailey stuck her head out and frowned at me. “Well, get in.” She didn't wait for me to make excuses, just grabbed my arm and tugged.

Seeing no way out of it, I slid inside the car next to her. I listened as she gave the driver directions in Spanish. She smiled at me as she sat back against the seat. It blinded me and all it took was that look on her face for me to be totally fine spending a day shopping with her. If that wasn't a clear indication that I was quickly falling for this woman, then I didn't know what was. It had only been a couple of weeks, how had she wrapped me around her finger so efficiently?

I knew the answer to that. I'd been watching her since we'd gotten here. Minus one minor meltdown—which had me cracking up as she cussed out her father—she'd been composed and sweet. She was quiet and thoughtful with everyone she was near. Well, almost everyone. Jas brought out a side of her that had her snapping at him more often than not. To be fair, he brought that out in a lot of people.

I couldn't decide whether I liked her sweet or feisty side more. The reason I was able to enjoy both was because she was sweet to me and feisty toward him.

It didn't take us long to get to the store and I blinked as I tried to follow her conversation with the guy selling suits. I knew some Spanish, but that was more Wolfe's department. He was the language expert. My knowledge all came from high school and it'd been too damn long since I'd needed it.

Both of them turned and eyed me while speaking rapid-fire and it made me want to bolt back out to the car. "Don't worry," she assured me. "Carlos will be gentle with you."

My brows shot up as my eyes flicked over to Carlos. "Huh?" Normally, I'd be cracking jokes and laughing, but not when they were both eyeing me like an all you can eat buffet.

She laughed and the sound curled itself around me. If I had to put up with some dude named Carlos dressing me to get her to laugh more then I'd happily fall on that sword.

Carlos thrust a tux on a hanger toward me and I grabbed it and went back to the changing area. Grumbling, I forced myself into the ridiculous clothing and then came out so they could inspect me.

They both let out matching sounds of pleasure and I wasn't sure I liked the way Carlos was watching me. She, on the other hand, could look at me like that anytime she wanted. A picture of her on her back on my bed flashed through my mind and I shifted behind a rack of clothing to hide my sudden hard-on.

Carlos said something to me in Spanish, the tone of his voice expectant. He waved over toward a mirror so I went over and stood on the platform there.

“He needs to hem them a little,” Bailey explained.

Carlos grabbed a soft measuring tape and moved it up from my foot to my crotch.

“Jesus,” I muttered, shifting because he was getting a little too close to the jewels for comfort. When he went higher, I growled down at him.

He froze and looked up at me in shock. Bailey had the same look on her face.

“He’s basically fondling my dick,” I told her, defending myself.

She snorted out a laugh, then covered her mouth with her hand. “He’s just... Never mind,” she said with a shake of her head. Motioning toward me, she told Carlos something.

He rolled his eyes, but his hands left my junk. I stood still long enough for him to adjust my pants then we left.

“What about the others?” I asked as we got back into the car.

“He’ll use your measurements for them,” she said. “I explained the difference in height and bulk to him. Carlos is very good at his job.”

“How do you know?” I asked.

She grinned over at me. “This isn’t my first trip to Colombia.”

By the time we made it back to the embassy she had another meeting to go to with her father. Wolfe and Jas would take care of that while I went back in a few hours to pick up our tuxes.

* * *

“WHY THE HELL do we have to wear these?” Jas complained for the millionth time as we stood at the bottom of the stairs waiting on the senator and Bailey.

Personally, I agreed with him. We were a security detail for the senator, not participants in this fundraiser. We shouldn't be dressed up in uncomfortable tuxes, but the senator wanted us to 'blend in'. Even for a senator he had some pull. The Marine Corps would almost never authorize a team of Force Recon to do this kind of crap. Whatever he was scared of must be something big. I doubted that 'death threats' were all he was dealing with. Not that he'd bother to let us in on whatever else might be waiting for us.

Before Wolfe could snap at Jas for bitching, Bailey showed up at the top of the stairs. Everything except her went out of focus. All of my senses tuned into her as she descended the stairs. She was wearing an off the shoulder midnight blue dress that hugged her curves. The slit went up to mid-thigh showing tanned, smooth skin that made me want to run my tongue over it.

"Holy shit," I muttered and the other two grunted in agreement.

She held out a hand covered in satin gloves that went up to her bicep. I grabbed it, feeling like a clumsy oaf, and helped her down the last few steps. The glove was smooth against my palm, but I had a feeling her skin would be softer. It was taking every ounce of willpower not to kiss her. Her murder red lips curved as she stared up at me and my breath caught in my chest. She was fucking gorgeous and was going to cause a few of the old men at this fundraiser to have heart attacks.

"Thank you." She smiled at me and I grinned back.

My eyes tracked down her body. She had on some sparkly necklace that rested between her tits and my gaze got stuck there long enough that Wolfe gave me a not so subtle nudge. Guiltily, my eyes shot up to her face. "You look great."

"Thanks," she all but purred and I had to shift to ease the pressure behind the stupid tight fitted pants. Her hands raised and she started adjusting my bowtie. "You guys look really good, too."

Jas snorted, but he looked away when her gaze met his. I was still shocked he was behaving himself around her, mostly.

We'd see how long that lasted. Something about her was a thorn in his side. Probably the same thing that had my dick hard in my boxer briefs. Not something about her, everything about her.

Senator Michaels chose that moment to come down the stairs. He looked at us in surprise, but just nodded as he took his daughter's hand and headed out toward the cars.

Probably didn't think we'd clean up this nice.

Getting into our SUV, I smoothed out the arms of the jacket I was wearing and winked at Jasper, who climbed into the back seat. We should be riding with the senator and Bailey, but he'd insisted on us taking our own vehicle. Probably didn't want us that close to his smoke show of a daughter.

Wolfe kept a close eye on the Senator's vehicle in front of us as he drove.

"These get ups are uncomfortable as fuck, but I look damn good in mine," I commented. Jas rolled his eyes and Wolfe shook his head. "Bet I could slay some serious pussy if we didn't have to work." I kept it to myself whose pussy I wanted to drive my cock into. Wolfe got a bit pissy about mixing work and pleasure.

"Shut up, you ugly asshole. We both know they wouldn't go for you while I'm around," Jas told me with a wide grin.

I chuckled as I turned in the seat to face him. That wiped the smirk off his face and his eyes narrowed on me. "You realize people think we're all brothers," I told him.

"So?"

"So if I'm ugly, then so are you, dumb ass."

"Enough. I swear you two are worse than children," Wolfe growled at us. "We have work to do tonight. We need to stay focused."

Jas and I stopped bickering and a mischievous glint entered his eyes. We'd known each other long enough now that I didn't need to wonder what his plan was. I waited as he grabbed Wolfe in a choke hold from behind. Wolfe swore, the

vehicle swerving. As soon as he straightened it out, I reached over and scrubbed my hands over his gelled hair, making it stand up in tufts. Jas released him as I sat back in my own seat.

“Fucking children,” Wolfe muttered, running a hand through his hair to try to fix it. We all fell quiet after that. Wolfe ran us through our priorities for the night and we went over how we planned to keep an eye on the senator. He didn’t need to do the same for Bailey because taking our eyes off her was going to be damn near impossible.

We followed the senator and Bailey to the party, keeping an eye out for anything out of the ordinary. As soon as we stepped out and handed the vehicles off to the valet, Bailey caught sight of us and laughed.

“What happened to you?” she asked. When Wolfe just glowered around the room, casing it for anything that might be a threat, she stepped forward. “Lean down.”

Her father was already speaking with someone nearby, so we were waiting on him. I watched with envy as she helped smooth Wolfe’s hair back down. She was standing so close to him he had to be getting a good look down that bombshell dress.

“Bailey.” There was a disapproving tone in Senator Michael’s voice.

He didn’t treat the staff like human beings like his daughter did. He definitely didn’t like her touching us. Giving him a knowing smirk, I offered her my elbow. She took it and it gave me a smug sense of pleasure to watch the senator’s irritation grow. He wasn’t about to cause a scene in front of all these people though.

From there it was a whirlwind. I watched Bailey smile and laugh at all the appropriate places, but there was a dimness in her gorgeous green eyes that made me frown. Most women would love all the extravagance surrounding her, but if I had to guess I’d say she was miserable. She covered it well, but it was there. Her eyes didn’t match her smile. Then again, I didn’t know her very well yet. I could be wrong.

Everyone sat down to dinner and we lined up against the wall behind Bailey and her father's chairs. She turned and laughed at us over her shoulder. "Your seats are right here." She motioned to three seats across from her.

Senator Michaels shot her a dark frown. "You bought them plates?" He only kept his voice low enough that the guests surrounding us didn't overhear.

"Yes, Father, I did. You said you wanted them to blend in." She arched a brow at him and I had to smother a laugh.

"It's ten thousand dollars a plate, Bailey."

I choked on the swallow of wine I'd taken as soon as we'd sat down. Jas helpfully pounded my back until it felt like my lungs would burst out of my chest and land on the table in front of us.

Bailey fluttered her lashes and gave her father a wicked smile. "It's for charity," she said in an innocent voice. "Imagine how well it will reflect on you that you just donated fifty thousand dollars."

This wasn't one of his re-election fundraisers. It was for a local charity. It was clear to see that he wasn't happy spending his own money and that if it wasn't going to benefit his re-election efforts he wasn't willing to do it.

I had to bite back a chuckle and both my friends were grinning at her backhanded response. The smile fled my face when Senator Michael's hand fisted on the table cloth. If he thought he was going to do something stupid—like hit her—we were going to have a problem. I'd shove his ten-thousand-dollar plate up his ass.

Luckily for him, he pulled himself together just as the first round of food was being served. He chatted with others around him throughout the meal, the smarmy pleasant mask slipping over his face like it had always been there.

I didn't like the man. Trusting my gut instinct was huge for me and something told me he was a piece of shit. Oh sure, he'd decked himself out in glitter and gold, but underneath he was still shit.

After the meal came dancing. The other guys groaned and managed to get out of the way when Bailey came up. There was laughter in her eyes as she looked up at me. “Care to dance, Kip?”

I had no idea what to do, but I studied the others on the floor and figured it wasn’t much more than swaying to the music. Every kid at an eighth-grade dance could do that. “Sure.”

Leading her out to the floor, I grasped her hand and put my other on her lower back. Most of the men had theirs on their partners’ shoulders, but Bailey’s dress dipped down to just above her ass. This gave me a chance to run my fingers over her silky smooth skin.

We were standing close enough that I felt, more than heard, her breath catch when my fingers dipped down below the edge of her dress to brush the swell of her ass. Her wide eyes met mine and I smirked down at her.

She didn’t berate me though, she just followed along as I led her through the song. She felt so damn good in my arms and I was sure my pants weren’t doing a very good job of hiding the erection I was sporting.

Gathering her closer, I eliminated any space between us and I knew the minute she felt my hard-on pressing against her stomach. It didn’t bother me in the slightest if she knew I was attracted to her. The blush rushing up over her neck and cheeks made me wonder how much experience she had with men.

“Do you have a boyfriend?” I asked her, my voice rough. She wasn’t even doing anything and she had me turned on. If this was going to be the norm then my dick would be constantly sore, to say the least.

“Not anymore,” she told me, meeting my eyes.

“Good.”

She looked like she was about to ask me what I meant when a shot rang out.

“Death to corporatists!”

The shout and the sound of gunfire had every muscle in my body tensing before I dragged her down to the ground, covering her, shielding her with my mass. *Damn, damn, damn.* I was so wrapped up in her that I'd shirked my duties. The adrenaline dump had me focused on the threat now.

My eyes sought out my teammates and I saw them rushing toward the entrance of the building. It had only been two shots, but that didn't mean there wouldn't be more. I stood and pulled Bailey to her feet, dragging her toward the safety of the back of the room.

I found Senator Michaels along the way. "This way, Sir," I barked at him. He followed behind me and I shoved them down into a corner where the back and side wall met. With them covered on two sides, I could focus on the attackers if they came this way.

A quick look back at them showed them sitting together on the floor. People were panicking, screaming and running around, but I kept a close eye out for anyone who didn't belong as I waited for Wolfe and Jas.

My heart pounded out a steady rhythm as I waited. I wanted to turn and comfort Bailey, but I couldn't afford to be distracted. A quick peek every now and then showed that she was holding up. Her skin was pale, but there was a determined look on her face. It made me proud that she was able to remain so calm while their peers were running around like cowards.

It didn't take long before Wolfe and Jas were back. "The cars are out back," Wolfe told me, his eyes straying toward Bailey, checking on her. "One of the staff told us we can get out through the kitchen."

"Shouldn't we wait for the authorities?" Jas muttered, looking around.

"No," Wolfe said with a shake of his head. "We need to get them out of here before whoever that was comes back."

"You didn't see them?" I asked.

"They moved too quickly. They were already running by the time the second shot went off. Was anyone hit?" Wolfe

asked.

“Not that I can tell,” I told him. Turning, I held my hand out to Bailey. “Time to get out of here, Beauty.”

Senator Michaels gave me a sharp look, but I ignored him. He might be a Marine and a senator, but he wasn't my boss. He was one of the people we were here to protect. That meant that in an emergency, our authority circumvented his own.

We hurried them out through the kitchen and I didn't relax until we drove into the walled compound that made up the U.S. Embassy.

CHAPTER 7



Bailey

*M*y heart thundered in my chest for most of the ride back, but I felt safer once we were at the embassy. Wolfe grabbed my hand and helped me out of the SUV. His rough fingers closed over mine and it was as though the fear couldn't penetrate the shield he erected around me.

They were trying to hurry us across the gravel lot and into the building, but I couldn't move that quickly because of my dress and heels. My breath caught in my throat as Wolfe swung me up into his arms, carrying me bride-style toward the building.

"Don't worry, I won't drop you." His deep voice had my pulse fluttering. I had no concern about him dropping me. In fact, I was more troubled that he would have to put me down at all. I could have stayed nestled in his arms all night.

I didn't worry when he was around. If anyone made me feel safe, it was him. Being wrapped up in his strong arms was playing havoc with my already strung out emotions.

"Check the perimeter," Wolfe told the other two as he walked into one of the side rooms made for entertaining. "Senator Michaels, come with me."

He set me down gently on the little sofa and searched every nook and cranny of the room before coming back to

stand before us. “We’re going to stay here until the others get back.”

“Do you think that shooting was meant for us?” I asked, worry turning my blood cold. I felt terrible that we may have put everyone else at the fundraiser in jeopardy. Not that it’d been my choice to go. I’d suggested to Dad that we shouldn’t attend since he’d been getting threatening messages. He’d told me that was impossible and that he had people he needed to speak to.

“Probably not,” Wolfe soothed.

“They have shootings here all the time. It was nothing,” Dad said, his tone abrupt as he looked over at me. He stood up and went over to the cabinet against the wall and poured himself a drink.

Wolfe followed him over and I sighed as I sank back into the couch, trying to relax. I’d been playing a role all night—sophisticated starlet—shining to make my father look good, but these events always wore me down. I jumped when Wolfe knelt next to me again. He pushed a crystal glass into my hands. It had about two fingers of golden liquid inside.

“Drink it,” he said, reading the expression on my face. “It’ll calm your nerves.”

I thought I’d done a damn good job of not showing how much the shooting had shaken me up. Looking down into the glass, I saw the alcohol sloshing against the sides in time with my trembling.

He watched me like a hawk, so I tipped the glass back and let the alcohol burn a path down to my stomach. I coughed into my hand and caught his lips quirking.

He took the glass from me and put it on a table in front of us before standing next to me. Peering at him from the corner of my eye, I could see that he was still tense. He was waiting for some threat to come bursting into the room.

The fact that these men took danger head on like they did was impressive to me. I wasn’t strong, or brave. I just tried to do the smart thing and stay out of the way. I did everything I

could to stay out of dangerous situations. My father's lifestyle had a way of dragging me into them.

This had only happened a few times over my childhood, but it was enough to make me extra cautious. I was overall pretty risk averse. I didn't jump out of planes, or bungee jump. No rock climbing or ocean swimming. Nothing out of character for me. I was pretty boring, but that suited me just fine. All I needed to do was get through this summer and I'd be fine.

Tonight had solidified the decision I'd already made about getting away from a life of politics. *I'm cutting ties with Dad if that's what it takes to be out of this life entirely.*

It didn't matter that he and his parents were the only family I had. Dad's parents always treated me even worse than Dad did. After my mother had died he'd refused to let me see her parents. Maybe that's what I'd do. I'd track them down and see if they were interested in a relationship with their only grandchild. For too long I'd let Dad control what I did.

It was the whiskey talking. I knew I'd likely end up doing everything he asked of me this summer and then continue coming back. Sadly, it wasn't his money that kept me coming back. I hated the people-pleasing part of me that made it difficult to stand up for myself. I could handle the yelling and insults when he got mad, it was when he told me he was disappointed, or worse, that my mother would have been disappointed in me. I knew it was a manipulation. Still, only once I hit my boiling point did I ever try to fight back.

"What's wrong?"

I glanced over and gave Wolfe a puzzled look.

"You were sighing."

"Oh. It's nothing." The inner voice that had been previously hyping me up deflated and shook her head at my answer. Whenever I got back into this environment I felt weak and unappreciated.

Years of childhood training can't be undone in such a short time. I remembered my vow that I'd begin to stand up for

myself and take what I wanted instead of going along with what others insisted I do.

The door swung open and I tensed, waiting to see who was coming through. Kip was frowning when he stepped into the room. I'd seen him without the smile over the last week, but never with a frown. It made my belly churn. It amazed me how easily I could read their moods now.

"Wolfe. Need you for a minute," he called out. His eyes found mine and though I could see worry in his gaze, he gave me a wink. I relaxed a little.

They walked out, speaking quietly together, leaving me and my father alone.

"The way you're behaving with those men is inappropriate."

I turned and gave my father a wide-eyed stare. "Excuse me?" Of all things to talk about right now, this?

His glare darkened. A glance down showed that his hand was gripping his glass so tightly his knuckles were white. "You know what I'm talking about Bailey Marie."

I hated it when he did that. Pulled out the father tone and used both names. As if he gave some kind of shit about me. I stood up, smoothing down my dress and meeting his narrowed eyes.

"I haven't done one damn thing that's inappropriate, Dad. But if that's what you believe then I may as well do the things you're worried about. Why not have some fun if I'm going to suffer through the consequences anyway?"

His mouth tightened into a thin line before he spoke. "Don't even think about it." He downed the rest of his drink.

"Oh. I'm thinking about it," I assured him. "In fact, maybe I'll live out every one of my fantasies...with all three of them." I didn't stick around to listen to the horrified lecture that would result from my words. I strode out of the drawing room and stumbled up the stairs to my room. My hands were back to shaking, but at least I'd held true to my word. I'd stood

up for myself. Hopefully it would eventually become second nature. I was tired of being his doormat.

His furious shouting followed me down the hallway. I was shutting my bedroom door as I heard another crash open downstairs. My father's yelling had drawn our protectors back into the house. They probably thought he was being attacked, but I didn't care to help set the record straight. I needed space and time alone. I wasn't crying because my father was an asshole. Unfortunately, I was all too used to him acting that way.

It'd just been too much stress in one compacted timeframe. The lack of control over my life, the dangerous situation he'd put us in, the feelings growing inside of me for not one, but three men. It was all too much.

I laid down on my bed and cried. It couldn't have been more than thirty minutes before a knock sounded on my door. Wiping my tears away from my face, I called out, "Go away."

The door opened and I glared over my shoulder, only to be met with Wolfe's steadfast stare. Sighing, I flopped back down, burying my face in the comforter. "I'm fine," I said, words muffled.

The bed dipped next to me, but I'd never heard him take a step. How did he move so quietly?

"What happened?"

"It's nothing."

A warm hand came to rest on my back and I sucked in a breath. Feeling his rough fingers on my skin had electric sparks arcing between us. I wondered if he felt it too.

"Nothing doesn't send you running to your room, crying."

"Not crying," I lied.

"Sure. But what happened?"

Rolling over onto my side, I pillowed my head on my arm and stared at him. His hand had slid as I'd moved and now it was anchored on my hip. He didn't lift it, just left it there to torment me.

“It’s stupid.”

“It obviously isn’t.”

I didn’t want him to think I was the brat Jasper had nicknamed me. When his chuckle sounded inside the quiet room I realized I’d said that out loud. My cheeks heated.

“Jas is an asshole,” he said with a shrug. “Love him like a brother, but he’s a dick,” he added when my lips lifted into a smile.

“It was something Dad said,” I told him. The smile slipped off my face. “It was nothing. Stupid.” He looked like he was about to argue, so I continued, “I hate being here. Hate this life.”

He nodded as though he understood. “You don’t ever look like you’re enjoying yourself.”

That surprised me. I know for a fact I faked it well or I’d never hear the end of it from the great Senator Michaels. That meant Wolfe had been paying attention—close attention. The thought warmed me even as he pulled his hand back, as though he just realized it was still on my body.

“Why do you do it, then?”

I sighed inwardly. How could I explain to him—a man who’d probably never feared anything a day in his life—that I was scared? Scared of my father. Scared of failing in what I’ve chosen to do with my life and that this was always a back-up. Scared of standing up for myself and disappointing my father, even though most of the time I hated him. Scared to face that contradiction.

There was no way to make it sound like anything other than ‘I’m a coward’, so I said nothing. Maybe that was it, maybe I was a coward. I stood up, facing away from him. Glancing at him over my shoulder, I gave him a shy smile. “Could you help me with my dress?”

“Help you...” His eyes trailed down my back to where it dipped low enough that a strong wind would bare my butt to the world. The fact that the material clung so tightly over my ass—well, and the double sided tape Carlos had provided—

were the only reason I hadn't had a wardrobe malfunction tonight.

I'd worn the dress to piss off my father—and maybe to catch the eyes of some sexy military men. Okay, primarily to catch the attention of three men, but pissing off Dad was a bonus. Whether I'd known it or not, coming to Colombia was the start of my rebellion. I'd been acting in ways not normal to me. Being attracted to three men at once certainly wasn't like me. And trying to catch their eyes? It was thrilling and sexy even though I knew something like that wasn't possible. The best I could hope would be to end up dating one of them. Not that they were interested in me that way. That didn't mean I couldn't have a little fun.

My father never would have expected it from me, thus his words from earlier. With them ringing in my ears, I decided to push my luck and see if I could have that little fling Amy had mentioned. It wasn't like I had a boyfriend anymore.

The baking book nerd was throwing caution to the wind. Fuck my father. Fuck Ted. Fuck all the responsibilities that were always heaped on my shoulders. I was going to play with fire. And I was going to enjoy it.

Crossing my arms over my chest, I gave him what—I hoped—passed for a seductive smile. “There's a hidden zipper. It's hard for me to reach it.” No it wasn't. I'd gotten dressed alone, but I wasn't going to tell Wolfe that.

He stood up and stared down at my ass. I arched my hips ever so slightly, pushing my ass out. It took everything within me—and biting down hard on my tongue—to keep from taking the request back. Nerves had my pulse racing. I watched his long tanned fingers move forward and find the metal clasp. He tried to just tug the zipper down, but the material wouldn't cooperate. His muttered curse made me smile. He wiped the expression off my face quickly when his other hand came up and palmed my ass.

Theoretically, he was holding the material still so he could pull that pesky zipper down. I didn't miss the slight squeeze he

gave before he let me go. My mouth was dry and my heart was pounding as our gazes clashed.

Turning, I stepped closer to him, my hands holding the sagging material up to my breasts. The double sided tape didn't have a chance against the weight of the dress. If I let go, it would break away and allow the dress to pool at my feet.

There was hunger on Wolfe's face. At least, that's what I hoped that was. This was going to be embarrassing if it was anything else.

I knew that if this were Kip or Jasper, they'd make the first move, but not Wolfe. He was too stalwart and trustworthy. Even if he wanted to take control, he'd never take the first step and be inappropriate. He always put the mission first. I wondered what he'd be like when he let go of that steadfast resolve and discipline he wrapped around himself like a shield. Would I ever see it happen?

If this were Kip or Jasper, I wouldn't have been so brazen. But I knew I was safe with Wolfe. Maybe that's why I needed it to be Wolfe right now, and not the others. It wasn't that I was choosing him over them, but somehow I knew being close to him first meant he would protect me. He wouldn't judge me. Wouldn't be disgusted by my advances. There wasn't the fear of rejection with him. And no one would be allowed to speak badly of me without his interjection. He would shield me, defend me in a way I'd always wanted.

As I watched, the expression on his face intensified. I was as safe as Red Riding Hood with his namesake, if the heat flaring in his eyes was any indication. At the same time, I knew he'd never hurt me. He'd be kind, if not gentle.

My heels gave me the few extra inches of height I needed to be able to pop up onto my tiptoes and press my lips to his. He was frozen for a moment while I explored the softness of his lips. I wouldn't have expected them to feel so good.

Gathering my courage, I let my tongue lick against the seam of his mouth. It was like flicking a switch.

His hand slid into my hair, gripping it at the scalp and he yanked my head backward. I gasped at the stinging sensation and stared at him in shock. His chest heaved as he seemed to battle with himself. Whatever wild creature he contained inside must have won, because with a deep growl he pulled me tight against his body and locked his lips to mine.

Had the word gentle ever come to mind about him? I was so wrong. He was like a man possessed and the only thing that could save him was kissing me until my head spun.

My hands went to his solid shoulders just so that I could keep myself on my feet. His hand in my hair and the other arm he locked around my waist ensured I wasn't going anywhere, but it still felt like I could fly away at any moment. Touching him steadied me.

His hand brushed my naked ass and I realized the dress had fallen between us enough that it was hanging below my thighs. I had a thong on, but it wasn't much of a barrier to this man, or to my own needs. My pussy clenched in excitement as he squeezed my right ass cheek.

My hearty moan was like flicking another switch. He froze, eyes open as he stared at me like he couldn't believe what he was doing. I sort of understood. I couldn't believe I'd started this. Now that I was in the middle of it I was sort of glad I had though.

He released me so fast, I stumbled. His thick arm shot out and caught my bicep to righten me. We both looked down as the dress bared my body to him. I was standing in nothing but a lacy thong.

His swallow was so deep it was almost audible. "If I keep going I'm going to bend you over that desk and fuck you until we break it."

My eyes widened as his filthy words sunk in. Holy... wow. No one had ever spoken to me that way before and I...liked it. Really liked it if my wet panties were any indication. My nipples were hard little beads and it wasn't from the summer air swirling around in this room. He was trying to give me an

out, one last chance to say no. Instead he'd revved me up beyond any ability to say anything, let alone no.

“Then I'm going to lay you down on that bed and eat that sweet cunt until you're screaming.”

My jaw dropped and suddenly that was something I wanted too.

“But you're not ready for that.”

Wait. What?

Why couldn't I say anything? He was backing toward the door all while saying these delicious, dirty things. With one last heated glance he shut the door between us and I stood there shaking like a leaf, more turned on than I'd ever been in my life.

CHAPTER 8



Bailey

Something woke me. I peered around my darkened room. The embassy had gone all out and had given my father and me some of the nicest suites they had. That meant they were huge and ornate.

It'd taken me hours after Wolfe had left to cool down and fall asleep. I tried a cold shower, but I was literally sweating as the cold water pounded over me. I'd never been so hot in my life. I'd lain awake reliving that kiss and the way it'd made my body thrum to life. Ted had never given me the feelings that had appeared earlier tonight. Not even when we'd gone all the way and had sex. I didn't know it until tonight, but sex with Ted had just been...okay. Nothing special, and most of the time I'd never even orgasmed.

Wolfe had set every nerve ending on fire. I had a feeling sex with him would be all consuming. And I really wanted to find out for sure.

The air conditioner kicked on, making me jump. I wasn't sure why I was feeling so ill at ease. Was it because of the shooting from earlier?

Darkness and shadow bathed the room as I tried to figure out what'd pulled me from my dreams. That was until one of those shadows moved.

I bit back a gasp, watching as hard as I could in the blackness. There it was again. I wasn't dreaming. The shadow slunk along the wall near the window. Someone—or something—was in my room. I suppressed a shudder of fear and slowly reached over toward the lamp sitting on the table next to my bed.

Whatever it was must have seen me move because it lunged at me.

A hand grabbed my arm as warm flesh pressed over my mouth, muffling my scream of terror, which meant this was a person. A man. His weight settled over my hips as he straddled me. I honestly wasn't sure what was more scary, the man or a ghost? You couldn't fight ghosts after all.

I started struggling in his hold. He'd have to detain me one handed if he planned to keep me from screaming. I bucked my hips and felt satisfaction crash into me as I dislodged him partially from where he was pinning me to the bed.

It was enough that I was able to slip out from under him. My bare feet hit the slippery hardwood floor and I started to run for the door.

I whirled as I heard the man chasing me down. I wasn't going to make it to the door and I'd rather face him. If he thought I was giving in without a fight, he was mistaken. I'd hit, scratch, bite, claw, whatever it took. I'd never been in a fight before, but I'd promised myself that I wouldn't cower anymore. I was so scared I worried I might pee in the cute little pajama shorts I had on.

His hands grabbed me and I slapped at him, trying to land a hit that would make him let me go. Realizing I was too far out of element to be effective, I opened my mouth to scream bloody murder. I knew the guys would be here within seconds flat.

Stars exploded in the darkness as something connected with my face. I staggered, holding my cheek and gaped at him when I realized he'd hit me with the fucking lamp.

“Asshole,” I gasped at him. He’d only grazed me the first time, misjudging the distance in the darkness.

He was close enough I could see his smug grin. That was right before he brought the lamp down again. I was too stunned and disoriented to dodge the heavy crystal the second time and it collided with the top of my head.

* * *

THE ABRUPT JARRING motion woke me up for a second time that night. It took me a moment to realize that I wasn’t in my warm bed in the embassy. My head throbbed, reminding me of the attack that had taken place. I didn’t move an inch as I listened to the men in the front seat. They were speaking Spanish, not at all concerned with whether I was listening in.

I wasn’t tied up. They probably assumed I’d stay unconscious for the ride, or they just didn’t care if I heard what they said. That sent a chill of fear running down my spine. If they didn’t care it didn’t look too good for me making it out of this alive.

The old me—the one I’d kicked to the curb only hours ago—wanted to curl up in a terrified ball and wait to see what happened. I refused to give in to her. The only way to be courageous was to fake it ‘til I made it. If I pretended to be the strong, kick butt heroines I read about in my romance novels, then maybe one day I would be.

We were in a little Jeep and they had me dumped in the back where the seats had been taken out. There was a door that allowed the back end to open up. Casting them a look, I took a deep breath and lunged for the door.

It opened easily under my hand and pride and excitement flashed through me until gravity caught up and I tumbled out of the speeding vehicle. Slamming into the hard gravel and rolling across it was another wake up call to how serious this was. It happened so quickly I couldn’t even scream and after I hit the ground I had no breath to make a sound. My mouth opened to let the agony pour out, but I was voiceless. I’d

landed on my shoulder and hip and bright lights were flashing across my vision.

Red tail lights joined the white hot sparks of pain and I knew I had to get up or they were going to capture me again. Shoving to my feet—which were still bare—I limped my way to the side of the road. We were far outside of the city and I knew we must have been traveling for hours. Dense jungle surrounded the dirt road we'd been on. I was in my silk pajama shorts and a matching silk blouse top. Not exactly the ideal clothing for a stroll through the rainforest, let alone a mad dash.

Stopping in front of the greenery that would swallow me up with only a few more steps, I hesitated. Wandering into this jungle with bare feet and matching pink silk pajamas with red lipstick kisses on them was going to be a death sentence.

I looked over my shoulder where the Jeep was beginning to reverse. That was also going to be a death sentence, or worse. Steeling my resolve, I rushed forward and let the brush cover me.

* * *

“Ow, ow, ow,” I whispered as I hot footed it over sticks and rocks and brush. I was trying to be as quiet as possible because those men were hot on my heels. I was so proud of myself because I'd managed to stay out of their grasp so far. It was pitch black out here and I'd run into more than one tree as I went, but I was holding my own.

My feet were on fire from all the scratches that now decorated the bottoms of them. I couldn't afford to worry about something like dying from an infection—something that was easy to get out here in the humid jungle air—not when I was more likely to be killed by the men chasing me, or a predator. I was ornery enough that I'd rather be eaten by a jaguar, or bitten by a pit viper, than let those guys chasing me catch me. Though, if I was being given a choice, I'd rather not be killed in any form.

The crashing sounds from behind me were slowly fading away. My heart was hammering in my chest, and my head throbbed in rhythm with it, but all I could hope was to keep ahead of those men. I could hear them calling back and forth to each other in Spanish.

I swallowed, my tongue feeling thick and swollen from my mad dash and the lack of water. It was all I could do to navigate in this oppressive darkness. Holding my hand out, I brought it closer to my face. It was nearly touching the tip of my nose before I saw it.

My harsh panting broke the silence of the forest. The men had fallen quiet, but all the animals and insects weren't making a sound either, which meant they were still close. Or maybe it was because I was here.

Hide. That's my best option. Find a spot to hide until morning.

I'd been standing still as a statue, listening, catching my breath, internally freaking out about being out here. A branch cracked to my left and my head whipped in that direction. Golden eyes blinked at me from the brush.

Oh God. I take it back! I don't want to be eaten by something out here!

I clamped my hands over my mouth to keep from screaming in terror. That wouldn't help me at all and would only alert the men chasing me of my location. My body was shaking so hard it was difficult for me to force my wobbly legs to move.

Standing in one spot, in what I assumed was a small open area, wasn't the best plan. I put one foot in front of the other as carefully as I could. There were snakes, spiders, and scorpions all over this rainforest. Not to mention jaguars, puma, and crocodiles.

And anacondas, my inner voice supplied helpfully. As if a snake that was big enough to devour a person wasn't terrifying enough to make me pee myself.

The leaves rustled as I made my way forward. I had no way of knowing whether I was going north or south, away from civilization or toward it. I wasn't even sure which direction the road was. I wouldn't know until morning, and even then, in the dense jungle, I probably wouldn't know until I came across some kind of landmark or, if I was lucky, the main road.

My foot came down and a branch cracked loudly underneath it. I froze, holding my breath. I'd only been moving for probably fifteen minutes and wading my way through thick brush and darkness meant I hadn't gone very far.

The point was proven by a shout to my right and the sound of something moving toward me through the brush. I spun and started to run away from the men. It seemed like I might be lucky and catch another break when I slammed into something hard. The impact knocked me back on my ass with a grunt.

My heart dropped down into the dirt when I saw a pair of boots in the shadows. My eyes trailed up legs covered in tan material and for a moment hope surged. Had Wolfe, Kip, and Jasper found me?

The man bent down and dashed all positive thoughts from my mind. It was the same man who'd taken me from my room. I didn't have time to react before he yanked me up by my hair.

Scalp screaming, I scrambled to my feet. "Please. Just let me go," I begged. My ego was hidden deep somewhere in my chest and I'd say anything I had to in order to gain my freedom.

The man sneered at me, white teeth flashing in the dark. He didn't bother to respond verbally. His hold on my hair meant I couldn't duck out of the way when he brought his hand around and slapped me across the face.

Gasping, I clutched my cheek as tears welled up in my eyes. That new little piece of me that I was cultivating rose up when the rest of me wanted to cower before him.

"You slap like a bitch."

Okay. It wasn't the smartest idea to antagonize him, but if I didn't do something I was going to shrink down into a ball-sized form of goo and just allow this to happen. I had to resist and all I could do right now was talk.

He snarled in anger and jerked me closer toward him. He whispered awful things in Spanish. What they would do to me. What he planned to do to me once I was dead.

Bile rose in the back of my throat and panic welled in my chest. They were going to kill me. If I was lucky they would rape me only after they killed me. I didn't even know why they'd chosen me, but it didn't matter enough for me to ask. I didn't outwardly respond to him even though I could see him watching me closely.

His rancid breath washed over my face. He had me tugged up against his chest, holding me immobile...except for my legs. "¡Jorge! ¡Vamos!" he called out.

I heard his companion making his way toward me. It was now or never. Taking a shuddering breath and holding, I grabbed his biceps and brought my knee upward as hard as I could.

In the dark, my aim was a little off and it plowed into his inner thigh, but high enough up I grazed his balls.

"Mierda," he grunted, letting go of me and cupping his privates as he collapsed down to his knees.

Giddiness gave me wings as I started to run again. That was stamped out as another yank on my hair made me cry out. He'd stumbled to his feet and grabbed my hair again. Fresh tears poured down my cheeks at the pain. I swore to myself that I'd cut my damn hair as soon as I got out of here... If I ever did.

He reeled me back in, spinning me in his arms. My gasp was the only sound I made as his fist connected squarely with my face and sent me back to sleep.

CHAPTER 9



Wolfe

The door splintered beneath my boot and sent my leg sliding through to the other side. These fucking doors were built sturdy so the rest remained intact. Swearing, I yanked my foot out and reached in through the hole to unlock the door.

I'd been the one who'd been up patrolling, which is why I was fully dressed. Jas had at least pulled his pants on, but Kip was only in his boxer briefs. They'd immediately come to help when I'd called.

"Bailey!" My and Kip's rooms were on either side of hers and Jas's was across the hall and I'd been checking everything out upstairs when I heard a scuffle coming from her room. My heart was in my fucking throat. We'd done everything necessary to keep her safe, yet somehow I knew in my gut something was wrong.

The others were quiet behind me, all laser-sharp focus and anger. We rushed into the room, guns drawn and my mouth pulled into a grim line when I saw the open balcony doors.

Striding over to them, I looked down just in time to see a Jeep disappearing out of the embassy compound.

"Goddamn it!" I roared, slamming my fist into the glass door. Glass tinkled down around me as the window exploded.

Kip raked a hand through his hair and gave me a worried look. “What do we do now? We don’t have any tactical vehicles here. How do we chase after them?”

“What’s all the commotion?”

As one unit we turned and found Senator Michaels standing in the doorway. He was in pajamas and had a frantic look on his face. He’d received a few more death threats since we’d gotten here so I couldn’t blame him for being a bit jumpy.

My eyes narrowed as I studied him. “Someone kidnapped Bailey.”

His eyes widened, his mouth dropping open in horror as he rushed past us. “Out the window? Where is she?”

“Gone,” Jas growled at him, his tone implying that he thought the senator was stupid.

Senator Michaels whirled around and drilled a finger into my chest. “You’re to blame for this! I brought you here to keep us safe and you’ve let my daughter get taken right out from under your nose.”

My teeth ground together as he poked my chest again. His finger digging into my skin, his provoking words, the anger on his face, none of it mattered to me. I was already beating myself up for losing Bailey. She was like a soft little rabbit. She wasn’t made to be out in the world alone. It was my job to protect her and I’d fucking failed.

The senator kept railing at me, yelling about how we were useless and incompetent. It was one thing to insult me, but no one insulted my team. No one.

Grabbing his hand, I twisted until his finger was off me, then I kept going, spinning his body until I had him bent over with his arm in an arm bar. He couldn’t move without me snapping his wrist, elbow, or shoulder. My choice.

“Get your hands off me!”

“Never speak about my brothers that way if you want to fucking live,” I snarled at him.

“Wolfe...” Kip cautioned.

Even Jas looked nervous. It was because they knew me well. There was a reason that I kept myself locked down with layers upon layers of discipline. If I let go of my legendary anger, I’d burn the world down around me. Bailey’s loss plus this sniveling—he actually sounded like he was sobbing—bastard’s words had me teetering on that edge.

We were Marine Force Recon. The team was my life. That didn’t mean I was going to stand here and take abuse from this shit stain. Not when he was the one who brought Bailey here. The one who insisted she make appearances with him—putting her even more into the limelight and in danger.

I released him and watched as he backed up, rubbing his arm. He headed toward the door. “I’m calling the cops, but I expect you to fix your mistake. Find my daughter. Bring her home.” With that, he started walking away.

“Where the fuck are you going?” Kip moved over into the doorway and shouted after him.

“To find someone else who isn’t a fuckup that can help.”

Kip’s lip lifted in disgust, but all he said as he turned was, “Some fucking Marine he must have been.”

I agreed wholeheartedly. The senator was a coward and was heading back to his room instead of stepping up to help us find his daughter. That didn’t matter right now. The only thing that did was finding Bailey.

As if reading my thoughts, Jas met my gaze. “How are we going to find her?”

“The embassy has security footage,” Kip offered.

“Which we don’t have access to,” I muttered. “We aren’t on our usual orders and there’s no way they’ll give it to us.”

“The only way they would give it to us is if he asked for it,” Jas said, motioning the way the Senator had just left. “I’ll go get him to request it.”

“It’ll take too long,” I growled, stopping him in his tracks. “We’ll start looking on our own.”

“Uh, Wolfe, normally I’d agree, but we were sent here to babysit. We don’t have any of our usual supplies,” Kip pointed out. “We’re sort of dead in the water unless you know someone here who can help us out.”

A smile spread over my face. “Doubt they’re here right now,” I said, “but they can help.”

The others gave each other confused looks as I pulled my phone out of my pocket and hit a number and put it on speaker phone.

“Oh my God! Suave! Oooo!”

My brows shot up as the woman screamed out in orgasmic bliss. A grunting sound came over the connection. Kip doubled over, holding his gut as he laughed. Even Jas’s lips twitched in what could have been a smile.

“Please tell me you didn’t just answer our call in the middle of fucking a woman?” I asked.

The heavy breathing from our friend over the line made me shake my head. “Well, I’m not fucking a donkey. What do you want, Wolfe?” Suave grunted.

“I’m going to need you to knock it the fuck off first.”

“Bro,” Suave complained. “I’m fucking close. I’ll come then call you back.” A giggle from whichever woman he’d charmed into his bed sounded.

“It’s important, Suave.”

He grumbled, then the telltale sound of a hand smacking an ass sounded. “Get out.”

“What?” she screeched.

“Just for a few minutes, Baby.”

I chuckled and waited while the line was quiet.

“Alright, she’s gone. What could you possibly need at... shit! It’s two a.m. What’re you calling for?”

“I need your help,” I said, then explained everything.

“Alright. Hang on.” A loud thudding and more cursing floated through the air. “Brando and Weaver are here, too,” Suave announced cheerfully.

“What the fuck is going on?” Brando asked, sounding pissed as hell.

I didn’t want to know how Suave had just woken up his team leader and other teammate. Instead, I quickly explained where we were.

“What do you need, Wolfe?” Brando asked with a yawn.

“Bailey Michaels has been kidnapped. I need you to do your CIA thing,” I told him. “Get us the security footage from the U.S. Embassy here, get us a list of potential kidnappers for this area, look into anyone staying here at the embassy and whether they could have been involved, and get us the toys we need to get her back.”

“Shit, Bailey Michaels?” Suave asked. “She’s one hot piece of-”

“Suave, I’m going to fucking staple your balls to your asshole if you fucking finish that sentence,” I told him. Glancing over, I saw Jas all but vibrating in fury. Kip didn’t look too pleased either. None of us liked him talking badly about our girl.

My brows drew together. I needed to knock that shit off. Over the last few days that’s how I’d started thinking of her. As ours. As if Senator Michaels would ever let his reputation be sullied when the news media found out a team of Marines was fucking his daughter. She could never be ours.

That was one thing about our team that we’d sort of naturally slipped into. If one of us got into a relationship, we all had to agree on it, because we all got into that relationship. It just worked for us. We were gone so damn much that it was hard for us to maintain everything back home. We got called out on missions regularly. So, we’d all started living together, sharing all the common household duties and real life shit once we were state side. That had morphed into sharing a

relationship with a woman when Jas had brought home one we'd all ended up being attracted to.

The relationship was only with the woman—we weren't anything but brothers and teammates amongst ourselves—and she basically got herself three boyfriends. Honestly, with how busy we all were it was more like it took all three of us to equal out to only one boyfriend.

We'd had relationships off and on over the last few years, but our latest had fizzled out a few months ago and we hadn't found anyone worth pursuing since. Until now.

Shoving those thoughts out of my head, I listened back in as Jas and Kip spoke to the others.

“We're going to need some supplies, too,” Jas requested.

“What kind of supplies?” Brando asked, tone wary.

“Rifles. Grenades. Ammo,” Jas listed off.

“A rocket launcher, if you have one,” Kip blurted out with a grin.

“If we have one?” We could all hear the grin in Weaver's tone.

It was true, these CIA guys had some fun fucking toys. We'd know because usually we'd have the choice of all of this shit if we were on a regular mission.

“What the hell did they send you over there with?” Brando asked in disgust.

“Our 1911's,” I told him. We had modified pistols that had been developed for Marine special operations units such as ours. Even with the kickass guns, it wouldn't be enough. Not against the rifles the kidnappers would likely have. “Brandon. Every minute that ticks by while we sit here holding our dicks-”

His sigh was heavy. “There's going to be so much fucking paperwork for this. You have a pen? Paper? Something?”

Kip pulled out his cell and nodded.

“Go ahead,” I told him. Kip noted down the address Brando gave.

“You’ll find everything you need there.”

“Thanks Brando.”

“What about me? I lost out on a great orgasm thanks to you!” Suave yelled from across the room.

I chuckled. “Yeah, appreciate it. All of you.”

“You need help?” Brando asked, his tone serious.

“I’ll let you know. For now, it’s better if we do this alone.”

“Understood. Get to the safe house and pick out your toys. I’ll call you as soon as I have something for you.”

We both hung up and I gave my teammates a nod. “Finish getting dressed. We’re on the road in ten.”

CHAPTER 10



Jas

It only took us five minutes to grab our shit and pile into one of the SUVs the embassy had loaned to Senator Michaels. They weren't tactical vehicles, no armor, no roof hatch, just ordinary SUVs. They would have to do. I glanced up as we rolled out and saw the senator in the window of his daughter's room, on the phone. I don't know what I expected. He wasn't the kind to get his boots dirty. I doubted he'd even done that during his time as a Marine. But the thought of him doing nothing but making calls while his daughter was in danger made me want to wrap my fingers around his neck and squeeze until his eyes were bulging and he stopped breathing.

Pushing thoughts of him out of my mind, I focused on the road in front of us. The stash house Brando and his team had was here in the city. We needed to find it and arm ourselves because knowing the CIA guys, they'd be calling back soon. I wanted to be ready to go crush the fuckers who thought they could come into our place and steal away Bailey. They were going to pay with blood.

We climbed out of the car, guns drawn as we looked around. Just because this was one of Brando's stash houses, didn't mean that someone hadn't found it since the last time he'd left.

After a quick sweep and an all clear, we entered the combo we'd been given and shoved the door open. Kip let out a low whistle as Wolfe flicked the lights on.

“Damn. Brando is prepared-prepared.”

I shook my head at Kip. We were like opposite faces of the same coin. At the core we were the same man. Had the same values. Loved this job. He just happened to be the happy-go-lucky side while I was the pissed off rage side. I'd watched him whistle a tune in the middle of a shoot-out once. As much as I understood him, I also didn't.

“Grab everything we can use,” Wolfe said, snagging a set of keys off the hook on the wall. He placed the SUV's keys on the hook.

“We're leaving the embassy ride? Won't that raise some flags?” I asked.

“I plan to be back—with Bailey—before the embassy realizes it's gone. And it's low key enough that no one in this neighborhood will look twice at it.”

He was right. At least they'd given us a ride without the fucking flags and symbols plastered all over it. It was just a plain black SUV. Hopefully no one would steal it. If they did, we'd deal with that problem once we solved this one.

Moving forward, I picked an AK off the wall and checked it over. Kip looked over as I slid the bolt home, making sure everything worked properly before I slung it over my shoulder.

“All this fun shit to play with and you take the AK?” He gave me a disappointed look.

We often went in under cover and were required to use what the locals used. AK-47s were cheap and plentiful and typically the weapon of choice. While not as accurate at long ranges, the things almost never broke, never jammed, and if the kidnapers were armed, they likely had AK's. That meant I could strip them of their ammo in a fight. A quick and easy way to replenish my own weapon as we went.

“I'm comfortable with it. It'll do the job I need it to,” I explained with a shrug. I'd had the pleasure of shooting most

of the weapons in this room, but when it came to a dangerous situation I wanted the gun I was used to. Consistency was key in staying alive. It was a lot like how there were guys who'd wear the same socks on game day to ensure a win.

Wolfe came back in and we started stuffing everything into duffel bags before tossing them in the back of the Jeep that was sitting out front. I gave it a quick inspection, typical Jeep, roll bar, open sides. But the front dash had armor, and the front windows were bullet proof. It was better than the SUV. As usual, Brandon had pulled through for us. The man had contacts and allies everywhere and I was damn glad to be friends with him and his team.

“Shotgun,” I muttered to Kip, enjoying the way his face fell when he forgot to say it first. He was going to have to ride in the cramped back seat of that tiny box on wheels. The open roof and sides would give more space, except the roll bar would cause him to have to duck to not bang his head on it over every bump.

Wolfe would drive, he always did. As the tallest—and our team leader—that was his prerogative. I was the second tallest and though Kip wasn't short at six-three, it usually meant he got the shit end of the stick.

We loaded up and then sat there, the silence deafening. It was as though we'd just realized we didn't know where to go. This feeling of vulnerability was one I didn't fucking like at all. Knowing that Bailey was out there, alone, scared, maybe hurt, forced me to fight for control. I wanted to rip this country apart looking for her.

She might irritate the shit out of me, but that didn't mean I wanted to see her get hurt. Seeing her face last night when that jack-off ex-boyfriend had called her back had some kind of emotion twisting in my chest.

I was trying to rein in my temper around her now. Granted it'd only been twenty-four hours and for a few of those hours she'd been kidnapped, but it was a work in progress. She just brought out this primal, feral side of me.

Watching her at the party earlier had given me a new perspective of her. I'd have figured the rich, spoiled senator's daughter would have been lapping up all the attention at the charity fundraiser. She'd played the part, just like any dutiful daughter would, but watching her closely I'd realized she was completely miserable the whole night. Well, maybe not when she'd stuck it to her dad about buying us dinner. That was damn hilarious.

We'd pretty much come to the same conclusion about the senator. None of us liked him. His actions from earlier just cemented that feeling. I wondered if we all had come to the same conclusion about the Senator's daughter?

Glancing at my teammates, I saw grim, frustrated looks on their faces. We weren't feeling this way solely because she was part of our mission and had been taken. No. It was easy enough to see that Bailey had gotten to all three of us. We were all reacting to that fact in different ways. I'd been lashing out at her because I knew there was no way we were going to end up with her. It was easier to keep her at arm's length. I was pretty sure Kip was halfway in love with her already and the poor kid was going to be in for a rude awakening when she walked away at the end of this.

The phone ringing cut into my thoughts, and I focused on Brando's words as he spoke.

"Weaver, tell them what you found," he ordered.

"Truck belongs to a Pedro Salazar. He has a place there in town, but I highly doubt he'd bring Bailey there," Weaver said, sounding like he was reading the information. "Nothing else showed up on the search we did for him. Usually this means the truck is stolen."

We all cursed and shifted in our seats. My mind was already racing as I tried to figure out the next course of action.

"Usually, but not this time. Luckily for you we happen to know one of the best when it comes to finding people who don't want to be found," Brando told us.

Relief was white hot as I heard that. “Quit fucking around Brando.”

“Fine, fine. We contacted Zinnia Hart. You’re going to owe her a really nice fucking present by the way. Her men weren’t happy about her getting out of bed this late, especially while she’s eight months pregnant.”

I didn’t know who he was talking about, but Wolfe was nodding as though he did. I’d ask later. Wolfe was the one with all the contacts, he and Kip were good with people. They pretty much only introduced me and then did most of the talking with our different contacts. Brando and his team were among the few that I actually got along with. Though, the way Brando had said Zinnia’s ‘men’ made me wonder if they were the same as us.

Our lifestyle wasn’t typical. None of it was, but especially not our relationships. We just found it easier to share a woman between us rather than try to have three women living in the same space. Maybe one day we wouldn’t live together out of necessity and therefore the sharing would end. Glancing over at the men I considered my brothers, I conceded that it was likely we’d continue our way of life even after we left the military.

Years of routine and habit were going to be hard to break by that point. We just needed to find a woman that could handle all three of us long-term. We were brash, possessive—with anyone who wasn’t one of us—and a lot to deal with on a day to day basis. Most of the women we’d found lasted a year at the most before they called it quits.

“Zinnia managed to track down an abandoned farm deep in the rainforest attached to Salazar. She suspects he’s a low level drug lord and that the farm is actually a headquarters for his operation,” Weaver continued.

“Sounds like a good place to take the kidnapped daughter of a U.S. Senator,” Kip said.

“That’s what we were thinking, too. I just shot you the coordinates over text. Let us know if you end up needing us on

this,” Brando told us. “We’re in between assignments right now and are in Peru.”

“If you don’t give us something to do, Suave is going to run out of women to fuck,” Weaver said with a chuckle.

“Fuck off!” Suave roared from a different part of the room. “Wait, is that possible?”

I laughed at Suave’s question. Worry rang out in every syllable. If anyone could convince all the women in an entire country to sleep with him it’d be Suave. He had his nickname for a reason.

“Thanks Brando. We’ll keep you updated,” Wolfe replied.

“Make sure you grabbed the SAT phone,” Brando added. “You’re going to be out of cell range almost immediately. I have one here. Number’s saved under ‘giant penis’. It’ll auto dial by voice, too.”

Kip snickered in the back seat and I just shook my head, then nodded at Wolfe, letting him know I’d grabbed it.

“We got it. Thanks again. Give Zinnia my best wishes when you talk to her again,” Wolfe said before cutting the connection.

“Kip. Plug that address into the GPS and get us going.” Wolfe tossed his cell into the backseat, then pulled out onto the road.

My eyes scanned the area. It would be my job to handle the security. Anyone who came looking for a fight would be on the receiving end of my AK.

I listened as Kip started giving Wolfe directions. Soon we were bouncing along on a dirt road heading into the rainforest. It felt good to finally be on the move. I just hoped we weren’t going to be too late.

CHAPTER 11



Bailey

Groaning, I slowly peeked my eyes open. Well one of them at least, the other hurt to try. Sunlight filtered through the slatted boards of the building I was in. Looking around, it looked like some kind of tool shed.

The sunlight made my head throb harder, though I wouldn't have guessed that was possible. It'd taken a beating last night, thanks to my captors. Anxiety clawed at my stomach, you'd think that the darkness of the night would be scarier, but the sun just promised a new round of horrors, the kind I could see.

Wiggling my hands, I realized they were tied behind me. My arms and shoulders protested the movement. Being tied up here—likely for hours—had made them start aching.

I shoved up into a seated position and studied the room around me, trying to shove down the fear that was starting to rise. Giving in to it would only ensure that it paralyzed me. My mouth was so dry, I could hardly swallow.

All in all, I was feeling pretty lousy. Closing my good eye, I focused on my breathing.

Stay calm and think. You took a beating last night, true. But you also jumped out of a moving vehicle and ran barefoot through the rainforest. You're not weak. You can think your way through this. How are you going to get out of here?

Bolstering my courage, I opened my eye again and studied the room. There were all sorts of tools in here, but my gaze fell on an ax nearby. My feet were tied with rope as well, but I wasn't anchored to anything.

I laid back down and rolled my way over to the weapon. The dirt and grime covering the floor transferred to my skin and clothes, but hygiene was the least of my worries right now. If I didn't get myself out of this situation, it was going to turn deadly for me.

Best case scenario, my father would pay a ransom for me, but who knew how long that would take? The fact that they had me out here in a shed instead of in a home couldn't be a good sign. A dark spot soaked into the floorboards in a corner of the room caught my attention and I bit my bottom lip.

Please let that be some kind of machine oil and not blood.

Struggling back into a sitting position in front of the ax, I managed to set myself against it so that I could start sawing at the ropes binding my wrists together.

It only took a few minutes to realize this wasn't going to be as easy as I'd thought. "It only takes like a couple of swipes in the movies," I muttered, rubbing my ropes back and forth over the ax blade. "Stupid movies. Gives people unrealistic expectations."

Talking to myself was really the only way to keep my panic at a manageable level. I was a college student who loved to bake. I wasn't really cut out for this. Unfortunately, here I was. I could either sit here and wallow in self-pity and let this happen—something the old me would have probably opted for—or I could take matters into my own hands and do everything I could to escape.

"Persistence, right? Just because your first escape ended with a punch to the face doesn't mean we stop trying." Not that I was eager to feel a set of knuckles slamming into my nose again. That hadn't exactly been fun.

The spaces between the walls of the shed didn't give me much indication of where I was or how long I'd been

unconscious. I wiggled my hands again and felt relief when the ropes shifted a little.

A gasp tore from my lips as the feeling and blood came rushing back into my fingers and they began tingling painfully. Gritting my teeth, I forced myself to move them around until the pins and needles feeling was gone.

Rattling came from the door and my eyes widened as I realized someone was coming inside. It sounded like they were unlocking the doors.

As quickly as I could I rolled myself back over to the spot I'd woken up in, casting a last longing glance over at the ax.

My kidnappers flung open the doors and my focus was pulled to them. It couldn't be a good thing that they were letting me get a good look at their faces. Neither had bothered to cover up. A chill skated down my spine at the hard look in the man's eyes who'd pulled me from my room at the embassy.

"Come with us." He folded muscular arms over his chest as his friend came over and used one of my arms to yank me to my feet.

I gasped as the wrenching pain bolted through me, but I didn't struggle. The last thing I wanted was for them to realize my ropes were hanging on by a thread. "Do you expect me to hop to wherever we're going?" I asked. Giving a pointed look at the ropes around my feet, I met the first man's eyes and arched my brow. He was the leader out of these two men.

He made a vague motion and the man standing next to me used a wicked looking knife to saw through my bonds. He straightened and ran the flat edge over my cheek. The point raked over my skin, but didn't scratch or puncture. "Que piel tan bonita. No puedo esperar a cortarlo en pequeños pedacitos."

I swallowed, terror turning my blood to ice in my veins. He'd just told me that I had beautiful skin and he couldn't wait to cut it into tiny little pieces. My heart was beating against my

chest so hard it was as though it was going to escape this room with or without me.

The man standing near the door let out a frustrated growl. “Basta. Puedes jugar con ella más tarde. No puede sangrar cuando llamamos a su padre.”

I knew in that moment that keeping quiet about knowing Spanish was going to get me more answers than not. He’d just told Crazy Town to stop it. That he could play with me later. A shudder of revulsion and dread rolled through me at the thought of everything he might do if I was left alone with him. My brain focused on his last words. She can’t be bleeding when we call her father. I had to get out of here. It didn’t matter what it took. If I didn’t, I was as good as dead.

Crazy Town shoved me forward, and I stumbled before catching myself. I made sure to tuck my hands as much as possible so that—hopefully—he wouldn’t notice my frayed ropes.

If I tried to escape now, they’d easily catch me. No. I had to go along with them and hope that I had an opportunity later. Find some shoes hopefully. Trying to be as subtle as possible, I looked around as we walked. We were in a large clearing, rainforest surrounding us on all sides.

We were walking toward a house, but there was a huge barn and fields—at least twenty acres—of rows and rows of pot plants.

Oh God. Not only do I now know what they look like, but I know where their marijuana farm is. I’m so dead.

My hands were cold and clammy and it was like I was moving robotically, being marched toward the house and likely my own demise. A quick look at the face of the man in front of me and my head spun.

He glared over his shoulder at me. “Hurry up!” he snapped.

I tried, but everything was whirling around me. I couldn’t pass out. If I did they’d drag me, discover my ropes, and all hope would be lost. Biting down on my tongue so hard blood

filled my mouth, I fought to stay present in the moment and not faint. It worked. The sharp pain from my tongue forced my mind to focus on it rather than entering the house and being shoved into a chair in front of a tripod holding a phone facing me.

I didn't speak. What would I say? There was no point in reasoning with them. A huge body blocked my view of the phone as I heard the unmistakable trilling of a video conference call dialing.

"Hello?"

My eye closed as my father's voice echoed through the room. I didn't know if he could help me or not, but maybe my Marines could? Their faces flashed in my mind and I suddenly missed them, even Jasper.

"Senator Michaels." The smooth voice didn't belong to the two thugs who'd kidnapped me. My eye snapped open and sure enough, I saw them standing out of the way of the video chat. Who was this man then?

"Who-"

"You know who," the man hissed. "I'm going to need you to do me a few favors. That is...if you want to see your daughter alive again."

There was silence for a few moments before my father's angry voice filled the room. "You're blackmailing me?"

Just like Dad, more insulted that they would blackmail him versus being horrified that they took his daughter. The muscles in the man's back flexed beneath his chambray shirt. He was dressed like a rancher, but sounded like the scum of the earth. How had I ended up in this situation?

I listened in as the man requested millions of dollars and for men I didn't know to be released from prison.

"Fine. I'll need time to arrange it all. I'll also need to see that my daughter is unharmed."

I was shocked at how quickly he gave in. *He didn't even try to negotiate. Maybe Dad does love me more than I thought.*

The man stepped to the side and I blinked at the phone. “Dad?”

His face was a mask of rage. It didn’t soften when he spotted me and my bruised face. “Bailey. Are you alright?”

My eye darted over to the men standing against the wall. Crazy Town lifted his knife and mimed slashing it over his own throat. A whimper tore out of my throat, but I nodded and focused back on my dad. “Yeah.” I only hoped he could see the fear in my expression and realize that I wasn’t safe here. The most I could hope was that they’d keep me alive until he finished his task. After that, I’d be coming home in a body bag.

“You’ve seen her,” the newest man said, stepping into view again. “You have twenty-four hours.”

“That’s impossible,” Dad sputtered. “Arranging that here from Colombia in twenty-four hours isn’t feasible.”

My heart sank down so low I was shocked it didn’t melt through the floorboards. He wasn’t going to be able to save me? Was he going to let these men kill me? Was anyone even looking for me? I was so upset that I didn’t even hear the rest of the conversation. They didn’t let me speak to Dad again before hanging up.

Tears pricked at my eyes, but I refused to let them fall. I wouldn’t let these men see me cry. They pulled me out of my seat, pausing at the door when their boss spoke again.

“Make sure she stays alive until he does what we want.”

“And then?”

His grin was pure evil and I had to look away. My fate was sealed with a flash of straight white teeth. Suddenly I didn’t want Dad to pay the ransom. I wanted more time.

I was dragged back to the shed and tossed in like an errant farm animal. At least they left me alone. Despite how thirsty and hungry I was, I didn’t ask for anything. I wanted them gone. If they left me here, I could work on my ropes and hopefully be out of this shed just as the sun was dipping down under the horizon.

* * *

THE LAST RAYS of the sun were fading as I studied the door in front of me. It was locked with a heavy chain and padlock on the outside. I could chop my way out with the ax, but that might be noticed. There was no way I could get out of here quietly.

Walking over, I picked up the ax with two hands, lugging it over to the back corner of the shed. I moved tools out of the way enough that I could squeeze under the bottom shelving back there. Once I was wedged into the corner, I started hitting the ax against the wooden wall. I winced with every hit. I used short strokes and tried to make it as quiet as possible. It was slow going, and I was still making noise, but not a lot and no one came to check on me. Eventually, I carved out enough space that I could squeeze through.

I pushed my body through the hole and took a quick look around. No one was here. They were probably doing whatever end of day chores were required in a place like this. There were animals here too, chickens roamed the yard and I'd heard a mooing coming from the barn as they'd dragged me back and forth. Hopefully the animals and crops needing tending would give me a decent head start.

My feet were bruised, cut, and swollen and I'd sell my entire cookware collection for a pair of sturdy shoes. Since there was nothing here for me and I wasn't stupid enough to go snooping around inside the house, I made a beeline for the forest.

For the second time in two days, I let the brush swallow me. I needed to keep moving. To stop and rest could mean the end for me. Survival was the only thing on my mind right now.

CHAPTER 12



Kip

I glared down at the GPS in my hands. “Four more miles.” It didn’t sound like much, but out here, where the roads weren’t maintained this drive was taking forever. The sun was setting and if we didn’t get to Bailey soon who knew what they’d do to her.

Brando hadn’t had an answer as to why Salazar had kidnapped her, that was for us to figure out. And we would. Once we got her back.

Jas let out a low curse and for once I knew exactly how he felt. Before I could say anything the SAT phone rang. I answered it, automatically putting it on speaker mode. “Yo.”

“Kip.” Brando sounded strained. “I’m patching through a call for you.”

I frowned. “Who the hell is it?”

He didn’t bother responding, instead putting the call through.

“Hello? Hello? Is this damn thing working?”

I rolled my eyes, but answered. “Senator Michaels. What can we do for you?”

“There you are. Where the hell are you and why haven’t I been able to-” the transmission garbled a little, but it wasn’t hard to guess what he was bitching about.

“We’re on our way to rescue Bailey,” I told him, trying to hold onto my patience. Jas was in the front muttering to himself and I didn’t need to listen in to know what he was saying.

“-got a call from the kidnappers.”

That piqued my interest. My eyes met Wolfe’s in the rearview mirror. I motioned for him to slow down, I didn’t want the signal to cut out. “What did they say?”

“They want one million dollars and for a whole list of people to be set free from prison. It’s ridiculous.”

I had to bite my knuckles to keep from raking this man up one side and down the other with my angry words. The fact that he cared so little for his daughter made me want to disembowel him, and I wasn’t even usually the most violent one in our little group. He brought the worst demons out of me.

Wolfe must have seen me struggling because he reached back, searching for the phone. I handed it over and let him talk to the bag of dicks making stupid excuses on the other end of the line. I was done listening.

I stared down at the cursor on the GPS screen and willed it to move faster. By the time Wolfe got off the phone with the senator we were getting close. “Half a mile.”

Wolfe flicked off the lights. The sun would be completely down when we got there. Shifting until I was on my knees, hanging over the back seat, I rummaged around in one of the bags until I found what I was looking for. I handed two pairs of night vision goggles forward.

These were state of the art and had a function that would keep us from being blinded as we fired our weapons. We’d be able to creep around in the dark and hopefully take out our targets before they were able to form a counter attack.

We left the Jeep behind and ran the last quarter of a mile. Given how rough the roads were, they would hear us long before we rolled in. We needed the element of surprise on our side. By the time we made it to a clearing that held a house,

barn, outbuildings and fields of pot, my muscles were loose and limber, ready for the fight ahead.

Gunfire broke the silence of the night and we swore, diving for the sides of the road and whatever cover we could find.

“They must have sensors or cameras,” I shouted over the crack of gunshots splitting the air. I cursed at my own arrogance. I was so hyper focused on Bailey that I assumed that a compound in the middle of the jungle wouldn’t have electricity, let alone security systems. Clearly this was a false assumption and I’d underestimated Salazar.

I plastered myself against a tree and tried to peer around it. Exploding tree bark sent slivers of wood into my cheek as rifle rounds slammed into the tree. I rolled back behind it and glanced over to Jas and Wolfe.

The sun was still up, but just barely. We were in that orange dusk phase of the sunset, where it was too bright for goggles, but getting dark enough to degrade vision. They were close enough, I had no trouble reading the grim expressions they wore.

Wolfe made a series of motions with his hand, followed by a three second countdown, his fingers dropping into his fists. *Three, two, one.* I stepped back from the tree and leaned to the side, firing my rifle into the field. I wasn’t sure where Bailey was, and we couldn’t risk firing into the buildings and hitting her by mistake. But I could make some noise and hopefully distract the shooter. Jas did the same. We fired about ten rounds each before rolling back behind the trees for cover.

I looked back at Wolfe. He held two fingers up. Two shooters. He motioned again, this time toward the house. They were holed up in there. Finally, some luck. With both of them in one building we couldn’t get caught in a crossfire.

Dipping out to the left side of the tree, I ducked low and used the brush to conceal my movements. Wolfe and Jas were laying down suppressive fire as I moved, providing me cover by forcing the shooters to wait out their barrage of bullets. Now that we had a clear target, they could be more precise.

Bailey could still be in the house with them, a hostage and human shield, so we still had to be careful.

If anything happened to her—especially at our hand—we'd never forgive ourselves. They wouldn't fire into the building, which meant there was no way for them to take out the men there waiting for me. I'd be on my own once I got to the house. We just couldn't risk the chance of her being inside. They were just keeping the shooters busy while I made my way over there.

I moved far enough through the brush that I could no longer see the window they were shooting from. That meant they couldn't see me. Hopefully. I grasped my rifle by the fore grip with one hand and made a mad dash across the open clearing. My heart thundered in my ears as I ran. Excitement burned a path through my veins.

I lived for this shit. Not that I wanted Bailey to be in danger. I didn't. But nothing brought me alive quite like the thrill of a good shootout. There was probably something wrong with me, wrong with us. We all dreamed of times like this and looked forward to it. Something about testing your courage and skill against other men who wanted you dead just made you feel fucking alive.

There was a small shed between me and the house. *Run to the shed, use it as cover if need be, then on to my target. To where they were likely keeping my girl. My beauty. If they hurt her, they'd pay for it in ways they can never imagine.*

My legs burned, propelling me across the open ground. I was more of a distance runner, but I could pull together a decent sprint when the need arose. The clearing felt like it was a mile long, though in reality it was probably two or three hundred meters. I closed in on the shed and immediately took a defensive posture on one knee, rifle raised to my shoulder. I scanned the barn as I crept around the side to look at the house.

The last thing I needed was to go barreling past the barn and have some asshole take a shot at me from inside. We'd only spotted two shooters so far, but we didn't know how

many men Salazar actually had out here with him. It could range from a handful to over a dozen. I needed to be careful, otherwise I'd be leaving my brothers one man down while still needing to find her.

Slowly putting one foot in front of the other, I stalked through the barn, quickly clearing it before moving on. I was hopping from building to building, using them as concealment from the men in the house as I cleared them. Once we went inside we needed to know that no one was going to double back on us. No one liked a surprise that nasty. It tended to end with one of us getting shot. We'd had it happen before in the past and always tried to avoid it when possible.

I slammed my back against the side of the shed, looking around the corner to make sure no one had spotted me. The guys were still exchanging occasional shots, but it was like both sides were stalling. The hairs on the back of my neck rose as I wondered what our enemy was waiting on.

The wind picked up right as I was about to move on toward the house and that's when it hit me, Bailey's scent. She always smelled like peaches and cream. Sweet and innocent and it made me want to corrupt her. I sniffed hard, not quite trusting that scent. It was too much to hope that I'd just found her. Then I saw the hole in the wall. They had kept her here, but...the hole? For the second time that day my face got peppered with splinters. I jerked back, dodging the shots. There was a third shooter, positioned in the entrance to the barn. *Where the fuck did he come from?*

There wasn't time for this. Jas and Wolfe didn't have an infinite amount of ammo. Bailey's sweet scent was threatening to completely override my senses. She was close. No way was I letting some cartel shit head slow me down.

I reached into my cargo pocket and grabbed hold of one of Brando's gifts. A flash bang. I was hoping to save it for the house, but right now was more important. This guy had to be taken care of before I could continue on. The sun was still sinking, and darkness had almost fully descended on us, the sun giving one last valiant effort to shed light over the clearing.

Pulling the pin, I stepped away from the wall of the shed, still keeping it between me and the barn. Flash bangs have a four second fuse. I released the spoon, the metal clip that the pin held in place. The fuse was active. *One. Two.*

I lobbed it over the roof toward the barn. *Three. Four.* I closed my eyes for a brief second while I stepped out from cover and began my run toward where I'd thrown the flash bang and where the man was standing. The explosion rocked the ground beneath my boots and a feral grin covered my face when I heard the subsequent stream of curses.

Opening my eyes now that I wasn't in danger of being blinded by my own weapon, I poured on more speed. I was closing in on the barn fast. The need to get there before he recovered was driving me hard.

Shithead was there, rifle on the ground, holding his ears as he stumbled around, disoriented. That was the great thing about a flash bang. Get it within twenty feet of someone and they'll swear they just got blown the fuck up. I'd just tipped the odds completely into my favor with one well-placed throw.

I closed the final few feet and slammed the butt of my rifle into his face. A spray of blood went across the barn wall, painting the wood, and he dropped like a log. His groans were muffled as he held his head. Fucker was bleeding like a stuck pig and still couldn't hear or see very well. Just how I liked my enemies, completely incapacitated.

Pulling my rifle back, I shouldered it and pointed down at the man. Before I could ask where Bailey was I saw that the left side of his head was...missing a big chunk. His skull was cracked open from where my rifle had hit him and I could see exactly what was on his mind. Now that I could see his injury, I was pretty sure that it was his brain matter decorating the wall next to us. The fact that he was still alive was a minor miracle, though he wouldn't be for long.

"Damn," I muttered. It wasn't that I gave a fuck what happened to this piece of shit. It was just that until we found Bailey we needed to take these guys alive. *No time to dwell on it.* The other two were still shooting at the wood line. I left the

guy to bleed out and ran to the house, plastering myself against the wall. I moved purposefully toward the sound of gun fire.

I peered in through a side window. Both of them were leaning against the open window frames on the east wall. I squinted my eyes, looking behind them as far as I could see. No sign of Bailey. Tucking my rifle behind me, I crept around the corner to the first window. The rifle barrel was sticking out.

Like taking candy from a baby. These guys really aren't prepared for us.

They had probably thought the senator would be an easy target and that the Secret Service wouldn't have the skill to mount a rescue like this one. They would have been right, if the senator hadn't insisted on our team being his guards.

I reached out with both hands and grasped the barrel of the gun, giving it a hard pull. It came right out of his hands like a muddied pig slipping out of a rancher's grasp. I dropped the weapon and stood up, reaching through the window before he could move away. Grabbing the man by the throat, I pulled him through the opening.

His scream said it all. He had no idea what was happening, just that it was bad. I dropped him on his head and gave a swift kick to his throat. Not enough to kill him... I hoped. Just enough to make him choke while I took care of his friend. More than enough that he wouldn't have the strength to pick that rifle up and shoot me in the back with it.

"Paco?" I heard the other man call out. I pulled out my knife. Rifles weren't great in close combat, and I didn't actually want to kill the fuckers, so I kept my 1911 holstered. My huge Ka-bar knife would be the best weapon for what I had in mind.

The second man leaned out the window with his rifle. Idiot. Once again, I grabbed the rifle with one hand, and with the other I brought my blade down into his arm. It pierced his skin and continued on all the way through muscle and into the window frame, pinning him there. His scream may as well

have been the all clear sign. I heard Jas and Wolfe running up behind me.

Looking down at his face, I recognized Salazar. Weaver had been nice enough to send over all the information on the man they'd been able to dig up, including a photo. Suave had been kind enough to send a picture of tits.

“Good work,” Wolfe said in a low voice.

“There's one more out by the barn,” I told him. “Likely dead by now.”

“I'll go check,” Jas volunteered.

“Let's find Bailey” Wolfe said, heading for the door to the house.

CHAPTER 13



Wolfe

I kicked open the door to the house and made a quick sweep of the inside. “Bailey!” I shouted. There was no response. Jas dragged Salazar’s partner into the room and zip tied his hands behind his back and his feet together. It had only taken him a few minutes to determine that the man by the barn was dead. He’d left him where he was and came back to us.

I looked over at Salazar in time to see Kip wrench his Kabar out of the man’s arm and shove him back through the window. Salazar’s scream was the first of what promised to be many. Grabbing him by his wounded arm, I made sure to squeeze extra hard as I dragged him into the next room. Jas proceeded to zip tie Salazar’s hands and legs to a chair.

The first man glared at us as we entered. Anger and a spark of madness was easy enough to detect in his gaze, but he kept his mouth shut as we tied him to his own chair.

Like a good little dog following his master’s orders.

The guy’s attitude didn’t surprise me. Men who lived life outside of the law tended to get a little drunk on power. Shit, we were opposite sides of the same coin. We followed orders, but did what was necessary in the moment. Most of our kills just ended up being sanctioned and excused. We did it for the overall good. Assholes like this? They did it to line their pockets.

The main difference between us, however, was the choices we made. The three of us had decided to work on behalf of our government instead of against it. In some alternate reality, it was possible we might have ended up working for some scumbag slumlord. The ability to hand out a death sentence was inside of us. We were just as dangerous as the men sitting on chairs in front of us. More so right now, since we had the upper hand.

“Where is she?” I asked.

“Fuck off, pendejo,” Salazar snarled.

“We don’t have time for these games.” I drew my own Ka-bar and walked over to his partner. I stuck the tip of the blade into his left eye. His scream was loud enough to send the jungle into a frenzy. The sound of monkeys echoing the harsh bellowing of the man under my blade made it sound like they were in the backyard rather than in the trees surrounding the clearing.

My blank gaze landed on Salazar. Nothing I did in here mattered to me. The only thing that made any difference was finding Bailey. I wouldn’t mourn the deaths of these men. Their torture wouldn’t keep me up at night. They’d made the mistake of touching what belonged to me. For that, they’d pay in blood. “Where. Is. She?” I punctuated each word with the twist of my knife.

“Dios Mio! You fuckers are insane!

I withdrew the blade and brought it to the man’s right eye. “There are plenty of places to stab him before he’ll die of blood loss. Then it’ll be your turn. Take comfort in knowing that everything I do to him, I will do to you even slower.”

The half blind man broke like shattered glass. “She’s gone! She’s gone!”

“What do you mean she’s gone?” My words were measured and cool. A whirlwind of emotion threatened to take over when he said ‘gone’. Gone as in sold? Gone as in...not alive? I couldn’t bring myself to say the words. A cold sweat broke out on my brow as I waited for the answer.

I moved the knife away from his eye and placed it under his chin. I turned the blade so that the tip was pressing against his gullet and put just enough pressure to move his head up. He looked at me with his remaining eye, whimpering desperately. Blood ran down his cheek as he fought for words. “She...She...”

“¡Silencio, Paco!” Salazar screamed.

They were sitting side by side, so I barely had to reach when I brought my knife hand across Salazar’s face, slicing him from forehead to lip. It was a shallow wound, but enough to have blood pouring from it. He hissed in pain. A small bit of satisfaction warmed me. When it came down to it, once we found out Bailey’s location, we’d be done here. Which meant they’d get the quick deaths they were probably praying for. Or at least Paco was. Salazar still seemed to be under the impression someone was going to save him. He was wrong.

“Paco,” I said with a toothy smile, turning back to the man who was being more forthcoming. “Paco, mi amigo, what do you mean she’s gone?” I knelt down so I was eye level with him. I placed my hand on his shoulder and gave it a sympathetic squeeze.

See buddy, we’re all friends. You can trust the man that plucked your eye out.

“She...she ran off. Into the rainforest. We were getting ready to go after her when you showed up. We saw her on the camera. She ran east.”

“Is that all you know?”

“¡Si! ¡Si! Yes, that’s all.”

“Thank you, Paco.” I jabbed my knife into his chest. He looked down at the hilt, blinking at it as though in a daze. His body was quickly shutting down, preventing him from reacting more than that. I’d aimed for his heart. It was kinder than he deserved, I was sure of that, but he’d held up his end of the deal. I was a man of my word, even if the agreement hadn’t been spoken out loud. Plus, we were short on time. His head

slumped forward as the life faded from his body. It had only taken seconds.

Salazar was another matter. Not only had he refused to give us the information we wanted, but he was currently struggling in his bonds.

“Kip, you head back to the Jeep and bring it back. Jas, go search the wood line to the east and see if you can pick up her trail.” They both nodded and ran off.

I stepped in front of Salazar. Despite his cut and bloodied face, he had rallied and now had that look of arrogant defiance. He really thought he was going to get through this. I was impressed. It takes a special kind of arrogance to think that way. It meant breaking him would be so much more satisfying.

Keeping my expression blank, I stared down at him. I'd nearly dropped to my knees with relief when Paco had said that Bailey was not only alive, but had managed to escape. I didn't have the luxury of giving in to the emotion. Not until we found her. Then I could revel in it. I let the cold seep in, the thing that slithered around inside of me whenever I needed to do something unpleasant, but necessary.

“Why did you take her?”

“Money,” he sneered. He was doing his best to bolster his false bravado, but he was beginning to tremble. Blood pouring down your face had a tendency to bring one to reality. He was facing his death and, whether he wanted to believe it or not, today was his last day. His last hour. He decided to go all in. “The Senator's daughter is worth big money on the open market. I could sell her to a dozen cartel or terrorist networks to be ransomed. I could sell her to...other markets, pretty as she is. Some men have a fetish for politicians' children.”

My temper broke at the thought of her being sold off as a sex worker. No one would ever fucking touch her that way again. No one except us. I brought my fist around in a haymaker and caught his jaw hard enough to send teeth flying out of his mouth.

The bastard just laughed. It was the laugh of a maniacal fucker. The laugh of a dead man determined to have the last word. “Such pretty hair, so long. I bet you could wrap your hand around two or three times, really get a good grip on the little bitch!”

In the far recesses of my mind, the tiny, rational piece was screaming at me to stop. That he had more information, not to kill him yet. He might have other partners, moles in the embassy, a buyer already lined up. I needed that info. *I need his blood more.* That rational bit was locked up, silenced by my insatiable rage and the untouchable coldness. He had insulted Bailey, disrespected her to a point beyond reproach.

He sat there, swaying on the chair, with blood covering his face, mouth wide open in laughter. It was like the fear had flipped a switch inside him and he’d lost his ever loving mind.

I shoved both my hands into his mouth, pushing down with one hand and pulling up with the other. The screams were overridden by the cracking and tearing as I literally ripped his jaw off. I grabbed his head with both hands, and with a twisting and pulling motion I spun his head around until it was pointing at his back, completely breaking his neck.

I stepped away from his limp and lifeless corpse and walked outside. My chest rose and fell with deep pants as I fought to get myself under control. This was what happened when I lost my temper. My enemies weren’t safe. It didn’t matter if they had a part to continue playing, I’d end them, and would later refuse to feel bad about it.

An explosion brought me out of my trance-like state and back to the real world. There was smoke coming from the direction of the Jeep. I was at a dead run. A new fear thundered inside my chest. I didn’t know what had caused the explosion, but Kip could be hurt.

* * *

POUNDING my way through the rainforest, I came to a skidding stop at the tree line and searched. Seeing Kip sitting on a

stump nearby, I sighed in relief and stepped out onto the road. I'd come through the trees in case more of Salazar's men had shown up. The last thing I wanted was to run directly into an ambush. I stopped next to him and we stared at the pile of wreckage and fire. The Jeep had been obliterated.

Despite what had happened, Kip only looked mildly perturbed. Typical of him. It took a lot to get under his skin. "Figured you'd get here quick enough. No need to run back and tell you that our ride is toast."

"You okay? What happened?"

"I'm fine. Just as I was getting close my spidey sense went off. That guy I killed in the barn, he jumped me after I'd swept the barn. I realized that he might have come from the forest. I did a sweep of the Jeep and found a tripwire. Had no way to disarm it and couldn't run the risk of one of you guys, or Bailey, running up on the Jeep, so I just blew it in place."

I ground my teeth together at the setback. "You made the right call. Bailey is out here somewhere, she escaped from them. She might have found the Jeep and tried to take it."

We both turned toward a noise that could only be described as a charging rhino. Jas plowed his way through the jungle and stopped when he saw us. He did a quick survey of us and the Jeep. Typical Jas. No need to ask questions. The Jeep was on fire; we were both alive. That's all the info he needed. "If you two are done fucking around, I found her trail."

CHAPTER 14



Bailey

Chest heaving, I froze and listened to the sounds echoing through the darkness. The sun wasn't completely down, but here, under the canopy of the forest, it was already dark. It was gunfire. Had they discovered I was gone? If they had, why were they shooting?

The sounds weren't close enough for them to be anywhere near me. It didn't matter. "Keep going, Bailey. Standing around is how the idiots in movies get caught," I whispered, turning and continuing my limping jog through the woods.

My feet, head, tongue, and face were all killing me. There probably wasn't a spot on my body that wasn't battered and bruised at this point, but Crazy Town had given me a damn good reason to keep pushing through the pain and exhaustion. No way was I letting that creep get his hands on me.

Knowing what he'd do to me as soon as his boss gave him the green light, had me swiping foliage out of my way as I waded through the forest. Bugs hummed and animals rustled the leaves, but it was almost like I belonged out here. The girl who was lost was a part of the environment, if only for a while.

God, please let it be temporary. I didn't have it in me to be a modern day Tarzan.

The gun shots began fading as I kept moving, so I allowed myself to slow down to a walk. More of a limp really, but as long as I was placing one foot in front of the other I wasn't going to be too hard on myself.

My muscles were starting to relax with the hope that maybe they hadn't found my trail and weren't following me when a deafening boom split the air.

I couldn't help myself, I screamed. Slapping a hand over my mouth, I muffled the sound and ducked down by a tree. My eyes scanned around in a circle, but the brush was too thick for me to see what had happened. The explosion had been far enough away that I was hopeful no one had heard me cry out. I didn't want to give away my location.

I hesitated for just a second. What if the gunshots and explosions were from my Marines? What if they were coming for me? What if the explosion had hurt them? I shook it off. Maybe it was them, but it could just as easily be a rival cartel. If it was my Marines, they could handle themselves. A barefoot, half-starved, half beaten baker wasn't going to help them. Best that I keep moving and get out of danger, so I could be in a place where rescuers could safely help me.

Knowing that my captors were out there was all I needed to keep pushing my body. It didn't matter that I was on the brink of collapse. I had to go. It was that or death. Whirling, I pointed away from the area the explosion had come from and ran.

* * *

EVERYTHING WAS dark and quiet and I had no idea how long I'd been on the move. It felt like forever, time trudging by like a long line of ants over the ground. Slow and steady. I let my exhausted body collapse down near the foot of a tree, using a huge exposed root as a resting spot for my head. The moss and other debris on the rainforest floor supported my body and felt like the softest mattress topper I'd ever slept on.

My eyes fluttered closed. There hadn't been any more noise for quite some time and if I didn't rest I wasn't going to be of any use. It wasn't safe to sleep here. I knew that. My brain kept screaming it at me, but my body was done. Worn out.

I don't know how long I slept. All I knew was it wasn't long enough. I dragged my gritty eyes—well, eye—open. It felt like I'd only been here minutes, but something had woken me.

The cry of some predatory cat sounded in the darkness, but it wasn't close. Was that what had woken me? I held still, barely breathing as I listened. My instincts—while certainly not cultivated for this kind of thing, but had shown up to the best of their ability—were tingling, telling me something was wrong. There was a lot of noise in the distance, but no noise close to me. Something, or someone, was near. Nothing else would have disrupted my exhausted slumber.

A shuffling noise came from directly in front of me and my eyes widened. That was what had pulled me from my fitful doze. Slowly, I crawled to my feet, every muscle weeping as I stared into the shadows surrounding my tree. I couldn't see much. One of my eyes was swollen nearly shut and it was so dark out here, away from the city lights. The moon and stars were blocked by the thick trees overhead.

There it was again. The noise finally registered in my foggy brain. Someone was moving through the brush. They were quiet about it, but it was impossible to be silent out here. There was just too much foliage not to keep some of it from giving you away.

I was too tired for this, but I'd rather my heart gave out on the chase than just waiting here ready to be picked off. I didn't want to die, so I'd keep running. I turned for what felt like the hundredth time in forty-eight hours and sprinted off into the brush.

It was imperative that I went as fast as I could. I was far smaller than my captors. If I could use whatever speed advantage I might have, I had a hope of getting away. My bare

feet weren't a hindrance while adrenaline spurred me on, going as fast as I dared in the low light available. Even without the adrenaline, they were pretty numb thanks to all the walking.

A shout rang out as they heard me crashing through the brush, away from them. I kept moving, too scared to stop. My heart double-timed it in my chest when I heard them coming after me.

How were they moving so fast? It felt like I was being hunted. Making a split second decision, I changed my course and darted off to the side, hoping to throw them off my trail.

It gave me only moments before I heard the heavy footfalls behind me. A man's heavy breathing was soon distinguishable even with the blood pounding in my ears. It felt like he was breathing down my neck.

A body slammed into me from behind, sending us sprawling to the dirt. I fought with every ounce of strength I had left. I'd somehow landed on top of the man, but as I raked my nails over the exposed skin on his neck he cursed and rolled me beneath him.

Hands captured my wrists, pinning them to the ground above my head and a heavy leg was flung over mine, keeping them still. Even with my vision adjusted to the darkness, I couldn't see more than a shape of the man looming above me.

"If you do this I'll come back and haunt you every day until you die," I snarled at him. Everything had come to a head inside of me and I was like a feral animal, ready to fight to the death. Terror clutched at me, fear rising that it was Crazy Town lying on top of me and he was going to slice me from limb to limb with that awful knife of his.

A deep chuckle sounded and then my heart stopped in my chest. "You're such a little brat."

Holding my breath, my brain froze. Could I dare to hope? "Jasper?" I choked out.

"Yeah, Little One. It's me."

Sobs tore out of my chest as he released my hands and rolled over until I was cuddled close to his wide chest. The scent of the ocean rolled over me as I buried my face in his neck and cried. I wished I could be stoic about my rescue, but I'd been terrified out of my mind over the last almost twenty-four hours and there was no holding back. Wrapped in his warm arms, I knew one thing for sure. I was safe. Somehow they'd found me. The relief was overwhelming and it didn't matter that I was lying in the arms of a man who hated me, I took comfort in him.

He let me cry it out and it wasn't until I was reduced to hiccups that he finally shifted me until he was sitting up and I was sitting sideways in his lap. I wiped my arm over my cheeks, wiping the wetness from my skin. I didn't even want to think about how dirty I must be after running around out in the wilderness and sleeping in the dirt.

"Why are you being so nice to me?" I finally asked in a soft voice. The last thing I wanted to do was start a fight, but I needed to know.

His breath gusted over me, moving my hair with the force of it. "You seriously think I'd be anything other than nice right now?" He didn't snap at me. In fact, he sounded tired.

"You hate me," I responded, voice trembling a little. I hated my weakness, but was willing to give myself a break. I'd just been through hell. Even as I said the words, I snuggled closer. He was putting off warmth like my very own space heater and the night had cooled enough that I was cold.

He was quiet for so long I didn't think he was going to respond. His chest vibrated against my ear when he did. "I don't hate you."

"You called me a brat."

"At first I thought you were. Then I started watching you and seeing who you truly were. You're kind to everyone--"

"Except you." My chest warmed at his praise.

He chuckled and brushed a hand over the back of my head. "Except me," he agreed. "Though I deserved it."

“Why?” I didn’t need to expand on that. He knew I was asking why he’d been treating me so terribly if he didn’t dislike me. This wasn’t the time or place for this talk, but I needed it. All the fear, all the terror that I had been repressing was coming out now. If I didn’t have this talk now, I might never stop crying.

“You make me fucking ache, Little One.”

My eyes widened and I glanced down.

He must have felt me shift in his lap because he laughed again. “Not there. Well...yeah there, too, but I meant here.” He cupped the side of my head and pulled me against his chest.

His heart thundered in my ear and I blinked back tears. That had to be the nicest, most romantic thing anyone had ever said to me before. “I kissed Wolfe,” I blurted out, then mentally smacked myself in the forehead. Why was I so awkward around hot guys?

He barked out a surprised laugh, making me jump in his arms. I pulled back and peered into his face.

“He never mentioned that.” There was an accusatory note in his words, but he was smiling.

“You’re not mad?”

“There’s a lot you don’t know about us, Bailey.”

“Like what?” I countered.

He hesitated. “That’s a talk for another time, not while you’re freezing to death out here.”

I fisted my fingers in his shirt, the material soft beneath my fingers. If we got up from here that meant this was over and he might go back to being a dickhead to me. “Tell me one thing I don’t know about you.”

We were sitting so close I saw the predatory flash in his gaze. “You don’t know how much I want to release you right now and send you running off into the forest again.”

My brows pulled together, a frown forming on my face.

One corner of his mouth kicked up at my confusion. He explained, "That way, when you run from us this time, you'll know it's us chasing you. Fearing for your life won't be a worry in your mind, but you'll be scared just the same. You'll know that when one of us catches you...it'll be the most intense pleasure you've ever had."

I blinked at him, mouth hanging open. It sort of sounded... delicious...and forbidden. "I think I want that," I whispered.

"I'm sure you do, Little Bunny. When you're ready."

I yelped when the second deep voice came from somewhere nearby. Turning on Jasper's lap, I peered into the darkness and found Wolfe leaning against a tree, watching us. Kip sat nearby.

The moon must be rising in the night sky, because the forest around us was a little bit lighter. It was a little easier to see them, though not by much.

My mind was on overdrive now that they were here. It was easy to ignore their nicknames for me, to excuse them away. We were all just feeling relief to be together again.

"So do we," Kip told me, echoing my expressed desire from before, his white teeth flashing in the dark.

"But not while you're like this," Jasper said, though he pulled me back further into his embrace. His chest met my back and my ass pressed against something hard and thick. My eyes widened again and I looked over my shoulder at him. "Please tell me that's your flashlight."

Kip's laughter echoed around us and I cringed, eyes darting around to make sure my captors weren't going to jump out.

Wolfe must have noticed my unease because he walked forward and squatted in front of me. His large hand wrapped around my chin and forced my face toward him until I was staring into his warm brown eyes.

To have Jasper at my back while Wolfe's lips were so close to mine, all while Kip watched? A delicious tremble pulsed

inside my core. What was wrong with me? I couldn't be thinking of all three of them like this. I certainly shouldn't be.

“They're dead.”

I focused back on Wolfe. “Wha-”

“The men who took you,” Jasper snarled behind me.

“You killed them?” I whispered, not really shocked, but needing to know. It was going to be hard enough to sleep after this, but not knowing what had happened would keep me awake for the rest of my life. If they were dead, they couldn't come after me again. I didn't care if that made me an awful person—wishing for the deaths of those men—it was what I needed to move on from this.

“No one touches what's ours and lives,” Wolfe said, by way of acknowledgment of my question and in explanation.

“Wish I could go back and do it again,” Kip added.

My eyes darted over to him. He'd moved closer to our little circle, completing it. *Nobody touches what's ours? Was that me? Did I belong to them now?* Why did it feel so right to have them near? I licked my lips before speaking. “Thank you.” I was too emotionally raw to make it a more eloquent statement.

They seemed to understand that because all I got was a grunt from Wolfe before he pulled me out of Jasper's arms and swung me up into his own. “Let's get going. It's going to be a long way back to the embassy.”

Relaxing in Wolfe's arms, I laid my head on his chest and let myself fall asleep while they walked. I was safe. With them nearby no one could get to me.

CHAPTER 15



Jas

“*B*rando said it should be around here somewhere.”
Right as the words came out, I saw the pitched roof of a building rising up over the brush. “There.”

We made our way inside. The building had seen better days, but it had four walls and a roof, so it would do for now. I turned the knob on a kerosene lamp inside the door and the small place lit up. The inside actually looked a lot better than the outside, probably by design so no one messed with Brando’s safe house. I wondered if there was a school of architecture that specialized in state of the art buildings that looked like run down shit holes. We were so close to Salazar’s compound, no way this thing was here by coincidence. Someone at the agency had been watching Salazar. Not that it would matter now. We’d taken care of that little problem.

There was a bed in the corner and it actually didn’t look too dusty. Wolfe placed Bailey gently on top of the blanket. She curled into herself, but stayed sleeping.

“You stay with her,” Wolfe told me. “We’re going back to the farm to see if any of those vehicles are salvageable.”

“I still can’t believe that asshole blew up the fucking Jeep.” I shook my head.

“He thought he could take us on and win,” Kip said with a malicious grin. “He was wrong. They all were”

“We’ll figure something out. We can’t walk all the way back to the city,” Wolfe said. “In the meantime, watch over her.”

We all turned and looked at her. She’d seen better days. There were bruises and cuts marring her soft skin. I had a feeling there wouldn’t be an inch that didn’t have some kind of wound. Her feet had taken the brunt of the damage, though. She’d been running through the rainforest with no shoes.

Pride in her resolve to escape was like a live wire inside of me. She was stronger than I ever gave her credit for. “I will.”

They searched through the cabinets in the tiny kitchen area, seeing if there was anything that would help. That asshole had blown up all our supplies along with the Jeep.

Wolfe grabbed a couple of flashlights and they headed out. I went to the sink and turned on the water. My brows shot up when clear water started flowing. I wouldn’t trust it enough to drink it, but it would let me clean the bedraggled woman sleeping like the dead in the corner. She’d earned her rest, but I needed to clean her cuts and scrapes before they got infected.

Rummaging through the cabinets, I found a large bowl and a cloth. Filling the bowl with water, I brought it over to the bed. I studied her face, anger raging within me at the black eye that had swollen her eye shut. Those assholes had hit her. Kip was right, I wished we could go back and kill them all over again. Had I known then what they did to her, I would have taken my time killing them.

I rolled her onto her back, my lips twitching when she let out a little snore. She was beyond exhausted. My fingers went to the little snaps holding her silky blouse closed and opened them. It didn’t take me long to maneuver her around and strip it, her little shorts, and panties off.

Swallowing hard, I tried to ignore the fact that she was completely naked in front of me, but that was impossible. Her tits were perky and full, perfect handfuls. My eyes raked over her flat stomach down to the juncture of her thighs. I swore as my cock hardened painfully behind my zipper. She was going to be the death of me.

Picking up the cloth, I squeezed the excess water from it before swiping it gently over her skin. She murmured, her brows pulling down in a frown at the touch of the cold water. When I kept going she batted at me with her hands and tried to roll.

I placed one hand on her hip, holding her still so I could wash her. She huffed, but settled down so I could complete my task. Not one inch of her skin was safe from my ministrations. I cleaned her fully, being extra careful with her tender feet.

It'd taken multiple bowls of water to clean the dirt from her skin, but she was finally fresh and clean. Toeing off my boots, then shucking my own clothes, I used the cloth to wipe myself down. It would be a while before the others got back and I wouldn't mind a quick nap.

I locked the door and propped a chair against the handle. It would be enough of a delay against any intruders for me to get up and be ready to fight. I grabbed my 1911 from its holster and walked—naked—back to the bed where Bailey was sleeping. I managed to tug the blanket out from under her and draped it over us as I laid down beside her.

Pulling her so that her back and ass were flush against my own body, I set the gun nearby in case I needed it and let myself listen to her soft breathing until I fell asleep.

* * *

I ONLY DOZED, hyper vigilant of every sound and possible threat that could find our safe spot. My arm was draped over Bailey's hip as I woke up from my little cat nap. My eyes opened and I looked down at her. She looked so fucking innocent sleeping there. She was also incredibly beautiful. Her full lips were parted and I could imagine sliding my dick between them.

My hard-on pressed between her ass cheeks and I couldn't resist grinding my hips against her, sliding my dick along her skin. I hadn't allowed myself to touch her inappropriately earlier because I'd been bathing her to ensure she didn't get

sick. The caretaker was gone. Only the predator in me remained. She was my prey, and it was time.

I couldn't seem to help myself. I raised my hand and cupped her breast, squeezing my fingers around her soft flesh. She moaned in her sleep, only driving me forward. I was a bastard. I knew I shouldn't be touching her while she was sleeping, but I'd been denying my feelings for her for too long. From the minute she'd stepped off that plane, I'd wanted to do this. To touch her and hear the screams of pleasure I knew I could drag from her mouth.

I tweaked her nipple, enjoying the little mewling sound she made. Glancing at her face, I saw that she was still asleep. It made me wonder if she was dreaming about this as I did it? Had I invaded her mind like I wanted to conquer her body?

Moving downward, I rolled her until she was lying on her back. I flipped the blanket away and let my gaze roam over her. Even scraped up she was so fucking beautiful. Her battle scars only turned me on more.

Crouching between her splayed thighs, I leaned forward and closed my lips over one raspberry shaded nipple. She tasted like the sweetest dessert and I was fucking starving.

Raking my teeth over the tender peak, I released it after laving it once with my tongue. There was somewhere else I wanted to taste even more. Watching the frown play over her features as she slept, I laid down between her silky thighs.

I didn't bother to go slow and I certainly wasn't going to wake her up and ask permission. There was nothing to ask, she was mine. Ours. She just didn't know it yet, but she was about to. My mouth closed over her clit and I sucked, one long hard draw on her sensitive flesh.

Her gasp was loud in the room, but I watched her closely. Her head moved back and forth sluggishly as I circled my tongue over her tender little bud. She was feeling every ounce of pleasure I was wringing from her body, but she wasn't fully awake.

I wanted to make her feel good. As much as I wanted to sink my dick into her welcoming body, I wasn't going to. She was too banged up. The last thing I wanted was to cause her more pain. My tongue dropped down, lapping up the juices that had started flowing out of her pussy. I could eat this delicious little cunt all night and still never have enough of her.

Getting into it now, I took turns dipping my tongue inside her pussy, then swiping it back up to torment her clit. Soon enough her body was trembling and her legs had closed on my head like a vise.

Hands yanked on my hair and I looked up into her shocked expression. Her lips were wet and parted and though one eye was swollen shut she was gorgeous. "You taste so fucking good," I growled.

One eye widened and a groan erupted from between her lips as I flicked her clit hard with my tongue and sank a finger into her pussy. She clenched down on me and I wished it was my cock feeling her pussy spasm.

"Jasper," she gasped, head dropping back. "What are you doing?"

I'd never liked the sound of my name before, but now I just wanted to make her scream it. Make her come so hard she startled all the animals nearby with her cries.

"Eating breakfast and I'm not stopping," I rumbled against her flesh, not bothering to lift my head while I spoke.

She looked torn between anger and pleasure. I could see part of her ready to scold me, but ultimately pleasure won out. "Please," she whimpered. Her hips arched, pressing her pussy harder against my face. "Don't. Please don't stop."

My grin was fast and sharp. My little brat was a wild one. When she'd been drunk I'd peeked at the books she liked to read. I couldn't wait to unlock all the dirty little secrets she fantasized about. We'd explore every one of them down to every last, filthy detail.

She was rhythmically squeezing my finger with her sopping wet cunt and rolling her hips.

“You going to come for me, Bailey?”

Her moan took on a desperate note.

“You are,” I told her. Stopping to flick her clit again, I lifted my head and watched the bliss cross her face. “You’re going to come on my fingers and my tongue like a good little girl. Now,” I told her, slapping my hand against her pussy. It wasn’t a very hard hit, there was no leverage for that. Plus, I didn’t want to hurt her, just surprise her.

It worked. Her eye popped open and her mouth formed a perfect little o, as the sensation of my fingers hitting her wet flesh drove home the pleasure spearing through her. I dropped my head and drew her clit back into my mouth, sucking hard, forcing her over that edge. I speared a second finger inside of her tight passage as she came.

Her scream echoed around the room and I got my wish. It was my name on her lips, cracking through the air as she orgasmed.

I worked her body, pulling every last ounce of rapture from her until she was limp and drained below me. Sliding my tongue over her, I cleaned up the wetness coating her thighs and pussy, enjoying the fruits of my labor.

She was too tired to stop me, though there was shock there in her one pretty green eye. The other was black and blue and it was likely she’d have that shiner for a few days at least.

Finally done, I crawled up her body and gathered her against me, pressing her nose into my chest.

“What about you?” she asked softly, sleep quickly tugging at her.

I chuckled. “Some other time, Little One. Sleep.”

She was out before the order was past my lips. I tucked her in closer, enjoying the press of her body against mine.

CHAPTER 16



Bailey

Men's voices roused me from my sleep. My heart started pounding in my chest and fear clawed at my throat. Had it all been a dream? Was I still lying on the floor of that shed, waiting to be sliced up by a psychopath?

“Hey there, Beauty. You're alright. Wake up.”

Lips brushed over my head and my eyes—well one of them, the other ached badly and stayed closed—popped open. The others had stopped talking and I realized it was Wolfe and Jasper.

Kip was lying behind me on the bed, arm wrapped around my waist. He'd been the one to wake me.

As soon as my gaze landed on Jasper, heat flared across my cheeks and my pussy clenched. If escaping my captors wasn't a dream, it meant that waking up to his wicked face grinning at me from between my thighs probably wasn't either.

Despite the aches and pains, there was a sated feeling as well. *Oh God.* He'd buried his face in my pussy and gave me the strongest orgasm I'd ever had. Ted certainly hadn't ever wrung that amount of pleasure from my body and I'd never screamed like that before. The bastard hadn't even asked. He just did it. I felt slightly ashamed, because that had made it so much hotter.

Jasper was watching me with those dark eyes, a smirk playing on his lips. Wolfe just shook his head and went back to their conversation.

“We’ll be getting out of here soon, Beauty.”

I rolled in Kip’s arms until I was facing him. There was worry there in his amber eyes. “What’s wrong?”

He gave me a sardonic smile. “You can already read me easily. Nothing’s wrong. I just want to get out of here so we can get you on a plane back to the States.”

“Are we in danger?” I whispered, worried that maybe more men would be coming for us.

“No. Even if Salazar had more men on the way—which he doesn’t, we made sure of it—there’s no way they’d get to you. We won’t let anything happen to you, Bailey. That first time was a fluke. I still don’t even know how they managed it. They managed to get straight into your room without passing by our rooms.”

“We’ll be figuring that out once we get home,” Wolfe said, a hard edge in his voice. “Whoever thought they’d help out Salazar is going to find out what a mistake that was.”

I blinked at the angry looks covering their faces. A warm feeling crept into my chest. It sort of felt good to have these men so pissed off that someone had dared to take me. I’d never had anyone care about me before. Even if they were only mad because it had happened on their watch, it still meant something to me. “Why do you think someone helped them?”

“They weren’t set up for an operation like this. Not properly. Everything seemed like an afterthought,” Wolfe explained. “They weren’t professional kidnappers. No way they had the skills to bypass embassy security and slip past the three of us on their own.”

My brows pulled low and I sat up on the bed. The blanket pooled down around my hips. “What do you mean?”

Wolfe cleared his throat, his eyes darting away from me. Jasper’s smirk had returned and when I glanced over at Kip he had a huge goofy grin on his face.

“What?”

Kips eyes dipped downward, so mine followed and I gasped. I was completely naked and now was sitting in front of them with my breasts bared and on display. Snatching up the blanket, I pulled it up to my chin and laid back down. I glared over at Jasper. “You took my clothes off?”

“Sounds like he did a whole lot more than that,” Kip muttered with a jealous glare over at Jasper.

My eye widened and mortification swept through me. They all knew what we’d done. My mouth was hanging open and I wasn’t sure what to even say.

“Don’t worry, Bailey,” Wolfe said. “We’ll talk about that once we get back to the embassy. We should get going,” he told the others without waiting for my reply.

Don’t worry about it? Talk about what? I wanted to ask my questions, but Kip had already hopped off the bed and the three of them were carrying backpacks stuffed full from the little cabin.

Jasper stepped back in the room as I looked around, trying to find my pajamas. My skin was clean and I realized he must have somehow bathed me. I wasn’t sure whether I felt grateful or not. It was kind of hard to feel angry about that earth-shattering orgasm he’d given me.

“Where are my clothes?” I snapped. Pulling my indignant anger around me like a cloak, I scowled at him. It was the only defense I had left against him and it was easing the blow to my pride.

“Here.” He stepped forward and handed me a pair of sweats and a t-shirt. “They were from the farm,” he explained when he saw my puzzled look. “Your pajamas are beyond salvaging.”

The last thing I wanted to do was wear the clothes of any of my captors, but it was that or go naked. Somehow this was still preferable than having nothing to wear.

“Could you turn around please?” I asked, when he stood there arms over his chest watching me.

His lips spread into a genuine smile and I sat staring at him in a daze. I wasn't sure I'd ever seen him smile. Smirk, sure, but a smile?

“I've already seen your body, Brat.”

I narrowed my one good eye on him, opening my mouth to unleash—what I hoped—was a scathing response, when he held up his hands.

“Alright. Have it your way.” He turned, presenting me with his muscular back. I wondered if he was wearing a shirt from the farm, too, because it seemed to be a few sizes too small. It melded against the line of his back like a second skin.

I quickly jumped up, hissing in pain when my feet hit the wooden floor. I'd forgotten about them. That's what Jasper did to me. He caused every thought to fly out of my mind and left me reeling with emotion. Usually anger was right up there near the top of the list, but hot on its heels was lust.

He glanced over his shoulder at my low cry. His eyes moved slowly over my body while I stood, frozen as he did. He licked his lips as though he was remembering what he'd done to me last night.

A tremor made its way through my body at my own memory of his mouth and tongue ravaging me. As soon as he looked away, I pulled on the sweats, shoving the legs up to just under my knees so I didn't trip over the extra material. Then I pulled on the t-shirt, frowning down at the white cotton. It seemed thin and I was worried they'd be able to see through it. I didn't have a bra since I hadn't worn one to bed and my panties were nowhere in sight. Somehow, I still felt naked even though I was technically covered up.

Wolfe walked in and his pace slowed as he came toward me. His eyes dropped down and I hunched my shoulders. That answered my question about whether the shirt was see-through.

Without a word, Wolfe picked me up in his arms, jostling me until I was settled against his chest.

“I can walk, Wolfe,” I told him, staring up into his handsome face.

“You don’t have any shoes and your feet are a mess,” he rumbled as he started out the door. “It’s about a quarter of a mile to the road and where we left the vehicle. I’m carrying you.” He was already ducking through foliage as he said the last words, so it wasn’t like I had any choice in the matter.

Despite my initial protests, I’d let him carry me. It didn’t seem to matter what was going on, in his arms, it felt like nothing could touch me. Sighing, I laid my cheek against his chest, feeling the rhythm of his heart beating out a pattern against my skin.

The early morning sunlight was revealed as we got closer to the road and out of the thickest part of the forest. I still felt exhausted after the events of the last day, so when Wolfe handed me over to Kip—who was sitting in the back seat of the little truck—I snuggled into his embrace and closed my eyes.

“Shotgun,” Kip said, his chest vibrating beneath my cheek. “And I choose back here.”

My eye opened and I saw Jasper glowering at us both. I frowned and looked up at Kip. “What’s his problem?” I whispered.

“He wanted to ride back here with you.”

Biting my lip, I kept my thoughts to myself. It certainly didn’t look like he wanted to ride with me. He looked pissed and like he didn’t want anything to do with me. I didn’t want to be needy, though. Just because he’d...well, *touched* me, didn’t mean he was going to magically turn into a nice guy. Even the thought of him being described like that made me grin. Just because we’d...shit. What did you call what we did together? We hadn’t slept together.

Just because he gave me oral, I decided, didn’t mean he was my boyfriend. My heart gave a hard thump as though it was as forlorn at the thought as the rest of me.

I had no idea how to deal with all the emotions swirling around inside of me. Even though I wanted to deny them, I'd grown feelings for all three of these men. Kissing Wolfe had been the most mind-blowing meeting of lips I'd ever experienced. Then there was what Jasper had done to me. My body pulsed as though it remembered and was saying it was ready for round two. Then there was Kip... He cuddled me close and I felt warm and loved.

Traveling through the dense rainforest with the three of them, heading back toward civilization, was a stark contrast from how I'd gotten out here. I was safe and protected and I knew it. They wouldn't allow anything to happen to me. I just wondered if they knew how badly I'd be hurt once we got back to America and they left me. They may as well lob a grenade into my chest. The result would be the same.

CHAPTER 17



Wolfe

I got out of the SUV and opened the back door. Watching closely as Bailey got out, I waited to see if I needed to sweep her up into my arms. Her father had called out the doctor once we'd gotten back to the embassy yesterday and he'd given her antibiotics to fight off any infection that might come from her excursion, but she was still in pain. She'd refused any of the pain pills he'd tried to give her. She accepted the bare minimum of care, then asked for the first plane back to the U.S. For once her father seemed to do what was best for her and obliged. She had just wanted to get out of the country where people had taken her. I couldn't blame her for that.

She smiled warmly at me and put her hand in mine when I held it out. If her feet were bothering her—and they had to be with how cut up they'd been—she didn't let it show on her face. From the moment we'd turned down her father's driveway it was as though she'd morphed into someone else. The dutiful daughter.

I fucking hated it. It pissed me off that we had to bring her here once we'd landed back in America. I wanted to whisk her off somewhere. Anywhere that was away from her father. Away from this life. Somewhere that she'd never be taken hostage again.

My phone rang and I sighed. Pulling it out of my pocket, I watched as Bailey released my hand and walked toward where Kip and Jasper were waiting for her. Seeing the number on the screen, I connected the call.

“Zinnia Hart. How’re you doing, Sweetheart?”

Laughter spilled over the line. “Wolfe, you charmer. I’m great!”

There was someone muttering something in the background, but I couldn’t make out what was being said.

“Hang on,” Z told me, but she didn’t cup her hand over the phone so I got to listen to her side of the conversation. “Keller, if you don’t want to hear me speaking with an old friend, then you’re welcome to leave.” She paused for a minute and my grin widened as she snapped back. “I don’t care what he called me. I’ve known him for years.” She paused again, then sighed. “Out! Out of my office. Go annoy Rush.”

The unmistakable click of a door shutting sounded over the connection. “Sorry about that,” she said, sounding a little out of breath.

“Sorry, if I got you into trouble,” I countered.

“You didn’t, he’s just protective.”

Possessive was more like it, but I understood it completely. We were the same with any woman we dated. Sharing with each other was one thing, but men outside of our group? They didn’t need to be speaking to our woman. I had a feeling Zinnia’s men felt the same.

“How’s the baby?” I asked, my voice softening. I was a fucking sucker for kids. Couldn’t wait to have a little brood of my own.

“Good. I’m going to give her an eviction notice here soon if she doesn’t let me get a good night’s sleep.”

I chuckled and tried to picture the Z I knew as a now heavily pregnant woman. “I bet.”

“Oh, sorry! The reason I called.” She laughed. “I swear I’m losing my sanity some days. I dug more into Salazar.”

The others were watching me, waiting before they went inside the huge family estate in front of us. It didn't escape my notice that everything had gone back to normal with the senator now that we were back. He was mostly back to ignoring his daughter, walking ahead of her toward the house. Anger roiled inside my gut. It was getting harder with every encounter not to pummel Senator Michaels. I didn't like him as a person, but I really fucking despised the way he treated his daughter. As though she were an object and not a person. Something he could drag around and put on display at his every whim.

"I managed to track a couple of payments made to Salazar over the last month."

"Payments? From who?"

"Someone named Peter Coleman. I'm still digging into him, but he appears to be a businessman who was there at the embassy the same time as you. The payments are substantial. This last one was for fifty thousand dollars," she told me. "Keep in mind, in Colombia, that's like five hundred thousand."

"Damn."

"I'll keep looking into it."

"In the meantime, we'll go pay Peter Coleman a visit."

She hesitated, but I could hear the smile in her words when she spoke again. "I can't wait to meet her. And of course, see you again."

"We'll have to get together soon," I told her, not bothering to correct the insinuation that Bailey was something to me.

There hadn't been time to sit Bailey down and explain to her the way my team and I worked when it came to relationships. For all I knew she'd bolt once we did tell her. I'd been watching her closely since we'd rescued her and it was obvious she felt something for each of us. Whether she'd be willing to admit that and get into a full blown relationship was another thing entirely.

At this point, I wasn't sure we were going to give her much of a choice though. Even if I had to bulldoze my way past her defenses, I would. I'd never wanted a woman the way I wanted her. She was kind, giving, and I knew she had a lot of love to share. Considering the way her father treated her, I wanted to make sure she was surrounded by attention and affection. We could do that for her. Not that we were without flaws. We weren't easy to deal with most of the time, but she'd never doubt that we wanted her.

I'd promised my brothers we'd have that talk with her before our assignment was up. There wasn't any telling whether Senator Michaels was going to keep us around now that he had his daughter here or kick us to the curb. We were stateside again; Secret Service should be taking over his security. Marines had no authority inside the U.S. But from day one none of this made any sense, so no telling what our next orders would be. I didn't want to keep working for him, but it wasn't my call to make. Besides, I didn't trust Bailey's safety to anyone else.

It still infuriated me that somehow those assholes had gotten past our guard and got to her. I'd run through it over and over in my mind and I didn't know how they'd managed to get into the embassy and past all the security measures we'd put into place. How would some businessman have eased the way for them? It shouldn't have been possible.

Shoving the phone back into my pocket, I walked over just in time to hear Senator Michaels declaring that we'd be continuing to handle his security for a while longer.

He blamed us for her kidnapping, calling us inept. Now he wants us to stick around.

A muscle was bunching in Jas's jaw as he fought to hold his tongue. He knew how to handle being ordered around by superiors, but none of us considered the senator as that. He was a fucking worm.

"Yes, Sir," I told him, coming up and placing a hand on Bailey's lower back. "We'll debrief with you just as soon as we get your daughter settled in and resting."

The Senator frowned. “I was going to have her come with me to a luncheon. It’s part of the-”

“No,” I told him. “Doctor’s orders were to rest for the next four days.” He’d just said to rest, but I figured Bailey needed a break. Getting dragged around town by her father wasn’t going to help her settle her nerves.

He looked like he wanted to argue with me, but with the four of us glaring at him—a unified front on this subject—he relented and waved his hand. “Fine. It’s not like make-up would cover all that up anyway,” he said, gesturing to Bailey’s face. “Rest. The three of you will need to come with me, though.”

My eyes narrowed on him. If he thought we were leaving Bailey here, unattended, he had another thing coming.

Jas met my gaze. “We’ll go with him; you stay with her.”

I’d been about to suggest that Jas stay, so it surprised me when he offered to go with the senator. I held his gaze for a minute. I could read his face like a book. He was suspicious. Like me, he knew that this wasn’t right, three Force Recon Marines playing bodyguard stateside. He was going with the senator to try to figure out just what the fuck was going on. I gave him a slight nod. We’d discuss this later and figure it out.

The senator had pulled Bailey aside and was speaking to her in a low, urgent voice. We watched but gave them space. Jas must have seen the surprise on my face because he explained in a tone low enough that only we could hear, “She trusts you. Explain to her about how we operate. See what she says.”

They wanted her as much as I did. I’d known from the beginning the reason Jas was treating her the way he had was because he wanted her. He just never considered that he’d be able to claim her. We still didn’t know. Looked like I was about to find out.

“You okay?” Kip asked as we watched the Senator go inside. He’d muttered something about meeting back out here in twenty minutes.

“Yeah.” She gave us a strained smile. “I’m just tired.”

“Let’s get you upstairs,” I told her.

* * *

“GUYS.”

We turned and found Bailey watching us. It hadn’t taken long to put her to bed, cocooning her in amongst her blankets and pillows. I wasn’t sure why women always needed so many pillows, but I wasn’t about to take any comfort away from her. Arching my brow, I silently asked her why she’d stopped us from leaving. She needed sleep.

My eyes dropped as her pink tongue darted out as she nervously licked her lips. “Could- Could you please stay?” Her face screwed up into a wince. “I don’t want you to think I’m a chicken, but...”

“You were abducted the last time I left you alone in a bedroom,” I finished for her.

“It wasn’t your fault,” she whispered.

Walking back toward her bed, I grabbed a chair that was nearby and sat down next to her. The other two stood behind me. They were going to have to leave here soon, so they didn’t bother to settle in. She picked up my hand and threaded our fingers together. My heart melted for her at that moment. How was it possible that everything she did affected me like this? “Sleep.”

“I can’t,” she insisted. “I slept the entire flight home.” She shook her head. “There’s only so much sleep I can get. Though, I appreciate you standing up to my father. If you hadn’t told him no, I was going to.”

“He’s pushy,” Jas growled. I knew he wanted to strangle the man for thinking Bailey was going to just hop right back into his routine the moment she got home.

“I don’t want to talk about him.” She hesitated, then her soft green eyes flicked over them, then met mine. There was

both worry and curiosity there in her gaze. “Did you find out why I was taken?”

She must have thought that’s what the call was. “Not yet, but we have the best of the best looking.” I didn’t want to tell her about the lead until we looked into it. Found out for ourselves if this Peter guy had been involved.

She cocked her head. “Who’s the best of the best? What best?”

I grinned. “An old friend from the CIA. She’s one of their best analysts. She’s going to figure out who was working with Salazar.”

She blinked at me in confusion. “You mean he wasn’t acting alone?”

I swore inwardly at myself. Jas and Kip’s response wasn’t to themselves however and curse words flew around the room.

Way to tell her that she still has someone to fear. Someone who might still come after her.

“Sorry, Little Bunny,” I told her, reaching forward with my free hand and tucking a piece of her hair behind her ear. “Zinnia found multiple payments that had been made to Salazar. So it looks like he was doing this for someone else.”

She nodded in understanding, but didn’t say anything else.

“We’ll find out who,” Kip promised her, “and we won’t let anything happen to you. We weren’t prepared the first time because someone helped that asshole get past every security measure that was in place in order to get to you. We’ll be ready for anything this time, though in your own home, it shouldn’t be an issue.”

I hadn’t had a chance to tell them about my conversation with Zinnia. I would, though. Soon.

Her eyes swept over the room and a sad look settled on her face. It was killing me, seeing her look so lost. Since she wasn’t going to sleep and I needed to take her mind off of everything, I figured this might be the best time for that talk.

It was always a bit nerve wracking having this conversation with women. There were usually three responses. Some women lost their shit and thought we were sadistic assholes. They were the largest category. Some got a maniacal look in their eye as they began thinking about having three men and all the fun times in bed that brings. Those women usually tried to bring more men into the situation later—not something we were cool with doing—so we'd started avoiding that kind of woman.

I was hoping Bailey would be in the third group. Maybe a little shocked, a little curious, cautiously on-board and optimistic. They encompassed the sweet spot we looked for in a girlfriend. Squeezing her hand, I drew her eyes to mine. I wanted to have the first part of this conversation before the others had to leave. That way she could hear from all of us that we were on the same page. “We have something we need to speak with you about.”

CHAPTER 18



Bailey

Nerves fluttered in my belly. They all looked so serious and I wondered if I'd done something wrong. They'd been so sweet and attentive since they'd found me—even Jasper, in his own way—and I sort of wanted to keep that going now that I knew they'd be continuing to provide security for us.

That made me feel so much safer than Dad bringing in a new team. I didn't want these three going anywhere, for more reasons than one. But now Wolfe's brows were drawn down and low as he stared into my eyes.

"What is it?" I finally asked, my nerves racking up higher with each passing moment. What was he going to tell me?

"I've learned that the easiest way to do this is just to say it flat out. So that's what I'm going to do."

My eyes widened. If he told me they weren't attracted to me or something I was going to die of embarrassment...and regret.

"Jas, Kip, and I...we share a girlfriend."

I blinked at him as I tried to absorb his words. My heart sank. Then anger flared within me. "Are you kidding me?" I growled, glaring at Jasper.

Jas's eyebrows shot up as I aimed all my hostility at him. A confused look flashed over his face. "What are you pissed at

me for?”

Dropping Wolfe’s hand, I ignored their orders to stay in bed and flung the blankets back. I was on my feet and standing in front of Jasper before they could stop me.

I drilled my finger into his chest. There was zero give in his rock hard pecs, but at the risk of breaking my finger, I shoved harder. “You mean to tell me that you have a girlfriend?”

His jaw dropped and he seemed at a loss for words. I left him to flounder while I continued on, accenting each word with a hard poke. “You did *that* to me! And you have a girlfriend?” I couldn’t bring myself to say what he’d done out loud, not in front of the others. Even though they’d known what’d happened.

“I-”

Glaring at him, I poked him again, shutting him up. “At least with Wolfe it wasn’t his fault. I kissed him. But you- you were the one who started that...” I gestured to my nether region, “whole thing.”

Kip’s laughter was spilling out past the knuckles he’d shoved into his mouth to try to contain his mirth. Even Wolfe had folded his lips between his teeth and bit down. Neither was coming to Jasper’s aid.

“You don’t do that to another woman,” I chided him. “You shouldn’t cheat!” My heart was broken because that meant I couldn’t have him and that I’d broken a woman’s trust. It just wasn’t right.

Jasper’s hand wrapped around my wrist, tightening painfully as he glared at me. His hold prevented me from continuing to stab my finger into his chest, but the small act of violence had made me feel a little better at least.

“Did you even listen to what he said, Brat?”

I scowled up at him and went back through Wolfe’s words. As soon as their meaning dawned on me, my anger deflated a little. I looked over my shoulder at the other two. “What do you mean exactly?”

Wolfe's lips twitched, but it was Kip who answered. "We share one woman."

My eyes narrowed as I considered that. It would honestly solve my problem of having to choose between them, but... was it really possible? "Why would you do that?" I asked. "You guys are so..."

"What, Little Bunny?" Wolfe prompted, his smile growing.

My lips thinned out into a line. They were having fun at my expense and it irritated me. "You're hot," I shot back. "And," I snatched my wrist away from Jasper and waved my hand up and down, encompassing Wolfe's body as I turned, "you know. Not to mention incredibly kind and protective." I gave Jasper a droll look. "Well, some of you," I amended. I wasn't ready to let go of my anger for him, despite the fact that it was a misunderstanding. *My* misunderstanding. That wasn't the point.

His smile was more of a baring of teeth, so I turned away from him and focused on the other two.

"We prefer to share, though only with each other. We're moody, possessive bastards most of the time and wouldn't respond well to our woman flirting with other men."

"Or talking to them," Jasper growled from beside me.

I rolled my eyes at him. "I still don't understand why you'd do that when you could each have your own?"

"We live together when we're not out on missions," Kip explained. "We've pretty much integrated our lives together to the point where it's just easier to share everything we have. We're gone so much, keeping three women satisfied isn't as easy as keeping one happy."

I frowned and looked around at each of them. "Do you guys...all sleep with her?"

They all chuckled at my question. "Yeah, Brat. We do," Jasper told me.

"...together?"

"Yes," they answered in unison.

My eyes widened as my mind went through all the possibilities that would entail. My mouth dried out and a dull pulse began pounding between my thighs. “And do you... sleep with each other?”

“No,” again they answered together, but Wolfe continued on, “we consider each other brothers. And while we’ll share and don’t give a shit about seeing each other naked, we’re not into men.”

That made sense. Well, as much sense as the rest of this made. “I didn’t realize men did this,” I told them, a little hesitant because I didn’t want to offend them.

“Most don’t,” Jasper said with a shrug of his large shoulders. “It’s just something that has worked for us.”

“We know a few other groups of men who do the same,” Wolfe amended, “but it isn’t super common.”

“Most guys don’t really enjoy sharing,” Kip said. A sexy grin formed on his face. “We find it hot.” His eyes raked over my body and a shiver spread through me.

“What we’re saying, Bailey,” Wolfe continued, “is that we want you to be our girlfriend.”

I bit the insides of my lips. “Wait, so you don’t already have one?” I’d already figured that out, but I needed to hear them say it. To get the clarification.

Wolfe and Kip shook their heads. My nose scrunched up and I tossed Jasper a small apologetic smile. “You’re still a jerk,” I said, though the edge was missing.

His dark brow arched up as he stared down at me. I wasn’t going to apologize for jumping to that conclusion. Any sane woman would have. That’s what I was telling myself anyway. Giving into the nickname he’d given me, I stuck my tongue out at him. I also stepped away from his side and toward the other two. I didn’t have a death wish, after all.

His sound of displeasure told me I’d made the right move there. “Once you’re ours I’m going to tame that brat right out of you,” he warned.

“I kind of like it,” Kip replied with a grin. “It’s entertaining to watch the two of you.”

“Agreed,” Wolfe told him.

Jasper just glared at them. Despite his words, there wasn’t any real heat behind them. I could tell he wasn’t really serious and his nickname had felt more like a term of endearment rather than an insult for a long time now.

“We have to go,” Jasper said with a sigh. His eyes pinned me into place. “When we get back, we’ll expect an answer.”

I opened my mouth, but before I could speak Kip shook his head. “This is your choice,” he said, silencing my words. “Take some time to think about it. Make sure it’s something you want. Ask Wolfe all the questions you want, but don’t give an answer until we’re all together again.”

With that, they left, shutting my door behind them. Wolfe settled me back into bed, tucking the covers around me and taking up his position by the side of my bed. It allowed me to relax and let my mind drift. I considered all the possibilities of what a relationship with them would look like.

All the ways in which they could please me.

* * *

I WOKE UP SOMETIME LATER, my heart galloping in my chest. Darkness had fallen while I’d slept and memories of being abducted from the embassy flashed through my mind. My mouth was bone dry and I was on the verge of hyperventilating.

“Pull yourself together, Bailey,” I croaked out. My voice split the silence of the room.

Taking a shaky breath, I sat up and looked around. Wolfe had left the light on. I quickly jumped out of my bed and ran to the connecting bathroom, peeking around the door. Empty. I stepped into my walk-in closet. Searched every space where anyone could be hiding. Afterward, I sat on my bed and let my chin drop to my chest as I worked to steady my nerves.

No one was in here with me. It was almost a comfort. Wolfe wasn't here. Probably checking the doors or something, I knew he wasn't far. But the fact that he was gone kept my heart racing. My feet were cold, so I slid back under the blankets. I took deep, slow breaths to calm myself. Curling on my side, my eyes flicked between the door and the window as I ran through everything the guys had told me.

The fact that they shared—and wanted *me*—wasn't something I would have ever expected. It sounded too good to be true. Not having to choose between them. Getting what promised to be the best, and dirtiest, sex of my life. Having three men to fulfill the longing for affection that had been a constant companion since I was young.

My father would hate it. Would forbid it, but I was beyond caring what he thought anymore. Not that he was going to make it easy to disentangle myself from him and his life. He never made anything easy.

I had no intention of finishing out the campaign trail with him, even though that's what he expected. I was done jumping at his every demand. He could make the guys' lives miserable though, if I went against him and dated them. I wanted to, but it wasn't fair to make them suffer.

Sighing, I debated on what to do. If I went home, I was potentially placing myself at risk. They'd killed the men who'd kidnapped me in Colombia, but was that the end of this?

The guys didn't seem to think so. Wolfe had told me before I'd drifted off that they suspected someone had helped the kidnappers get inside the embassy. Does that mean they would try again? Was it just a failed attempt at a ransom? Or is one of Dad's enemies trying to use me as leverage against his campaign?

Going home and back to my regular life was dangerous and stupid. Staying here and continuing to work for my dad was out of the question. I couldn't see any way out of this.

A soft knock sounded on my door and my head lifted as it opened. Wolfe stepped inside. "Sorry, didn't want to scare

you.”

I smiled at him as he took a seat next to my bedside. We were both quiet for a few minutes and nerves fluttered in my belly as he studied me.

“What’s wrong?”

“How do you do that?” At his puzzled look, I explained, “How do you always know when I’m upset?”

“Good at reading micro expressions,” he told me with a cocky grin. “Especially yours.”

I shook my head in bewilderment. “Why would you guys want me?”

He chuckled. “You mean besides the fact that you’re gorgeous? How about because you’re incredibly kind. Brave.” his brow shot up when I snorted. “You know many other women who’d have jumped out of a moving vehicle and ran off into the rainforest without so much as a pair of shoes? Let alone a flashlight, or weapon?”

I plucked at the covers, avoiding eye contact. “I’ve spent my whole life toeing the line because he required it. I don’t consider myself brave at all. Though, I’d like to change that.”

“Pretty sure you’re not giving yourself enough credit.” His large hand cupped my chin and forced me to look at him.

“He’s never going to let us be together.”

“Doesn’t seem to me like he gets a vote,” Wolfe countered.

“He knows too many people, Wolfe. He’d get you guys fired. Or...whatever is worse than being fired for men like you.”

“Do me a favor, Bay.” His brown eyes hardened. “You make whatever decision you want. Let us deal with the fallout from it. Trust me, we’ve taken everything he could do into consideration and we’ve decided you’re worth it. No politician can keep us from having what we want.”

My sigh was heavy. “You hardly know me,” I pointed out. “Why would you take that risk?”

“Because we trust our guts and my instinct is telling me that you’re it.”

My brows pulled together in a frown. “That I’m what?”

He just gave me a patient smile. “Don’t let your father influence your decision. If you decide you don’t want us... fine.” The growl that came out with the word fine told me that might not be the case. “But don’t let worry for us sway you. This is your choice, not his.”

I nodded and let my eyes drift closed again. My feet were back to aching—especially after my run around the room—but I ignored them. Knowing that Wolfe was here made it easy to fall asleep. I’d decide what to do in the morning.

CHAPTER 19



Kip

*I*t'd been a week and we'd taken turns watching over Bailey while the others followed the senator around. He was pissed that his daughter was 'taking too long to heal'—fucking asshole. Although in fairness, Bailey was getting restless too. She insisted she was fine. Years of seeing fellow Marines struggle with PTSD told me she wasn't fine. Not yet.

We were all taking the time to continue getting to know each other and with every day that passed I knew she belonged to us. I'd known it before—we all had—but this was just cementing the fact inside of our minds. We were meant to be together. We hadn't pressured her to give us an answer, and we wouldn't. We wouldn't need to. She'd come to her own conclusion—the right conclusion—in her own time. Well... We wouldn't pressure her for now. If she came to the wrong determination, I doubted Jas would sit back quietly as she tried to leave us. Fuck, I wasn't even sure what I would do in that situation. I was just hoping she didn't decide this was too much for her.

She placed her cards down and gave me a wicked smile. She had a flush, and had once again trounced me. The fact that I was dealing from the bottom of the deck had gone unnoticed to her.

“What the hell, Beauty? We need to take you to Vegas.”

Her laughter made me grin as she started shuffling the cards. It was good to see her loosening up. For the first few days after we'd gotten back, she'd been jumpy as hell. Couldn't really blame her there, but seeing her relax and ease into a routine made me feel better.

The sound of the door slamming open made me frown. I glanced down at my watch. Wolfe and Jas were out chasing down a lead Zinnia had given us and Senator Michaels was out doing something that didn't require us, for once, and shouldn't be back yet. Now that we were back in The States he was hitting the campaign trail hard. There was still about eight months until the election. It was going to be a long road for all of us.

"Stay here," I told Bailey, standing and heading over to the door that led into the foyer.

My eyes narrowed as I stepped out of the little sitting room we'd been in and shut the door. Six guys and a woman about Bailey's age stood there, looking around.

"Bailey!" the guy out front yelled. His voice echoed through the house, but he didn't yell again as he spotted me.

"Who are you?" I asked, fingers itching to pull out my gun. We'd had too many close calls to be casual about men forcing their way into the house.

The butler stood off to the side and I met his gaze. There was an apology there, but he didn't get a chance to voice it before the pipsqueak stormed toward me.

"I'm looking for Bailey."

"Not what I asked you, Bud," I told him. Anyone who knew me would have realized that despite the smirk on my face they were entering dangerous waters. It was all in the tone.

"My name isn't Bud. It's-"

"Quit being an asshole, Ted," the girl said, offering me an apologetic smile. "I'm Amy. We're here to see Bailey... Or at least I am. They *insisted* on giving me a ride." Her eyes drifted over to the others and I caught on to the fact that Bailey's

sniveling ex had brought five others as back-up, just in case. He was going to need them if he planned on causing trouble.

“Amy!”

My head jerked to the side and I gave Bailey a sharp look. “Stay put.”

Her brows lowered, but she didn’t leave the doorway to the little sitting room.

“You,” I said to the other girl, “can go in.”

Amy didn’t bother asking questions, just jogged around me and hit Bailey with a bone-jarring hug. They were making those high-pitched noises happy women made and if I didn’t have to deal with the assholes in front of me I would have grinned.

“Leave.” There was nothing but demand in my tone.

Ted looked at me like I was a cockroach crawling across the floor. His eyes swept over my BDUs and my boots and his top lip lifted in a sneer. They were all dressed alike in khaki shorts, button down shirts, and some kind of dress shoe without socks. It was my turn to sneer.

“I’m not going anywhere until I talk to Bailey.” His eyes drifted to my left just as I felt her touch my arm.

My snarl of frustration had her gripping my bicep. Normally, I wouldn’t worry about assholes like this, but I was outnumbered and couldn’t actually kill them. That created an unfortunate disadvantage. It would stir up entirely too much trouble. Parents didn’t like when their bratty little college boys were killed. Didn’t matter that they were starting something and asking for what they got.

Not to mention the senator whining about dead frat boys.

“There’s nothing to talk about, Ted,” Bailey told him.

I reached up, my hand wrapping around the back of her neck. Squeezing tight to let her know I wasn’t happy that she’d disobeyed me and put her security at risk, I kept my eyes on the ex. The fact that she’d dated a little weasel like this was grating at me.

A look of disbelief passed over Ted's face. "Why is he touching you?" He glared at me. "Security isn't allowed to man handle her."

"What makes you think I'm security?" I asked with a dark grin.

"Kip," Bailey warned.

She was trying to keep this from escalating. Which was a great idea, except for one problem. He'd brought reinforcements. He'd come looking for a fight. Probably figured he'd have to bully his way past whatever security force her father had hired.

Ted sighed and pulled a money clip out of his pocket. He thumbed out two crisp hundred dollar bills, then tossed them at my feet. "Take the money and give me a few minutes, Fido," he instructed.

My back molars ground together as I fought to control my rage. This fucker was only a few years younger than me, but in experience, I felt ancient compared to him. He hadn't done more than go to college and play with his daddy's money. I, on the other hand, had been killing men at his age.

"Not happening," I gritted out. My hand relaxed on Bailey's nape and I glanced over at her. "Back in the room. Now. Lock the door."

There wasn't time to explain to her about what was going to happen. I needed her to listen and do it now. She wasn't used to me being so short with her, but that just impressed upon her the seriousness of the situation.

She nodded and I released her. I waited until she and her friend disappeared into the room and I heard the click of the lock before I faced Ted again. If there were only three or four of these guys, I'd wipe the floor with them. I was pushing it, going against six of them, but I didn't have any other choice.

This many guys fighting together would inevitably get in each other's way. They weren't trained to fight together. Three, I could maneuver into each other's way and take them out one at a time. But six? There was no way to watch them

all. Someone would get a sucker punch in. And, I had to stress to myself, I couldn't kill any of them.

"No one is welcome in Senator Michael's home at the moment," I told them. "Leave."

"Amy got to stay," one of the guys whined from behind Ted.

My brow arched at him. None of them had impressed me so far, despite the fact that no one else had spoken until now.

"We're not leaving," Ted countered, giving me a smug grin. "And if you touch me, you're going to regret it."

"Going to call your daddy on me?" I taunted.

That had him scowling. "He's a lawyer. He'll make sure you rot in prison."

I snorted, my smirk widening. He didn't like that. He went to take a step past me, looking down in shock when I grabbed him by the throat. It wasn't possessive the way I'd touched Bailey. He choked, hands going to mine as he struggled to breathe.

Jerking him toward me, I used the momentum and my strength to toss him bodily across the room. He flew through the air and skidded to a stop like a fucking rag doll, at the feet of his buddies. You could slice the shocked silence with a knife. I waited for the inevitable reaction. A little prick like this wasn't going to like having his ego bruised. Not in front of his friends.

Ted scrambled to his feet, tossing a look over his shoulder, and as one unit the six of them advanced.

Idiots.

It was clear they'd never had any training, because four stood around while two came in closer toward me. No one wanted to be the first to get fucked up, they all wanted to go for the sucker punch. I ducked one wild punch from Ted's friend, eyes still on my main target.

Wishing I could even the odds with my gun, or even my knife, I swung at Ted. The crunch of bone was satisfying, but I

couldn't stay in one spot. I moved, placing Ted between me and the guy who'd tried to hit me.

A muffled grunt from Ted told me his friend had already been gearing up to hit me and his fist had just connected with Ted's side. If things got too out of control, I'd pull my weapon. To do so now would leave me nowhere to go. I needed to give these dicks an incentive not to call my bluff once I brought out my gun. They had to be afraid that I'd actually use it.

The others waiting on the sidelines stepped up and fists and feet started flying. Catching the wrist of one guy, I tossed him to the side, grunting as someone landed a blow to my face. Another blow caught me below the ribs. There were too many of them to avoid all the hits. The good thing for me was I could hit any of them. They had to be careful it was me they were actually punching and not their friends. I kept side stepping, making them trip into each other.

The hits kept coming, if I didn't raise the stakes a little I was going to take a real beating. I grabbed a wrist that was in front of me, pulled hard and brought his arm straight out. I twisted his wrist and hit my free hand against his elbow, snapping it backwards.

I released in time to get another punch to the back. I stumbled forward and spun around, bringing my foot up in a swift arc, landing against another man's knee. Another satisfying crunch echoed as his knee bent the wrong way.

I ducked and weaved between them, holding my own. Two of them were down, bleeding all over the floor and crying in agony. Enough serious injuries and they might reconsider this. The others were still in the fight. I was just starting to think that I might win this when one of them nailed me right in the balls from behind. Hissing in pain, I fought the blinding torment that tried to force me to my knees. I'd never give in and fall before them. They'd have to kill me first.

“Stop it!”

Fucking woman. She was going to be in deep shit later. We were going to have a long talk about getting in the middle of a

fight like this. She shoved Ted backward. Amy had grabbed one of the other guys and pulled him away from me as well.

My teeth ached, that's how badly my balls were throbbing. I couldn't fucking believe one of these pansy ass mother fuckers had kicked me there. They had no fucking honor.

I grabbed Bailey, towing her backward until she was pressed back against my chest. "Out of the way," I growled at her.

She glared up at me. "I'm not going to stand by while they gang up on you." Her hands went to her hips and then she swept an indignant look over the group. "I broke up with you Ted," she said. "I don't want anything to do with you. Get out, all of you!"

The other guys froze at her words, looking around at each other. One finally spoke up. "I thought you said you were still dating?"

"Shut up, Mike," Ted hissed. His eyes landed on Bailey. "You don't get to break up with me."

My chuckle was deep and even though I could feel blood running down my face from where one of them had caught a lucky punch, it amused me that he thought he could dictate that. "She does whatever she wants. And you're not what she wants."

"And you think you are?" he sneered.

Bailey turned in my arms and shocked them all when she yanked my head down and kissed me. She laid it on thick, her tongue brushing against my own as she moaned into my mouth.

Great. Now my dick is hard and my balls ache even more.

"He's my boyfriend," Bailey tossed at Ted as soon as our lips parted. "So yeah, he's what I want. Get out Ted, or I'm going to make sure my father uses *his* pull to put *you* in prison."

Ted stood frozen, disbelief and anger morphing his facial features into an ugly mask. This guy didn't like being told no.

The others looked ready to bolt, but weren't willing to go without him. It was time to give them a push.

I stepped in front of Bailey, shielding her with my body as I pulled out my 1911. I held it to my side, pointing toward the ground. Eyes watching me widened in fear. "You heard the lady. Get the fuck out." I cocked the hammer back to emphasize my point.

One of the guys stumbled forward, grabbing a hold of Ted. The other two that were still standing helped their injured friends up off the ground. They managed to haul him back out the door and I watched from the front porch as they piled into a suburban and peeled out.

Looking over my shoulder at the girls, I told Amy, "You're welcome to stay for however long you'd like." I narrowed my eyes on Bailey. "Tonight, you and I are having a talk."

CHAPTER 20



Bailey

“*I*’m so sorry, Bay,” Amy said as I led Kip up to my bedroom. “I tried to warn you that they were on their way, but I haven’t been able to get a hold of you.”

“I’m fine. I need to make sure they don’t come back,” he grumbled, but he followed along as I tugged on his arm.

“You’re bleeding everywhere,” I snapped. “You’re not fine.” It had been damn impressive watching him fight so many at once, but also scary. My heart had been in my throat the entire time, but I’d known I needed to step in and get them out of here. I wasn’t going to examine the fact that watching him fight all those guys had turned me on in a major way. The kiss I’d given him had only fanned my desire and I sort of wanted to kick my best friend out so I could jump the sexy Marine glaring at me.

“It’s not your fault, Amy,” I told her with a smile and more than a little guilt since I’d let the thought of kicking her out slip into my mind. She was my friend and I should want to spend time with her. I did. Just not right now, but I’d never tell her that. “I know all too well how Ted can be.”

“I can’t believe he did that,” she said with a shake of her head. “I didn’t think he had the stones.”

“Easy to start a fight when you out-number the target six to one,” Kip muttered.

He let me shove him down onto a chair and I left him and my best friend to talk while I went into my bathroom to get towels and the medical kit George—our butler—always kept stocked in each room.

I pulled my desk chair over and sat in front of Kip. Dabbing at the blood running down from a cut over his temple, I cleaned him up, ignoring his glare.

“You could have been hurt.”

“There were too many of them, even for you,” I countered. Wiping the wet rag over his cut, I studied his handsome face. His usual grin was gone and his words reverberated through my mind. *Tonight you and I are having a talk.* A delicious shiver skated over my skin. How was it possible that I was so attracted to all of them in their own ways? It was a good thing they all three wanted me, because there was no way I’d be able to choose between them. It was like trying to choose between breathing, eating, or drinking water. Each of those things would kill me if I wasn’t allowed to do them all. I was beginning to suspect that I couldn’t live without these three. I certainly didn’t want to.

“Ted is an asshole and the other guys can be dicks, but they wouldn’t have hurt us and they wouldn’t have let Ted hurt her either,” Amy told Kip with a pat on the arm.

The arch in Kip’s brow made his skepticism clear. His amber eyes were still watching me as I started bandaging up his cut. He remained stoic and still even as I flinched when I dabbed some medicated cream on it. I knew that stuff burned. You wouldn’t think it given his lack of reaction.

He was pissed, I knew that, but I wasn’t about to back down from my decision.

The door opening in the foyer below made Kip tense up again and my heart tripped in my chest. If they’d come back, I wasn’t sure we’d be able to run them off a second time. I didn’t want to think about Kip having to defend us against so many again.

Amy and I were on his heels—despite his barked order to stay put—and I let out a huff of relief when I saw my father and the other guys walking into the house.

We came down the stairs right as the questioning began.

“What the hell happened to you?” Dad asked Kip.

“Who’s she?” Jasper jerked his head toward Amy.

Wolfe stood, eyes narrowed, huge arms crossed over his chest as he took in every detail of the room. Finally, his gaze landed on Kip and Kip explained.

Dad looked as furious as the others when he heard that Ted had forced his way in here. For a moment, my heart lightened at this display of outrage on my behalf. As usual, Dad stomped all over that spark of hope as quickly as he could. “You let them in my house?” he barked at Kip. “What am I keeping you around for if you can’t even follow the simplest of instructions?”

Of course, damage to the house was more important than his daughter. A pang of pain entered my heart.

An arm went around my shoulder and I gave Amy a sad smile. I was used to this. Typical. He wasn’t worried about me or my safety, just that his orders hadn’t been followed. Realizing that this was how he’d been for my entire life cemented my choice into a firm decision.

“You don’t care about me at all, do you?” It took a moment for me to realize that I’d spoken aloud. Everyone was staring at me.

Dad glared at me. “Tell me, if I don’t care about you, why I just left an important campaigning event to be there when they arrested your kidnapper?”

My brows drew together in confusion. The guys had said Salazar was dead. I looked to Wolfe for answers. He was trustworthy enough to give them to me.

“We got a tip about someone who’d been at the embassy and had sent payments to Salazar,” Wolfe explained. “We went to go speak to him.”

“And?” I asked.

“Turns out the police made the same connection,” Dad answered in a smug tone.

I wasn’t sure why he took such pleasure in needling the guys. Did it have to do with my connection with them? Probably.

“We didn’t have a chance to talk to him,” Jas muttered.

“But he’s being arrested on conspiracy to kidnap in connection with what happened to you.” Wolfe gave me an encouraging smile, but I could see they were frustrated that they hadn’t been able to question him themselves.

“I did that,” Dad said, thumping a thumb into his chest. “I insisted the authorities get involved. Peter Coleman would still be free if I didn’t care about you.” The sneer in his voice wasn’t really selling it for me.

“Peter...Coleman.” I cringed and looked at Wolfe.

“What?”

“I met someone named Peter at the embassy. Sort of overheard a private conversation.”

His eyes narrowed. “And you didn’t tell us?”

“I didn’t think it was a big deal. It wasn’t like I actually overheard anything he’d said. He told me to basically keep my mouth shut and I just went out of my way to avoid him.”

Wolfe sighed. I didn’t look over at Jas or Kip. One man showing his disappointment was enough. “Bailey. You have to tell us stuff like that-”

“I will! From now on. Promise.”

“You owe me an apology, Bailey Marie-”

Anger flowed out of me and I pulled away from Amy, putting myself directly in front of my father. I felt, rather than saw the guys form a protective barrier around me.

Dad glared down at me. “You have something to say?”

His complete disregard for me and my feelings burned away every ounce of guilt that might have appeared with what I had to tell him.

“I’m leaving.”

His eyes narrowed on me. “The hell you are.”

“The fuck I’m not,” I countered. Later, I’d be so proud of myself that my voice rang out clear and calm. It didn’t shudder, giving away the turmoil raging inside of me while I stood up to him. “I’m leaving, Dad, and I’m not coming back unless you change...well everything. You’ve always treated me like shit.”

His mouth opened to argue, but I beat him to it, continuing on. “I got kidnapped and you didn’t really seem to care!” My hands found my hips as my fury began rolling like a snowball out of control down a hill, gaining speed and size as it went. “You barely acknowledged me once I got back, other than to point out you’d still need me to show up to your stupid events.”

“Bailey Marie Michaels,” he boomed, but I was too far gone.

“No, Dad.” His jaw clenched, but he paused. “I’m done. I’m not helping you with your campaign. If you want to continue to have a daughter you’re going to have to quit treating me like some hired hand that can help you win your election.”

“It’s not safe to go back to your apartment. Just because Coleman is under arrest doesn’t mean you shouldn’t still be careful,” he pointed out, sounding smug.

“She’s not going back there,” Wolfe told him.

Dad’s eyes flashed to him and it was his turn to look truly furious. “If you think I’m going to let her shack up with some fucking Marines, you’re wrong.” His eyes flicked to me, anger firing in his gaze. “If you think I’m going to let you embarrass me like this and destroy my reputation-”

“There’s nothing you can do, Dad. Wolfe, Jas, and Kip are my boyfriends.”

It was like I'd dropped a bomb on the room and once the deafening sound of the weapon had dissipated it left behind eerie silence. Then all hell broke loose.

Dad grabbed my arm, yanking me toward him. I didn't cry out even though I knew he'd bruised me with his grip. "If you think I'm going to let you embarrass me and disgrace this family you have another thing coming. I'll fucking destroy them before I let this happen."

My eyes widened as Dad stumbled back a few feet while I was yanked back into Kip's comforting hold. Jasper had shoved my father and he and Wolfe had closed ranks in front of me, Kip, and Amy.

"If you think we give a fuck about who you are or what you think you can do, you're the one who's mistaken," Jasper snarled at him. Then he shook his head. "Too fucking fancy for me." His voice lowered into an even more menacing growl. "Bailey's coming with us and if you try to stop us, I'll end you, you piece of shit."

"You'll never touch her again," Wolfe added. "We don't let little bitches touch what belongs to us." Despite all the anger I had right now, a little part of me swooned when Wolfe said *belongs to us*. This was real, it was happening. I was theirs and they were mine.

Kip started ushering me toward the door. Even though this was what I wanted, my heart cracked a little. It was an old wound that Dad had systematically created throughout the years of neglect.

My breath shuddered as I tried to hold back my tears. He didn't deserve them. Amy wrapped her arms around me and I leaned into her as the three men I'd just claimed as my own climbed inside the SUV. It was the one we'd taken from the airport and I'd never asked whether it was theirs, or Dad's. It didn't really matter.

As we pulled down the drive, I turned and looked through the back window. He hadn't even bothered to step out onto the porch to watch us leave. It was pretty much what I'd come to expect from him.

A mile or so down the road, Wolfe pulled out his cell and made a call. The line rang over the Bluetooth, echoing through the silence of the vehicle.

“Wolfe.”

“Hey. Heard you’re stateside now.”

“We just landed yesterday,” the man confirmed. “What do you need?”

“Meet at our house. We need a favor.”

“See you soon, Buddy.”

The connection cut out and I shook my head in confusion. The way these guys—my men—had conversations without ever saying anything was a mystery to me.

“I am so proud of you.”

I looked up at Amy and gave her a wan smile. “I told you I wasn’t taking shit anymore.”

“So you did,” she said with a laugh. “I think that’s the first time I’ve heard you really cuss. And telling your Dad that you’re dating all three of these guys?” Her eyes sparkled as she continued to laugh. “I would have paid good money to see that, but I got that show for free.” She lowered her voice, her eyes darting to Kip, who was sitting in the back seat with us. “Are you really?”

“As of now,” I confirmed and a giggle poured out from my chest. I slapped a hand over my mouth. I wasn’t a giggler, but everything was catching up to me. Ted and his asshole friends bursting in on us. Me telling Dad off. The guys having my back and getting me out of there. My nerves were shot and I was so glad Amy was there.

We eventually stopped laughing and sat quietly, companionably resting against each other. “What’s the plan?” I asked.

Wolfe’s gaze caught mine in the rearview. “We have some business to take care of. Then we’re going to talk.”

All the moisture fled my mouth and I swallowed hard. They all looked pissed and I wondered if I'd handled that badly back there? "What business?"

We'd been driving for about forty-five minutes and were far outside the city. The darkness encroached around us. Wolfe didn't bother answering me and Jas hadn't even looked back at me once. The corner of Kip's lips kicked up in response to my questioning gaze, but he too stayed quiet as Wolfe turned down a gravel driveway.

Headlights flooded the SUV as a car pulled in behind us. We parked and Wolfe cut the engine. "Everyone out."

Rolling my eyes at my friend, we scrambled out of the car. They were all in a mood and I was already raw from confronting my ex and my father both in the same night. It was easier to listen...for now.

Three men exited the vehicle that had pulled in behind us and I watched with a small frown as my guys exchanged back thumping embraces with the newcomers.

They had a quick conversation I couldn't hear before Wolfe led everyone into the house we'd parked at. I looked around as he flicked on the lights. It was a pretty big place—though not nearly as large as the McMansion Dad had always insisted on living in.

"Is this your house?" I asked.

"Yeah, Beauty. It is," Kip told me with a grin. His mood was improving by the minute.

"What's the reunion for?" A large burly guy with sandy brown hair and green eyes asked. He gave me and Amy a wink. "Though I don't mind considering the company."

"Suave," Jasper snarled. "I swear to God I'll cut your fucking dick off if you don't keep your hands to yourself."

Suave's grin grew larger. "Well now, there's finally something that you seem to give a shit about, Jas?" His eyes roamed over my body making me shiver and not in a good way. I didn't want this guy eyeballing me like that.

“Enough,” the guy who seemed to be the newcomers’ leader barked. “Leave him the fuck alone, Suave.”

“What’s the plan, Wolfe?” The third guy asked. He was shorter and more wiry than Suave.

“We’re going to take Amy home and go see some college kids,” Wolfe said with a smile that was more bared teeth than anything.

My eyes widened. “Wait, you’re going to see Ted?” My heart rate picked up as nerves danced.

“That’s right,” Kip replied. “We’ve told your father how it’s going to be when it comes to you. Time for that piece of shit to hear it, too. Then we’re going to have that talk I promised.” His voice had dropped down into a warning growl.

Heat throbbed between my legs at the danger emanating from them. Why did they look so incredibly sexy like this? Pissed off and in revenge mode. “I’m going with you,” I insisted. Too much had happened over a short period of time for me to feel safe anywhere but with them.

“You’re not coming,” Wolfe told me.

“They’re just a bunch of college guys,” I told him, eyes narrowing.

“They forced our hand, Brat,” Jasper said, mistaking my words for worry for Ted and his friends. His dark eyebrows rose when Amy shot him a glare. She wasn’t pissed about what they were going to do to the guys, but about the name he’d called me. “Six of them today might be twelve of them tomorrow. We’re going to make sure that doesn’t happen.

She didn’t get a chance to voice her displeasure because the other leader spoke again. “You want us to go with you?”

“No, Brando. Your job is way more important.”

Wolfe’s eyes landed on me and suddenly everyone was staring at me. I shifted from foot to foot, not understanding.

“Oh man! We’re babysitting? Fucked up,” Suave muttered.

“Shut the fuck up, asshole,” the third man in his group said. “The fact that they’re leaving her with us *is* a big deal.”

“Yeah it is, Weaver,” Kip said, still watching me. “Anything happens to her and we’re going to have your balls.”

“Understood,” Weaver said with a grin.

Brando, Weaver, and Suave. Clearly whoever they were, they were like my guys. Marines, or something. I was too tired and uneasy to ask. It wasn’t that I cared about Ted. I just didn’t want to be left behind. The idea of them setting Ted straight did nothing to ease the desire building within me. I’d rather spend the night exploring that—and them—than staying here alone with strangers.

“Please,” I tried again. “I don’t want to stay here alone...” My eyes flicked over to the other men and though I felt guilty for insinuating that I didn’t trust them, it was the truth.

Wolfe stepped forward and cupped my cheek. “They’ll protect you with their lives, Bailey. And we’ll be back as soon as we can,” he said, his deep voice soothing the raw emotions firing around inside of me. “Let’s go,” he told the others.

“Can I stay?” Amy asked. For once her voice was small and she was asking permission instead of doing what she wanted.

“Not this time,” Wolfe told her. “We have a lot to hash through once we get back. Give us a few days and then we’ll come pick you up personally and let you stay as long as you both want.”

Amy nodded and gripped me in a hug. She was warm and felt safe. Panic gripped my throat while everyone I cared about and felt safe with walked out.

“I’ll stay out of the way, but I’m going,” I said, locking eyes with Wolfe.

His muscular jaw flexed in anger as I disobeyed him and started to tug Amy out the door.

“The fuck you are,” Jasper replied, pulling me away from my friend before Wolfe had a chance to. His grip was gentle

even though his tone wasn't. "You're staying here where it's safe. You're going to learn quickly to listen and obey us," he said, tone dark with promise. I shuddered and though I wanted to yell and rail at him, I remained silent. I'd already pushed them as far as I dared tonight. "We'll be back soon. Brando. Watch her."

Brando's hand closed over my bicep and he ignored me as I shot him a glare over my shoulder when he easily held me in place. Jasper tapped a finger to my nose. "Behave."

I scowled at him, but didn't respond. It took everything inside of me to stay stoic and not cry out for them to come back. I wasn't usually this co-dependent or attached, but my kidnapping kept flashing through my mind. I didn't want to stay here without them. But I managed, Brando's iron grip on my arm was a pretty big deterrent. I'd stay, like they'd demanded and wait for them to come back to me.

Jasper paused next to Suave and then hauled off and punched his friend—presumably his friend—in the crotch.

Amy and I both gasped as Suave let out a roar of pain. "What the fuck was that for?" he wheezed as he sank down to the floor cupping his family jewels.

"This way you won't get any ideas," Jasper said, his gaze flicking meaningfully in my direction.

Brando and Weaver chuckled from where they stood flanking me. "We'll make sure nothing happens to her," Weaver promised.

"Good," Wolfe said. He gave me a nod. "We'll be back soon. Don't worry Little Bunny, we won't kill anyone."

Amy waved as they all walked out the door. I didn't move an inch until it shut and then I jerked my arm away from Brando and went to sit on the couch. The living room was furnished nicely and I was curious about their home, but it didn't feel right looking around without them here.

"Who are you guys?" I asked.

"Friends," Brando told me with a charming smile.

Friends. Another non answer. These guys were all amazing in the way they could tell the truth without giving away any details at all.

I laid down on the couch, determined to wait here for my guys to do what they promised and come back to me. Everything was catching up with me, finding out Peter had been involved in my kidnapping, standing up to my dad, being here with my Marines. I just needed a few minutes of quiet to process everything.

CHAPTER 21



Wolfe

I fucking hated leaving her behind. The look in her eyes when she'd asked to come with us had nearly gutted me. It wasn't where we were going that bothered her, it was just the fact that we were going without her. All three of us were well aware that she still wasn't feeling safe after what had happened to her. Not that she'd complain. She just seemed to feel better with us around, and we did too.

When she'd told her father that we were her boyfriends, smug satisfaction had filled me near to bursting and I wanted to spend the night showing her why she'd made the right decision. Unfortunately, we still had a mess to sort out before we could do that.

Weaver had been right when he'd said it was a big deal we were leaving her with them. I trusted Brando and his team with my life, but it was harder to trust them with hers. I knew they'd take care of her, though, and we needed to squash Ted like the fucking cockroach he was. Letting things go for too long would ensure that he tried something again. Given that chance, he would surely escalate things to a level they didn't need to get to. A swift retaliation was needed to convince him it was over.

I was still pissed that we hadn't gotten to Coleman in time. Maybe setting Ted straight would help clear my head.

“Thanks,” Amy said, resting her arm on the window sill. We’d just dropped her off at her and Bailey’s place.

“Would you pack up some of Bailey’s stuff?” I asked. “We’ll swing back by and pick it up in an hour or so.”

“Sure.” Her grin was malicious. “Those guys have no idea what’s in store for them.” She shook her head and patted my shoulder. “I’d do the usual ‘if you hurt her’ spiel, but something tells me that’s the last thing you’d do and if anyone else tried you’d kill them.”

“Already done that,” Jas piped in from the passenger seat.

Amy’s eyes widened and she did a slow blink. “Seriously?”

“He’s kidding,” I told her, but I could see the doubt flicker over her expression. “We’ll be back. And we promise not to kill any of them.”

“On purpose anyway.” Jas coughed.

With that, I drove to the address she’d given me.

We stood in the road looking at the frat house. Music was thumping, echoing across the lawn. I could see bodies through the windows, moving around as I was trying to count them. “I thought you said they weren’t having a party today?”

“They’re not.” Kip said, “This is just their normal Tuesday routine according to Amy. Just the residents in the frat house drinking and playing games with each other.”

“So there won’t be any collateral damage?” I asked. “What about the ones that didn’t go with him to Bailey’s house?”

“They have the option to run. Everyone else...fuck ‘em,” Jas said.

“Right, let’s do this. Kip, you get first dibs.” I motioned for him to lead the way.

“Right,” he said with a grin. He stepped forward, cracking his knuckles, and stalked up the path to the front door.

“Taking the direct approach. I like it,” Jas commented with a grin.

We walked up the stairs of the front porch, Jas and I taking up positions on either side of Kip. Kip banged on the door. It only took a minute before the door flew open. The man on the other side of it paled as soon as he saw us standing there. “What do you want...oh shit.”

“Remember me?” Kip said with a smile. The man had his arm in a sling, clearly one of the ones that Kip had tussled with earlier. Before he could shout anything to his fraternity Kip grabbed him by the shirt, with both hands, and launched the kid out the door.

He made a perfect arc through the air and over the stairs, landing in the lawn with a loud thud. “Hey, who the fuck are you!” someone yelled from inside the house.

“We’re here for Ted, the rest of you can go,” I said flatly.

“Fuck you dude!” The guy yelled, throwing his beer down and puffing up his chest. Stupid fucker thought this was a bar fight. Jas stormed through the door. He was about to correct that thought.

Jas ran straight into the man, wrapping his arms around his waist and lifting the guy off the ground. He kept his momentum up and ran through the wall behind them. Sheetrock debris and dust flew through the air. I laughed as I walked through the door. This was going to be great.

There were at least a dozen frat boys in here. With the three of us working together, it was going to be a melee. I grabbed my first frat boy by the collar of his shirt and drove my fist into his face. His head snapped backward as he was knocked out. I flung him into another kid that was running at me. He tripped over his unconscious friend and landed in a heap at my feet. I grabbed him by the hair and drove my knee into his face. The cracking of bone made me smile and eased the bout of rage that had been piling up within me since we’d gotten back and heard that these assholes had started a fight near our girl.

I heard a scream and looked at the hole Jas had made in the wall. He had emerged and was holding some kid over his head with both hands and heaved him into two boys that were

charging him. The three fell in a tangle of arms and limbs. It was chaos in here and it was fucking glorious.

“Where the fuck is Ted!” Kip was holding a kid up by the neck. He pawed at Kip’s grip as his face turned red like a ripe tomato. He gave up fighting and pointed up the stairs. Kip dropped him, he fell to his knees holding his throat and gasping for air. I gave him a kick to the stomach for good measure as I followed.

Kip stormed up the stairs. I paused and turned to Jas. “You good down here?”

Jas looked around, disappointment filling his features. There were four men lying at his feet. Add in the guy I dropped, the one Kip threw down the stairs and the one he choke slammed, that was seven down. I heard a crash of broken glass. Two guys were bailing out of a window. Make that nine down. “I’ll finish up down here,” he replied on a sigh. He’d been hoping for more of a fight.

I turned to the stairs and was about to go up when a body rolled down. I waited for it to pass, then headed up and met Kip at the top. “They’re loyal to a fault, I’ll give ‘em that,” Kip said. “Though maybe after tonight they’ll be a bit pickier about where they place their loyalties.”

We stalked down the hallway, kicking open doors, trying to find Ted’s room. “Oh Teddy! Come out, come out wherever you are,” Kip sang playfully as he kicked another door open. Another kid, sitting at his computer desk with headphones on spun around with a wide-eyed paranoid look. A glance down at his lap and we saw he was sitting there with his dick in his hand. “Sorry bro, you can go back to jerking off.” Kip pulled the door closed.

Snorting out a laugh, I shook my head. The fuck was wrong with these kids these days? They should be out looking for women to talk to, not beating off to some anime porn.

“You assholes want me?” We turned. Ted was standing at the end of the hall, shaking. He held a knife in his hand. “I’ll fucking cut you if you don’t get out of here.”

I laughed, though there wasn't an ounce of humor in the sound. "Kip, he's all yours." It took everything inside of me to let Kip have the kid. I wanted to rip his head from his shoulders and piss down his neck, but Kip had been the one who'd had to deal with the fuck sticks on his own. It was only fair he got his shot with them now that the odds were evened out.

"Oh Teddy, didn't your mother ever tell you not to play with knives?" Kip kept his eyes glued on the kid, but a smile played over his face.

"I'm serious, get the fuck out!" His eyes were as wide as saucers. He waved the knife around, probably his idea of a threatening motion. In reality, it just showed both of us that he had no clue what he was doing with the weapon.

Kip closed the gap at a fast but steady pace. Ted drew his arm back, then stabbed straight out. Kip twisted mid stride and brought his arm down over Ted's knife arm. Kip expertly wrapped his arm around Ted's, pinning it into his armpit, safely trapping the weapon. With his free hand he punched Ted in the face twice, then grabbed his throat.

"You should have gone for the slash, Teddy. It's so much harder to catch a slashing knife than to catch the stab." He punched him again, then leaned back and straightened Ted's arm out and brought his fist into Ted's elbow. The knife clattered to the ground, though you couldn't hear it over Ted's scream. He fell to his knees, clutching at the elbow that was now bent the wrong way.

Kip scooped him up off the ground by his shirt and carried him through the nearest bedroom, and made for the window. He dragged Ted across the desk and used Ted's body to break the window, hanging his torso over the ledge.

"Please, please don't!" Ted wailed.

"You will never come around Bailey again. You won't call her, won't email. If you see her in the street you will cross the road and hide. Do you understand?"

"Yes. Yes" He begged.

“Same goes for your fraternity brothers, assuming they speak to you at all after this.”

“Yes, okay. Please!”

“Good.” Kip pulled him back through the window and dropped him on the ground. We headed back down stairs and found Jas sitting on one of the unconscious bodies, looking fully disappointed.

“No one else wanted to come out and play. They all ran.”

Chuckling, I held out my hand and pulled Jas to his feet. “Let’s get back to our girl.”

We left the frat house in shambles and we drove home in satisfied silence.

CHAPTER 22



Bailey

Somehow I'd managed to fall asleep. Deep voices woke me and I realized someone had tossed a blanket over me, but left me on the couch. The light was out in the living room, but on in the dining room and my heart leapt when I saw my guys standing there talking to their friends.

Pulling out my phone, I checked the time, surprised to see how late it was. I thought for sure I'd be up all night worrying, but the events of the day had worn me out. I still wasn't sleeping very well at night. It was a pleasant surprise if I only woke up once to check my room to make sure no one had crept in. It was irrational. I knew that. The men who'd taken me were dead. The guys who'd vowed to guard me weren't about to let it happen again, but I still couldn't seem to make peace with that at night. When I was alone in the dark those fears came back.

We'd been staying in my dad's house, so I hadn't given in and asked any of the guys to stay with me. Now that we were at their home, I wasn't sure what to expect, but I hoped I wouldn't be sleeping alone anymore.

I crept over toward the kitchen. Over the last month I'd only seen my guys in my father's world. I wanted to see what they were like here, relaxed, speaking with friends without some threat hanging over all our heads.

"How'd it go?" Brando asked.

I felt guilty for falling asleep and not speaking with him and his friends. Maybe there'd be time again in the future.

"Pretty much as expected," Wolfe said with a shrug.

"They bled like stuck pigs and most of them begged," Jasper added.

My stomach fluttered and I realized with shock that it turned me on. Them going and beating the crap out of a bunch of guys had my pussy throbbing. What was wrong with me? Violence shouldn't turn me on this way. I didn't think it was so much the violence, but the fact that they were willing to do anything to protect me. After growing up with a father who never gave a crap about my existence, except for what I could do for him and his career, it was nice having their attention on me.

All of them were chuckling over an imitation that Kip was doing.

"How'd she do?" Wolfe asked, once they all quieted down.

"Good. She fell asleep almost immediately," Brando told them.

"Slept like a log, too," Weaver said with a grin.

My cheeks heated up and I hoped I hadn't snored or something embarrassing like that.

"She was exhausted," Suave snapped, giving his friend a harsh look.

"I wasn't saying anything bad," Weaver shot back. A large grin spread over his face. "Pretty sure this one is infatuated with your girl." He jerked a thumb at Suave.

"The fuck I am," the big man snarled.

"He put a pillow under her head," Brando said, his own grin growing.

"And a blanket on her," Weaver added. "Not to mention he about bit my head off if I made any kind of noise."

"Fuck all of you," Suave said, but I noticed that he kept his voice low.

My men chuckled, but Jasper shot him a warning glance. “We’re glad you like her, but try anything and I’ll give you another nut punch.”

Suave covered his balls. “No need. I just have a soft spot for vulnerable women.”

I frowned. I wasn’t weak and vulnerable. At least not anymore. I’d stood up to my father. That was a huge step for me.

“She’s got more heart than you know,” Wolfe told him.

“Not to mention spine,” Kip added.

“I don’t doubt it. She’ll need it to deal with you idiots,” Suave said with a laugh.

That seemed to be the signal and the six men embraced in the typical bro hug fashion, with a lot of back slapping. As soon as the three men were gone, Wolfe sat down at the table.

I was still hiding in the shadows, listening in. Despite wanting to go in and let them wrap their arms around me, I stayed put.

“What’s the plan,” Jasper asked.

“We’ll take turns having her sleep in our rooms,” Wolfe replied. “We don’t want to come on too strong and scare her.”

“She can have her own room if she wants,” Kip said. “We have plenty.”

“I want to keep her with us. She can have a room later, after the threat is completely laid to rest.”

“There’s still a threat? Even though Peter was arrested?” I asked, coming into the room.

Wolfe arched a brow and Jas glared at me. “It’s not polite to listen in doorways, Brat.”

I shrugged at Jasper and his cranky mood. Going over, I placed my arms around Kip. He tucked me up against his body and I reveled in the safety and heat he provided.

“Not sure yet,” Wolfe answered me. “But we’d rather be safe than sorry. If Coleman was responsible for this, he could still send someone after you. We don’t know why he did it in the first place.”

Sighing, I nodded. “He must have thought I overheard something I shouldn’t have. I really didn’t,” I told them. “I just want this to be over and done with.”

“We know, Beauty. Now that we’re not busy with your dad’s schedule, we’ll focus fully on figuring out what happened so you can have some closure.”

“Not that we weren’t looking into it before,” Jasper said. “Don’t worry. Nothing touches what’s ours.”

My heart squeezed. It was oddly comforting to hear him say that and it let me know that I’d made the right choice.

“We’re going to bed after we have a talk,” Wolfe said and looked pointedly at Kip.

Kip spun me so quickly all I could do was gasp as he pinned me against the kitchen wall, with his hand encircling my neck. He was staring down at me with a hard look. “When one of us tells you to get to safety and to stay there, we expect you to listen,” he told me. All the humor I was used to from him was buried beneath the serious tone. My heart raced with anticipation. I was equally scared by his sudden aggression, and turned on by his intensity. Part of me was hoping they would scold me, because if he kissed me I... I would happily bend over the kitchen table, and give in to anything they wanted.

I winced and pleaded with my eyes. “I only wanted to help. It was my fault that Ted was there in the first place,” I explained.

“No, Brat. It was Ted’s fault that he was there. That was his choice to come be a douchebag,” Jasper told me.

I couldn’t see past Kip’s wide shoulders, but I knew the others were watching just as intently.

“Even if it had been your fault,” Wolfe added, “that doesn’t mean shit to us. No man is putting his hands on you

again. In order to make sure that doesn't happen we need you to listen to us."

Now they flanked Kip, all of them giving me narrowed-eyed looks. My heart tripped in my chest. They looked so fierce and so damn handsome I wanted to give in. But I was a new woman now and I refused to back down anymore, even to them.

"He was outnumbered and I could help," I insisted.

Jasper snorted and I shot him a withering look. "We don't want your help, Bailey," he said. He waited a beat as his words devastated me. I wanted to be a partner to these men. How could I be if they didn't want anything from me? He must have read the hurt on my face because he shook his head. "You don't fucking get it," he growled, shoving a hand through his messy hair. It'd grown out on top since he'd been assigned to watch us, and it was constantly flopping into his eyes now. "If anything happened to you it would fucking kill us."

My eyes widened at the vehemence in his tone. Kip used his fingers to tilt my face up until I had to meet his amber eyes. "He's right. Nothing matters more than keeping you safe. Knowing you were standing there, and could have gotten hurt if one of those shit stains doubled down and came after us again, about sent me out of my mind. I was ready to fucking shoot them, to hell with the consequences. You're too damned important."

I licked my lips as the realization of what could have happened if he'd felt forced into protecting me hit. And what kind of trouble he'd have been in.

Kip's eyes dropped to my lips. "We care too much about you to let you put yourself in danger, Bailey."

"I care about you, too," I countered. "How am I supposed to watch while you're in trouble?"

"I didn't ask you to watch," he snapped. "I told you to lock yourself behind a door."

Wolfe stepped over and pulled me away from Kip. Both his hands wrapped around my shoulders and he looked like he

was ready to shake some sense into me.

I understood what they were saying, but my points were valid too. Folding my arms beneath my breasts, I gave them all my own glare. “You can’t expect me to do nothing.”

“Yes we can.” With those words, he did shake me a little, then he gave a heavy sigh. “Have you ever been in a fight?”

“Not before the kidnapping,” I admitted, and I hadn’t done a stellar job there either.

“Shot a weapon?”

“No,” I muttered, knowing exactly where Wolfe was going with this line of questioning.

“We have. We’ve been trained for this. We’ve fought against overpowering numbers before and still won. When it comes to a fight the only way we’re going to lose is if something happens to you,” he explained. “I know you’re struggling to find a place in your life now, especially after being separated from your father. We’re going to help you find that place. But the one thing that is guaranteed, is that your place will never be in the fight. That’s our job.”

I softened, melting in his grasp and he pulled me against his muscular chest. “Okay,” I relented. “Next time, I’ll hide when asked.”

“Good girl.” Kip’s hand smoothed over my back.

“That’s all we’re asking for,” Jasper added.

“Go with Kip. We all need to get some sleep,” Wolfe told me, handing me back over to his friend.

Kip steered me out of the kitchen and I heard Jasper mutter, “Why the hell does he get to sleep with her first?”

“You already did sleep with her, and more, asshole,” Wolfe reminded him.

A blush crept over my cheeks as I remembered what’d happened in the little cabin in the jungle. I looked over my shoulder at Kip and wondered if he’d try anything tonight. Was I ready for that? My core pulsed hotly and I would have

squeezed my legs together to relieve the ache if we weren't going up the stairs. That was really all the answer I needed.

“Extra bathroom. We all have en-suite bathrooms as well,” Kip said, pointing out the room as we passed. I'd definitely need to use that before bed. “This is my room, that's Wolfe's, and Jasper's,” he said, pointing them all out. “You're welcome to come and go as you please.”

It took about thirty minutes, since I'd decided to take a shower before crawling into bed. Kip took one after me and I sat on his bed running a brush through my hair when he came out. He had on a pair of gray sweatpants and nothing else and my gaze traveled over all the muscles he had on display.

I swallowed down the desire that was clutching at my throat. These men were my boyfriends, but I'd always been a bit shy and it took me time to warm up. It didn't matter that we'd been flirting for over a month now. I wasn't ready to just jump him.

Placing my brush aside, I slid under the covers. I was wearing a pair of pj shorts and a t-shirt that they'd grabbed from the apartment I shared with Amy. I'd left all my stuff at my dad's house and certainly didn't care if I ever saw it again. He could keep it to remember me by. Those clothes I'd left there weren't me anyway.

Kip hit the main light and I couldn't help but watch him stalk across the room. He moved with such a liquid grace it was hard not to stare. He climbed into bed next to me and shut the lamp off next to him.

I laid on my back, staring up at the ceiling, wondering if I should say anything. My limbs were stiff as my mind whirled with thoughts.

“You think any louder and you'll wake the others up,” he said into my ear, as he rolled onto his side facing me.

I laughed and tried to relax my body. He ruined that by gathering me up, turning me onto my side, and tucking me back against his body. He tossed a leg over mine and I was using his arm as a pillow. My breath caught in my lungs. We

were plastered together and I sort of wanted him to run his hands over me. At the same time, I sort of wanted him to wait.

“Go to sleep, Beauty.”

Closing my eyes, I tried to obey, ordering my heart to stop jackhammering against my chest. Despite the long nap I’d already had, exhaustion soon had me falling asleep in his arms.

CHAPTER 23



Kip

Sunlight streamed over my face and I grunted in irritation as something tickled my face. I swiped a hand over it, pushing aside whatever it was.

“Ouch!”

My eyes flew open and I looked down at Bailey. She was half sprawled over my body, cheek pillowed on my chest. Her hair was stuck to my stubble and that’s what was tickling me. I’d yanked it when I’d rubbed a hand over my face.

“Sorry,” I told her with a wry grin.

She looked up at me and a smile softened the glare she’d shot me. “Good morning.”

My cock thickened as I realized she had a leg tossed over mine. My hand immediately went to her thigh and I squeezed. We were melded together and damn if this wasn’t the best way to wake up. She was warm and pliable and I couldn’t help myself. I’d been thinking about kissing her for so long, there was no holding back.

I yanked her higher up until her thighs were on either side of my hips and she rocked forward, off balance. Catching her by the back of the neck, I pulled her close until I caught her lips with mine.

Her squeak of surprise was adorable, but I licked along her lips until she parted them for my questing tongue. I turned that

cute sound into a deeper moan and couldn't help but feel satisfaction. One hand was on her hip, while the other held her close to me at her nape.

My lips brushed over her cheek and down until I was sucking on her neck.

“Kip,” she gasped.

I loved the sounds she was making and wanted to hear more of them. Rolling us, I tucked her between the mattress and my body and went back to brushing my tongue over the smooth column of her neck. My hand traveled down over her until it was buried inside her panties.

“Kip!”

A smile spread over my face, but I didn't stop. My fingers brushed lightly over her clit. I listened to the little noises she made, figuring out what speed and pressure she liked most. When her hips started to press back against me, I knew I had her.

My free hand unbuttoned the little satin pajama shirt she had on. It matched her shorts and I realized she slept in these little sleep sets a lot. This one had little flying pigs on it. Adorable and yet still somehow sexy on her.

I only unbuttoned as many as I needed to free her tit. Shoving the material to the side, I latched onto her nipple, sucking hard.

She cried out, arching her back, offering me more of her warm flesh. She was like peaches and cream and I had a feeling once I got a taste of her pussy, I'd never be able to stop.

Scraping my teeth lightly over her nipple, I sank a finger inside her body, enjoying the way she pulled me in as though she couldn't get enough. I hadn't even started up a motion, yet her body was bowing and she groaned out in ecstasy.

“That's it,” I murmured, watching her face as she came. “That's what I want from you.” Now I started up a gentle gliding motion, lengthening her orgasm.

As soon as she came down from the high she smiled shyly at me. My grin curled up wickedly. “Did you enjoy that?”

Her cheeks stained pink, but she nodded.

“Good. Because I want you to do it again... And again.”

She did a slow blink and watched me with a frown forming as I slid down her body. My finger was still inside her tight little cunt and I curled it, making her jolt as I touched sensitive places inside her body.

“And again.” I lowered my body down to the edge of the bed, bringing my mouth between her legs and sucked on her clit.

“Oh my God!” She was squirming hard, so I pinned her hip to the bed with my hand.

“I know you’re sensitive,” I told her, my lips moving over the little bundle of nerves, eyes on hers. “But that will fade. Until then you’re going to take what I give you.”

Her lashes fluttered a sure sign that my words turned her on, but I could see the worry on her face too. “I’ve never...”

“What, Beauty,” I asked, giving her clit a slow circular lick.

She sucked in a breath as the sensations buzzed her system. “Come twice,” she admitted. “I’ve never...before.”

Satisfaction speared through me. I was glad she hadn’t. This was something I could give her. “That’s alright. You will from now on,” I promised her.

Her eyes widened and her mouth dropped open but all that came out was a strangled moan as I focused my attack on her clit. I timed the strokes of my finger to match my tongue and every once in a while swiped lower to lap up the wetness that was spilling out of her. She was so wet for me and I loved every minute of this. It was my mission in life to please my partners to the near brink of death.

She was the only woman who mattered anymore and I couldn’t wait to look down at her as she trembled on my bed. I wanted to leave her so satisfied she nearly ached.

Her second orgasm hit almost immediately and I couldn't contain my smile. I already knew her body better than she did. The overly sensitized state of her clit from her previous climax had shoved her into another one. I planned to keep that going.

"Kip!" she wailed, yanking on my hair, trying to pull my mouth off her sensitive clit.

I didn't let her. Instead, I latched on harder. Anytime she tried to pull me off I sucked her until she was a sobbing mess and then would go back to the circles that drove her insane.

Her dark hair was spread over the pillow as she tossed her head back and forth. Her third climax pulled a scream from her throat and I added a second finger inside her snug cunt. We were just getting started.

By the time the fifth orgasm rolled over her she had no voice left to scream with. All I got was a hoarse cry. She was nearing the end of her endurance. If she had to take much more she would pass out.

"One more, Beauty," I insisted.

There was a puddle beneath us, soaking my sheets and though I knew I'd need to wash them afterward, I never wanted to again.

She shook her head, staring up at the ceiling, but didn't say anything. I wasn't sure if she could anymore.

Her pussy still contracted over my fingers and she was shuddering in pleasure from her last orgasm.

It was going to take more to get her to come again. Enjoying the taste of her sweet pussy, I started building her back up. Her hands were clenching the blankets rhythmically as she tried to allow her body to accept the mass amounts of pleasure I was bringing her. It was overwhelming and the tears streaking down her face were a testament to that fact.

I'd never hurt her, but this was how I fucked. I wanted her reduced to her base instincts and so spent she couldn't move. This was about her right now. I didn't have any plans on following through and fucking her. If I had, I'd have stopped two orgasms ago. I didn't want her in pain when I slid my

cock inside her. This was just to show her—in my way—that she'd made the right decision. To reward her for her choice.

She was at that edge again and about to tumble off into oblivion. Biting back a wicked smile, I scraped my teeth harshly over her clit. That forced her to find her voice. It echoed off my bedroom walls as she shattered below me again.

Removing my fingers, I watched her float as I licked her delicious taste off my hand. Her legs were bent and lying flat on the bed, spreading her sweet pink cunt open for me. It'd be so easy to free my dick from the confines of my sweats and thrust into her.

I refrained. Instead, I bundled her shivering body against mine and held her. Watching her closely, I waited to see what she might need from me. Considering she'd told me she'd never had more than one orgasm at one time, this had probably been a lot for her, but she was soon going to figure out that was exactly what it was going to be like dating us. A lot.

Eventually, she stirred and looked up into my eyes. "That was..." She shook her head, at a loss for words.

I kissed her forehead. "Let's go get some breakfast." Getting off the bed, I pulled her to her feet and helped her straighten and button her top. I reached over and grabbed her satin sleep shorts and bent to help her put them on. I wasn't even sure when I'd pulled them off her.

In the future, I planned on doing this again, only we'd be going to breakfast with her naked. Dessert would be feasting on her body and then bending her over the kitchen table and railing her within an inch of her life. But it was too soon for that. I didn't want to send her screaming away from us as fast as she could go. The other two would beat the shit out of me and I'd deserve it. Wolfe had already warned me to ease her into it. He wasn't going to consider this easing.

As soon as we came down the stairs I could smell pancakes, bacon, and whatever else Jas was cooking. My mouth started watering and my stomach let out a happy growl at the prospect of food.

Bailey froze in the doorway to the dining room as Wolfe looked up from the newspaper and Jas glanced over his shoulder at us. Neither was wearing a shirt and I wasn't sure if it was that, or the fact that they were awake and had absolutely heard what we'd been getting up to, that was causing the blush to creep up her neck.

I loved how easy it was to make her blush. Taking her by the shoulders, I moved her over and sat her next to Wolfe. She sat with a heavy wince and shifted to ease the pain. Wolfe shot me a hard look.

Shrugging, I apologized silently. I'd lost control and now she was a bit tender. Sue me. She was too fucking hot not to touch her, and she was ours. She'd get used to our...stamina.

"How'd you sleep, Brat?"

Now Wolfe and I were both glaring at Jas. We were trying to make this transition as easy on Bailey as we could and he kept riling her up. She was still too dazed to say much.

Jas came over and set a cup of coffee in front of her and another in front of me. "Did you kill her?"

"Fuck off," I growled at him. "Give her a break today."

Jas just shrugged his shoulders and went back to the stove. It didn't take long until he set plates heaping with food in front of us.

Bailey's eyebrows shot up as she finally started to come out of the fog of pleasure I'd forced on her. "That's a lot of food."

"We eat a lot," Wolfe explained, spearing bacon and putting it on his plate.

We were still dishing up when the kitchen door opened. It was the back door, so each of us guys already knew who was coming through it. I shot a look over at Bailey. So much for easing her in.

CHAPTER 24



Bailey

A beautiful older woman with dark hair and chocolatey colored eyes stood glaring at us. Her hands were on her hips and she had an apron on. “You don’t even bother to stop in and let us know you’re home?”

A man stepped in behind her and put an arm around her shoulders. “They’re grown men, Jean. Give them a break. Maybe they had a reason...” He cut off as his eyes landed on me. Jean was already staring at me.

Realizing I had a forkful of pancake halfway to my lips, frozen as I stared at the strangers, I dropped it back onto the plate. My gaze flicked to each of the guys. They were relaxed and Kip was grinning, but that didn’t mean much since he almost always was.

Wolfe stood up and moved toward them. Jasper elbowed him out of the way. “Me first,” he declared and yanked Jean into his arms for a hug.

My brows crashed together and a dark feeling started rumbling in the pit of my stomach. I couldn’t believe that I was sitting here, still muddled from Kip’s intense love-making, and I was jealous. I didn’t even know who this woman was—or the man with her—but it didn’t seem to matter.

“She’s *my* mom, you dickhead,” Wolfe grumbled.

“Wolfe! Language!”

“Yeah, Wolfe,” Jas teased.

The jealousy poured out of me like thick honey out of a bucket. This was Wolfe’s Mom—and Dad, I was guessing. Suddenly horror struck me. This was Wolfe’s parents. How were we going to explain ourselves?

My eyes darted around the kitchen and I wondered if I could somehow slip out while they all gave each other hugs.

“Don’t bother,” Kip said as he stood up, reading my intent. He whispered, “Jean will just hunt you down to give you a hug.” Then he turned and swept Wolfe’s Mom into his own hug, lifting her off her feet. Her laughter trilled out as she happily spoke to ‘her sons’ as she called them.

“You must be Bailey.”

My head snapped up and I realized Wolfe’s Dad had made his way over to my side. “Hi. Yes, I’m Bailey Michaels,” I stuttered, standing. Self-consciously, I tugged at my short sleep shorts and tried to cover more of my thighs.

It didn’t seem to matter. Wolfe’s replica wrapped me up into his arms and hugged me tight. He smelled like a smokey pear scent. He and Wolfe could be twins except for the color of his hair and eyes. Obviously those had been Jean’s contributions to her son.

It only took me moments before I sank into his embrace. When was the last time a father figure type had hugged me? I couldn’t remember. My own father had refused to hug me for as long as I could remember, claiming it would make me soft. He wanted a ‘strong Marine’ and I had to act like one.

Tears built up behind my eyes and I tried to blink them away. I wasn’t sure what was wrong with me, but Kip had somehow brought out my vulnerability this morning along with all the pleasure. I was on the verge of becoming an emotional, blubbery mess.

“I’m Ray. Raymond Wolfe. It’s nice to meet you.”

He released me, but gave me a soft shove straight into Jean's arms. "We're so happy to meet you, Bailey. Our boys have told us so much about you." She was surprisingly strong as she held me close.

A sob was working its way up from my chest and if I ended up crying in front of all these people I'd never be able to live down my humiliation.

A strong hand gripped my shoulder. "Why don't you let me take her to get dressed, Mom," Jasper said.

Shock had me moving along with him woodenly. I wouldn't have guessed he'd be the one to read my distress and rescue me. It just reinforced my belief that all the name calling and picking he did was his way of flirting with me. When it came down to it, he was just as sweet to me as the others were. More than that, he was always on the lookout for any threats to me, even when I was the biggest threat to myself.

"We put your stuff in Kip's room for now," Jas said softly. His dark eyes were watching me as I went over to the bag he motioned to. "You okay?"

I shook my head, unsure of how to explain the roiling emotions inside of me. He didn't ask me anything else and I closed the bathroom door, shutting him out. Leaning my head back against the door, I closed my eyes.

Would my life ever go back to being normal? Did I even want normal?

My dad was pissed at me—he'd left multiple voicemails—I had three boyfriends, they'd beaten up my old boyfriend, and about a dozen of his friends. I was living with them, and now their parents were sitting in the kitchen after one of their 'sons' had given me so many orgasms I'd nearly died.

Maybe normal was off that table, but could I do this? With them? For the first time in...forever...I felt happiness threatening to make its way into my life.

A soft knock sounded on the door, telling me I'd been in here for too long. I quickly pulled off my pajamas and dressed

before opening the door. “Thanks,” I said, giving Jasper a small smile.

“Wolfe’s parents are the best,” Jas said, watching me like he thought I might faint and he’d have to catch me. I wasn’t that weak, just overwhelmed. “He started bringing us around for the holidays the first year after we were assigned together as a team. Jean and Ray have never let us leave. Not that we’d choose to.”

“Are you and Kip not in contact with your parents anymore?” I asked.

There was a flash of something dark and angry in his eyes. I hadn’t meant to bring up bad memories—I had them myself and knew what a pain they could be—but I did want to start learning more about all three of them.

“Kip still talks to his family. It’s mostly surface level shit. He doesn’t go home on the holidays and they don’t ask him to, but he calls them every Sunday like the dutiful son he is.” Jasper wiped a hand over his mouth, then scrubbed at the beard that’d grown in over the last month. “I don’t speak to my parents. Have a brother I talk to.” His dark eyes met mine. “My parents were lousy drunks and didn’t give a shit that they had kids. They kept a roof over our heads, barely, but spent all their extra money down at the local bar. My brother mostly raised me, somehow managed to scrape together meals from whatever he could find in the house.” He studied me then shook his head. “Not sure whether I’d rather have it the way I did, or the way you did. Honestly? Despite the money, I wouldn’t want your father.”

My mouth flattened out into a thin line as I thought about that. “I’m pretty sure I don’t either,” I admitted. I wasn’t angry about his assessment. I’d been perfectly groomed to be his stoic little girl. Only, I wasn’t. Stoicism was supposed to be controlling your emotions. I just buried mine. I’d been a doormat and hid everything from him just so I wouldn’t get yelled at or lectured. It was easy to see what he’d done to me now that I’d changed my mind set. He’d manipulated and neglected me. That was one thing Jasper and I had in common, our parents ignored us unless we were useful.

He threw his arm over my shoulders. "Let's get back downstairs."

I could hear the happy laughter and chatter as we walked back into the kitchen, dining room combo area.

Jean looked up and beamed at us. "We're so sorry to have barged in on you like this, Bailey," she said.

"No she's not," all four men said at once.

A pretty pout pulled at her lower lip, but her eyes were sparkling. "I sort of am," she clarified, "but it's been so long since I've seen my boys." She waved a finger at Jasper. "You're in trouble for not letting me know you got home last night."

Jasper snorted as he pulled back my chair for me. I shot him an incredulous look as I sat. "What?" he whispered. "I was taught manners." He gave me a wry grin then focused on Jean as he took a seat next to me. "If you're mad about that, Jean, just wait until you hear that Brandon, Weaver, and Suave were all here last night and left a few hours later.

My eyes darted around the table as Wolfe, Ray, and Kip all groaned. Jasper had a devilish grin on his face and Jean's mouth was hanging open. "Why did you tell her?" Wolfe said through gritted teeth.

"What! They almost never come to visit and I missed them?" She leaned back in her chair and glared at Wolfe. "We need to talk about you bringing people into my life that I adopt and then never having them come around anymore."

"I can't control them, Mom," Wolfe said with a laugh. He speared a new stack of pancakes and then slathered them in butter and syrup.

"Can't you order them to come visit?"

"They aren't even in the military, let alone under my command. If they were, Brando would outrank me." Wolfe's eyes danced as he smiled lovingly at his mother.

"What agency are they?" I asked.

Everything stopped for a minute as they all stared at me. It didn't feel like I was an outsider. Not when Kip was brushing his hand over my thigh and Jasper had his arm over the back of my chair. It was more that they just didn't consider that I didn't know everything that they did. They'd been together so long and knew everything about each other.

"They're CIA," Wolfe answered, his eyes roaming over me.

"Didn't we tell you that, Brat?" Jasper leaned in, his lips brushing over my neck before I leaned away from him. He frowned at me.

Widening my eyes, I shot Wolfe's parent's a pointed look. I shoved Kip's hand off my thigh even though it was under the table and out of view.

"Oh, don't worry dear," Jean said with an understanding smile. "We know all about their arrangement with girlfriends. And Wolfe at least filled us in on the wonderful news that you're now theirs." She looked happy and not the least bit judgmental.

I hesitated. It would be incredibly helpful if these people were on board with this. It wasn't exactly a normal lifestyle.

Kip leaned over toward me and whispered in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear. "We're glad she likes you. She never liked the others."

He jumped, banging his knees into the underside of the table. "Ow! What the fuuu..." The look on Jean's face had him swallowing the last word.

"Others?" I asked. I knew I wasn't their first girlfriend, but that sort of made it sound like there had been a lot.

Wolfe scowled at Kip as he kicked him again. "Idiot." He looked at me and I could tell he wanted to be sitting next to me while we spoke about this. "There's only been two others."

"Neither lasted long," Jean added. "They weren't right for these three. I know I've only known you for twenty minutes, but I can already tell you're exactly what they need."

My heart warmed and the sadness that had started to creep in fled. She was doing her best to console me after Kip's slip up, but I believed she was telling the truth.

"That last one," Ray said, then shuddered. "Did I tell you that she nearly burned the house down before I got her out of here? Thankfully, it seems like you've found the right one so I won't have to deal with kicking any more women out while you're out on a mission." Ray's twinkling eyes met mine and I couldn't help but laugh with all of them.

"Once we finish breakfast, I'd really love it if you came over and met the rest of the clan. We're having a barbecue to celebrate you, Bailey," Jean said, clasping her hands together.

"Me?" I asked, eyes wide. I didn't even get birthday parties at my dad's. A whole party for me was something I couldn't wrap my mind around.

"Oh yeah, a welcome to the family," Ray replied, with a wiggle of his brows.

"We'll be there after we've had time to clean up," Wolfe promised.

The pancake I'd taken a few bites of sat like a lead weight in my stomach. I didn't have a problem meeting new people, but this was potentially my new relatives. A welcome to the family get together. For me. I swallowed past the lump in my throat. Already Wolfe's parents had treated me more like a daughter than my father ever had.

I looked over my shoulder at the door. All of this was so much, too much. I thought that at any moment my legs might take off and pull me out of here. Back to...back to a life with no love. No joy. I felt a hand on my thigh again. I turned away from the door and looked at Kip. His smile was soft and calming. "Hey, relax. We know it's a lot, but you deserve this."

With that the weight melted away.

CHAPTER 25



Bailey

*M*y head was spinning. I'd just been introduced to Wolfe's nine brothers. There were ten of them! I didn't even want to contemplate how Jean had managed that, she was so slim and tiny, at least compared to the guys.

"There you are."

I jumped and turned to face Wolfe. "Sorry, I was looking for the bathroom."

He motioned down the hall and walked beside me. "Was that too much?"

My brows rose and I shook my head. "I grew up meeting huge crowds of people, I've gotten good at remembering names." I assured him. "At least this time they're all excited to meet me." I smiled at him. Some of his brothers were already married and their wives had yanked me into hugs, all of them so happy to be meeting me.

"I have a question."

"Okay," he rumbled, stopping next to the bathroom. His parents' house was huge, which made sense now since it'd had to house twelve people while the boys were all growing up. Now it was the focal point of the family and everyone gathered here for birthdays, holidays, and whenever Jean wanted more family time.

As we'd left the guys house and walked across an open field, it'd loomed before us. There were other houses nearby on the same property. Wolfe had explained that all except two of his brothers lived in these homes. They'd all wanted to live outside the city and raise their families on the same property they'd grown up on. Jas had added in that Doug and Derrell would eventually make their way home and build on their lots as well. They hadn't settled down yet and had chosen to live in the city near their jobs.

"Wolfe is your last name, so why does your family call you that?"

"Everyone in my training unit used Wolfe rather than my first name and it just became such a habit that after I brought the guys home my parents even caught on. All my brothers call me Wolfe, too."

"That's not weird?"

"It probably was at first, but not really anymore."

"So...what's your first name?"

He grinned at me and leaned back against the wall, crossing his arms over his massive chest. "Dane."

My eyes narrowed. "They gave you all D names?"

He chuckled. "Yup and really regretted it once we all started running around. It was hard enough to tell who was who, but once you did, trying to spit their name out was impossible."

"Your dad's genes are strong," I said with my own laugh. "All ten of you are the spitting image. Then add in Kip and Jas."

"Our instructors thought it'd be funny to team up the brothers, knowing that later on family wouldn't be allowed to actually form an official team. Joke was on them since we weren't related and that became our unit from that moment on."

"Wolfe!"

We looked over as one of his nephews toddled up, his mother chasing him down the hall. Wolfe scooped the child into his arms. “Chase,” he scolded, “you’re not supposed to run from your mother.”

“Thanks, Wolfe,” Clarissa said as she caught up. “I swear he gets faster every day.”

Seeing Wolfe standing there holding a child made my ovaries all but melt, so I said, “Excuse me,” and ducked into the bathroom. I just needed a moment to myself. Leaning over the sink, I studied my reflection in the mirror. Gone was the paleness that had taken over after my abduction. My cheeks were bright with color and despite the overwhelming amount of people at this barbecue, I was thrilled and so happy. I couldn’t remember the last time I felt anxious or scared. It was impossible for those feelings to creep in with this many people around. Especially when I knew three of them had my back unconditionally.

A knock on the door sounded, so I smoothed my hands through my hair, then opened it. Wolfe was leaning against the doorframe, eyes worried. “You okay?”

“Of course,” I said, brows pulling low. “I just needed to use the bathroom.”

“Mmhhmm,” he replied, catching my hand and pulling me along with him.

“Where are we going?” I asked. “I promised Jean I was going to show her how to make-”

He shoved me into a room and then had me pinned back against the door before I knew what was happening. I’d have whiplash if his big bear paw of a hand hadn’t cupped my nape, preventing it from moving. His fingers were tangled in my hair and his lips were on mine.

My breath caught in my throat as he explored my mouth. His tongue pressed against mine, and I couldn’t help but mimic the movement by arching into his body.

Wolfe’s hands caught my hips and jerked me up off my feet until I was wrapping my legs around his waist. He barely

let me take a new breath before he was kissing me again. “I’ve been waiting to do this,” he said against my mouth.

“Me too.”

We were moving against each other, grinding our hips together and frantically kissing as though someone was going to rip us away from each other at any moment.

A shout from the hall made him freeze, then he dropped his head to my chest as a herd of his nieces and nephews went thundering by. “I want to say fuck it all and take you back home.” If he had decided, I would have been powerless to stop him. I was clinging to him for dear life, hoping desperately for another kiss.

There was frustration in his chocolate eyes as he looked up at me with a wry smile. “Guess we’d better get back out there.” He dropped me back down to the ground, but when he went to open the door, I stopped him.

There was a challenge in my eyes as I locked the door. “Who’s room is this?”

A dark brow arched at me as he watched me turn the little lever on the knob. “Mine, Doug, and Darrell’s.”

“The only two brothers who aren’t here today,” I commented. “Convenient.”

“Oh yeah?” he asked, a smile spreading his lips as I put a hand on his chest and pushed him backward.

There was no way I’d be able to move him if he wasn’t playing along, but when his knees hit one of the beds, he happily fell back onto it. I didn’t know who this girl was. The one who was brazenly seducing one of her boyfriends. The one who had three boyfriends. But I was happy for the first time in a really long time, so I was going along with it.

Crawling up his body, I kissed my way up his chest—still covered by his shirt—and then captured his lips with mine. My hands went down and pulled his shirt upward until I was able to rub my palms over his muscles. A shiver worked its way up my spine. I knew his job was physically demanding and he had to stay in good shape, but this was better than good.

The world spun as he flipped our positions and he was suddenly looking down on me. “You feeling frisky, Bailey?”

“I just wanted to kiss a bit more,” I pouted playfully.

“You’re going to get more than that,” he promised, a wicked glint in his eyes.

Suddenly, I thought about my actions and shook my head. “Not here. Your family...”

“They’re busy down stairs,” he said, stripping his shirt off then toeing off his boots.

My eyes widened as I realized he was serious. I struggled beneath him, but he was a behemoth of a man and had my hips pinned down to the mattress between his knees. “Wolfe,” I cautioned.

He flashed me a grin, then started lifting my shirt. His eyes were trained on the skin he was revealing and I fell quiet as he hooked his thumbs into the underside of my bra and lifted that along with my shirt.

My breathing sped up as his hands left my shirt rucked up around my neck and covered my breasts. His hands were so big they easily spread across my chest. My breasts weren’t huge by any means, but I’d never gotten any complaints about them before. Wolfe didn’t seem to mind their size as he leaned down and sucked one of my nipples into his mouth.

Gasping, I arched against him. The pleasure zinged from the now wet tip directly to my clit. I would have thought after this morning’s activities with Kip, sex would be the last thing on my mind, but somehow, despite all the orgasms, I’d still been missing something.

Now I realized what it was. He’d purposely left me to stew all day after not fucking me. I was already throbbing and wet after a few kisses and a little nipple play. The jerk. I was pretty sure he’d known what he was doing. These men were clearly far more experienced than I was, but I was looking forward to what they could teach me.

I knew sex with them wasn’t going to leave me lying beneath them, staring at the ceiling, while I waited for them to

finish. I pitied whoever Ted married because that was what she'd be getting with him.

My thoughts jerked back to Wolfe and his hands as he tugged my jeans and shoes off. He'd left me in my lacy blue thong and the matching bra was still securing my shirt up above my breasts.

His heated gaze swept over my body as he shoved his own jeans off his hips.

My gasp was loud in the room and his lips twitched in response. My eyes could not focus on that bulge all at once. I had to shift my gaze up and down to see it all. "Nope," I said, rolling over to scramble to my knees. I planned to get off on the other side of the bed since he was blocking the path in front of me.

Hands caught my hips and hot skin covered my back. His teeth nipped my earlobe, causing an arc of pain to shoot through me. It settled into a pleasant feeling only seconds later. "Where do you think you're going?"

"Away from that," I told him, struggling under his hold.

He leaned more of his weight on me and my arms and knees gave out, sending me sprawling to the bed with him on top of me. I wheezed until he lifted off my back a bit.

"Why?"

I glared at him over my shoulder. "You didn't mention anything about having a huge..." I shook my head again. "No way."

His dark brow arched up. "A huge what, Little Bunny?" He was trying to hold back his grin.

"That thing is going to rip me in two," I told him with a disdainful sniff. "It's not happening."

He growled into my ear. "Oh... It's happening." His hand reached forward, burying itself between me and the blankets.

As soon as he began to rub my clit, my eyes threatened to roll into the back of my head. I couldn't allow that. He was playing my body like a musical instrument, but I was going to

be walking with a limp if he fucked me with that massive dick. It had to be a good ten inches, and as thick as my damn wrist. Nope.

My body had other plans though and soon he had me panting on the edge of a climax. He flipped me over—I secretly loved that he was tossing me around like this—and buried his face between my thighs.

He sucked at my clit through my panties and I wanted to yank the stupid things off and fling them as far as I could for interfering with the incredible sensations his mouth was creating.

When he finally lifted his body, I shimmied out of them, hoping he'd dive back in. Instead, he notched that huge cock between my legs and before I had a chance to tense up he was shoving it inside my body.

A sound strangled inside my throat as my body stretched around him. I hadn't had many partners and none had come close to Wolfe's size. I was afraid he might choke me from the inside.

"Relax, Little Bunny," he crooned in my ear. His hand was on my throat, holding me in place so he could dominate my body in any way he chose.

A gush of wetness, as he gave my neck a gentle squeeze, helped ease his way inside my body, but still it was a tight fit.

"Easy."

I worked at relaxing, not that it was easy, and soon his pelvis was resting against mine. It wasn't quite like reliving my first time and the uncomfortableness, but it was close. At least until he started moving. He brought back all the amazing sensations that were soon battering my body and threatening to send me into an orgasm.

CHAPTER 26



Wolfe

Bailey felt so fucking good, pulling me into her hot wet pussy and fuck if she didn't have me ready to bust. I wouldn't allow that. I wasn't coming before her on our first time together.

Her worry over my size had forced me to take control of the situation, but now she was raking her nails over my back like a pissed off cat. Only she wasn't angry. Her cries of ecstasy were getting louder and I knew she'd forgotten where we were.

Covering her mouth with my free hand, I stared down into her eyes. One hand on her pretty neck, the other over her lips, my hips thrust against her.

She jerked higher on the bed with each heavy thrust and I wanted to ram my cock so far inside her I settled in her womb when I came. Her gorgeous green eyes rolled back in her head as her body began to shake.

I pressed harder on her mouth—making sure to leave her nose unobstructed—so I muffled her cries as she came for me. She bit down on my hand, the sting shot through my palm and just made me want to push harder. I already couldn't wait for the next time when I could let her scream the way she'd done that morning with Kip. Fuck she sounded so hot when she came.

Her pussy clenched around me and I let myself go. This wasn't the best place or time for this, so it was going to have to be a quick one. My cum filled up her tight little pussy and my grin was more of a feral snarl.

She didn't know our plans for her yet, but soon enough she would. She was ours. I never planned on letting her go. One day she'd be our wife. She would bear our sons and daughters. She was going to be the center of our family. Her, me, Jas, Kip, and our kids. The idea had me feeling very protective of her in the moment.

I slid out of her and used my fingers to massage my cum back up into her cunt. She gasped as I finger fucked her using our combined fluids. "You're going to come for me again, Bailey," I ordered.

She shook her head, her pretty eyes large with desperation. "I can't."

"You will." I kept moving my fingers inside of her, leaning down to flick my tongue back and forth over her clit.

A quick glance up and I saw her shove a pillow over her face and scream into it. Her pussy spasmed around my fingers and I shoved my cum as high up inside of her as I could.

I stretched out beside her, letting her catch her breath before I kissed her. "We should get back downstairs."

It only took a few minutes to clean up and get dressed. I poked my head out into the hall and waved to her to follow me. Wrapping my arm around her shoulders, I led her downstairs.

"Oh there you are!" We both froze as Mom poked her head out of the kitchen. "Are you still willing to help with those cupcakes, Bailey?"

"Of course, Mrs. Wolfe," Bailey replied, smiling.

"Please, just Jean."

I followed them into the kitchen, unwilling to leave her side yet. Sitting over at the kitchen island, I watched her and my mom chat and whip up a couple batches of cupcakes.

When it came time to frost them my brows shot up as she put frosting in some kind of bag, then started decorating them to look like different kinds of flowers.

Mom's eyes met mine, surprise evident in her gaze. "Those are beautiful."

"Thank you," Bailey said, still focusing on her creations.

"You like to bake?" I asked.

Her smile was bright. "I was supposed to work with a bakery this summer... Before my dad hijacked my plan and made me go to Colombia."

"You're very talented," Mom told her.

"I appreciate that. I want to open my own bakery one day."

I wanted to stay and listen in, but my phone rang. Stepping outside, I answered it after recognizing the phone number. "Colonel."

"Captain Wolfe. I need you, Gunnery Sergeant Collins, and Sergeant Towers to report to my office tomorrow. Oh nine hundred hours."

"Yes, sir." That didn't sound good.

The colonel didn't expand on the order, just cut the connection, leaving me to wonder what the fuck was going on. I'd notified him that our mission with Senator Michaels was over and we'd taken leave in order to get some extra time with Bailey before we went back into the rotation. She needed time to settle in, and I was hoping to find out who the fuck had helped those assholes in Colombia before we'd have to leave for the next mission.

"What's up?"

I looked over at Jas and shook my head. "Nothing good. Colonel wants to talk to us tomorrow at nine." Kip wandered over and caught us speculating on whether Senator Michaels had anything to do with us being called in. "Of course he does," Kip said, taking a drink from his beer. "Guy's a dickhead. Now is when he tries out petty revenge."

We all chuckled at that, then Jas and Kip shared a look. Jas turned back toward me. “Any reason you look like that?”

“Like what?” I asked, not falling for his needling.

Kip gave an exaggerated sniff. “Forget what he looks like. You smell like sex.”

“Fuck off,” I told him, glancing around to make sure none of the kids were within ear shot.

“Does that mean we all get to fuck her soon?” Jas asked, licking his lips in anticipation.

Before I had a chance to respond, a few of my brothers wandered over and we all started talking football.

By the time the food was ready and everyone was piled at the various picnic tables, I was ready to have more alone time with Bailey. I wasn't ready to have her too far from me. All the women gathered around a table and started talking, leaving us guys to fend for ourselves and the kids.

Reaching out an arm, I snatched up a little girl who went running by. “You eat yet?” I asked, tickling her belly.

Her loud laughter made me grin. “No, Uncle Wolfe.”

“Good. Be my date.”

I piled food on two plates and sat down with Janean at the next table over from her mom and Bailey. The others came over soon enough, kids in tow.

“Looks like she's having fun,” Kip said, then shoved half a hot dog in his mouth.

I looked over at Bailey again, trying not to get irritated at my mom and sisters-in-law for monopolizing her time when I wanted to be doing the very same. Bailey tossed her head back and laughed and the irritation faded away. She needed this. She needed to feel like she belonged with my family—our family. Not to mention she fucking deserved all the damn love she could handle, because after getting an up close and personal view of how her father treated her, no one deserved the shit that prick pulled with her. I settled in to enjoy the rest of the evening.

* * *

WE RODE SILENTLY into the city. The last thing any of us wanted to do was leave Bailey at home while we went to meet with our commanding officer. But this was an order we couldn't ignore. We knew when we broke off with the senator that this would be coming.

I'd asked my dad to keep an eye on our house. I'd followed his footsteps into the military, but none of my other brothers had. They'd wanted to strike out and do their own things. Dad would make sure Bailey was safe without her even knowing he was watching.

Parking the car, I shoved open the door, put on my cover and fitted it on my head. As a unit, we moved down the sidewalk and entered the building I'd parked in front of. Off came our covers again now that we were inside. The military was all about ceremony and rules and wearing hats inside was expressly forbidden.

The hallway was a long corridor lined with offices. No one ever wanted to be called down this walkway. Too many senior officers here. Usually meant you'd fucked up.

A glance over at my brothers showed my same stoic face. We'd faced death too many times together to let an ass chewing worry us. Worst they could do was toss us out of the military. At one point, that would have been a devastating scenario for me. Now that we'd found Bailey? I didn't give a shit. The three of us could find work anywhere and we'd do whatever we had to for our family.

I knocked on the door and waited for the call to enter. We lined up along the back wall. "Colonel," I greeted him.

He looked up from the paperwork on his desk, his blue eyes studying the three of us. None of us moved a single muscle as we waited.

"Do you know why you're here?"

“I’m guessing it has something to do with a senator,” I admitted.

“That’s correct.” He tossed his reading glasses down on the desk. “Care to tell me why I got a call from a pissed off senator asking that the three of you be discharged from service?”

Kip shifted his weight from one foot to another, but otherwise we remained still.

“Sir. The mission that you outlined to us had been completed. We were to protect Senator Michaels and his daughter while they were in Colombia. Once we were back on U.S. soil, we made sure they were settled in and checked back in with you. Secret Service is more than capable of doing the job that they were designed for. Marines are not bodyguards, especially when stateside.”

“You’re right,” he agreed, steepling his fingers together on his desk. “Your report on what happened in Colombia was very thorough.” His eyes narrowed on my face. “So what happened that caused the senator to want to come after you three?”

“He wanted us to keep playing bodyguard,” Jas said, ignoring my look.

“Gunnery Sergeant Collins,” The colonel said, acknowledging him. “Why would he want that?”

“With all due respect, Sir, why did he want us to watch over them in Colombia to begin with?”

Colonel Schaefer considered Jas’s question, then nodded. “It was unusual, but he knows a lot of people inside who felt it wouldn’t hurt to have your team comply with a simple request. So, you’re telling me he’s this pissed off because he wanted you to continue and you told him your mission was done?”

“That’s the only thing within the scope of our duties that might have made him angry,” I hedged. It wasn’t our duty to tell our higher ups about our relationship with Bailey, though it might make the situation make more sense to the man.

“Hmmm...” There was a knowing look in his gaze, but he didn’t continue questioning us. “Then Senator Michaels will be disappointed to realize that we’re unwilling to discharge one of our finest Marine Force Recon Units over this. I’ll speak with you more when you return from leave, Captain Wolfe.”

“Thank you, Sir.” We turned and left his office. Movement down the hall drew my eye and I gave Senator Michaels a dark look as he stormed toward us. Figures he would be here. He might be a senator, but a Marine Colonel was not easily bullied, certainly not by a staffer or phone call. If he wanted action against us, he would have to drop in in person. I knew for a fact he was going to have a tough sell with our Colonel and the knot that had been forming in my gut all morning finally loosened.

“If you touch one hair on my daughter’s head, I’m going to make sure you can’t get a job anywhere. Not even the fucking local hamburger place will hire you once I’m finished!”

My lips twitched as I stared at him. He’d been smart enough not to get into my face, but he stood only a foot away, breathing heavily as he glared at me.

“We’ll do whatever we’d like with Bailey. She’s no longer your concern. We’ll protect her from now on,” I told him.

Jas was all but vibrating next to me. Kip had a hand on his bicep, keeping him from doing something stupid, like decking the mother fucker facing off with me.

“Mark my words,” Senator Michaels snarled. “You’re going to regret this.”

“You keep saying that, Senator,” I said, tilting my head and giving him a bored look. “You failed this time. You’ll fail every time, because you’re a failure. A complete fucking loser.”

With that, I motioned for my team to get out of there. We didn’t need to be brawling in the hall. Especially not with the likes of him. Despite my bravado that asshole had way more connections than we did. Now I just wanted to get home to

Bailey and put all this shit behind us. Her father wasn't going to let this go easily. We all knew it, but together we'd deal with whatever temper tantrums he threw and the fall out from them.

I doubted he could get us discharged. Even if he did, it didn't matter. I loved the Corps more than life itself. But I—we—loved Bailey even more than that.

CHAPTER 27



Bailey

I hummed as I loaded frosting into a piping bag. Jean had mentioned that one of her grandbabies was having a birthday in a few days and I offered to make a cake for the party. A party I was invited to.

Lowering the piping bag, I shook my head. Being with these men meant I was going to always be included in family events. A lot of family events since their family was huge. Wolfe's family was huge, I hadn't met Kip or Jasper's families and knew that it wasn't likely I ever would. Wolfe's family was their family, too.

Every weekend might be a barbeque on its own with most of the family getting together. It was mind blowing for me. My birthdays had usually been the servants making me a cake and celebrating with me because Dad almost always forgot.

Last year Amy had taken me home for Christmas and I'd gotten to spend the holiday with her wonderful family. Her mother and father had even bought me a present. Now, here I was with a potential family of my own and I wanted it so badly that my hands were shaking.

Not that I was only doing this for Wolfe's family. I wanted these three men. The family they came with was just the cherry on top. I spun the icing turntable and piped thick pink frosting on top of the cake and along the sides. Setting the bag

aside, I used my palette knife to spread the frosting until it covered the layers of spongy cake.

I'd texted Amy to thank her for the boxes of things she'd packed up for the guys to bring to me. They'd probably been expecting a lot of clothes and shoes, not boxes upon boxes of baking equipment. Not that I had everything here, but it would do until we could make a trip back to the apartment. I needed to speak to them about what the plan was. Thankfully, I had some time until fall semester started, but Amy would need to find another roommate if I wasn't going back. There was a little piece of me that didn't want to.

Now that I wasn't living under my dad's thumb, I could do whatever I wanted. I eyed the cake, happy with the base I'd put on it. I put new frosting in a new bag and began to decorate. The plan was to make a few different options for Jean to choose from. My eyes strayed over to the timer on the stove where I had more cake layers baking.

The guys had left early this morning for their base. Wolfe had mentioned that they had a meeting. It was giving me time to work through everything. My nerves settled as I fell into a rhythm and I wasn't sure how much time had passed, but a knock on the door made me jump.

Craning my neck, I saw Jean at the back door, smiling. "Come in!" I called out, greeting her when she walked through.

"Oh! Bailey!" Her eyes were wide as she took in the three cakes on the counter. The round vanilla cake was pink with white frosting decorating it in swirls and slashes. The second was a square chocolate with purple and a layer of pink that dripped down the sides like paint had been spilled. The third was a half vanilla and half chocolate rectangle, also pink, but it had a fairytale scene made out of fondant.

"I can do any of them and mix and match decorations. Whatever you want," I told her. My fingers itched to fix a small flaw on the last cake, but I forced myself to leave it alone.

“They’re so beautiful,” she whispered, approaching as if any sudden movements would cause them to collapse. “I didn’t mean for you to do all this work.”

“Honestly, it feels really good to be able to bake again,” I admitted with a small smile. “I’ve been feeling so out of my element for so long now, this was a chance to dive back in.” And I meant it too. It wasn’t just getting back into baking that was making me happy. It was the lack of guilt, the absence of fear. Before, I was always afraid that my father would erupt and end my baking career before it began. Now, I felt perfectly relaxed and was thoroughly enjoying myself.

“I could pay you for all of them,” she offered.

“Oh no.” I shook my head. “I was hoping this could be my present to Ivy.” Her granddaughter was turning six.

“If you’re sure, then that princess cake would be a huge hit.”

“Great! I’ll remake it for the day of the party. Would you like something to drink?”

Jean laughed softly. “My sons don’t have much in the way of drinks here. They don’t have a lot of guests and usually come over to my place to pilfer what they can.” She paused, her eyes narrowing on the cakes. “Come to think of it, they wouldn’t have had enough to make even one of those cakes.”

“There’s a store just up the road,” I said with a laugh. “I borrowed Jas’s car.” I poured a cup of coffee that I’d made with my French press and set it in front of her.

Jean’s eyes closed as she sampled it. “Well, now I’ll be coming over here each morning and pilfering from them.” She shook her head in amusement as I set a muffin in front of her.

I sat down beside her and smiled when she groaned as she bit into the blueberry muffin. “You’re welcome anytime.” I hesitated a moment before admitting, “I didn’t have a great relationship with my dad growing up and I didn’t have anyone else. I’m not really used to a large family, but being welcomed so fully into yours has made me so happy I could just sit here and cry.”

Jean's eyes softened and she reached out and grabbed my hand, squeezing it. "It only took about a minute to see the way my sons look at you. You already have their hearts, they're just trying to take it slow so they don't spook you. You will always be welcome in our family."

Tears pooled behind my eyes and I nodded, looking down so I could blink them away. I knew that she meant every word of it. This was what it was like to have a mother. I wished it was something I'd always had, but since I hadn't I was grateful to have it now. With her.

We chatted while she finished her coffee and muffin and then she left. I'd only been cleaning my mess in the kitchen for about ten minutes when the guys showed up. I eyed them as they walked in. They looked incredible in their fancy uniforms. "Do you always wear those to meetings?" I asked. Kip had explained that these were their Marine Dress Uniforms. Of all the military services dress uniforms, each sexy in their own right, the Marine uniform was by far the best. It was all I could do to form words with the three of them standing there.

They exchanged glances and worry clawed at my stomach. Something was wrong.

"Give us a minute while we change. Then we'll talk," Wolfe told me. They each gave me a kiss as they headed upstairs.

It didn't take long before they were back downstairs. Wolfe's hands wrapped around my shoulders and he sat me down at the table. They were all quiet as they sat too.

My eyes flicked between their faces. "What's wrong?" I finally asked.

"We went back and forth with whether we should tell you this or not..." Wolfe started.

"We don't want to keep anything from you," Kip explained.

"Your dad was the reason we had to go to this meeting."

My eyes widened as Wolfe's words sunk in. "Oh." I wasn't sure what else to say. I opted to wait to see what was going on.

"He tried to get us discharged," Jas snarled, anger clouding his face.

My heart sank in my chest. Dad had threatened to do that, but I was hoping that maybe he'd just let me go. That maybe this was my chance to get away from him and find some happiness. But the great and mighty senator just could not leave me alone.

"He was not successful," Wolfe told me.

I looked up and found his eyes boring into me. Hope was a dim flicker, trying to chase away my fear.

"Turns out they want to keep us around more than they want to please a senator," Kip said with a grin.

I peeked over at Jas. "So that's it?"

"No," Jas replied. "Guaranteed he'll try again."

I sighed and stared down at the table. "I'm so sorry he's causing you trouble." I started to stand until a hand clamped down on my shoulder.

Jas forced me to sit back down. "Where you going, Brat?" His eyes were narrowed. They were all silent as they waited for my response.

"My father is trying to get you fired," I explained, unsure of what they were confused about.

"Yeah? So?" Kip asked.

"I can go," I offered. "If I leave he'll turn his attention to just me and you won't have to-"

"Not happening."

Looking over, I blinked slowly at Jas. His expression had softened. "But I thought-"

"You thought that because I was pissed at your dad that it extended to you? Get this through your head, Bailey. Nothing he does will ever make me angry with you. You aren't

responsible for the tantrums he throws. Nor will he ever have any say over our relationship.”

My breath caught in my throat because Jas had hit the nail on the head. I’d spent most of my life cleaning up after my father’s bouts of rage. I’d tried my best to make sure that nothing ever went wrong so he wouldn’t get angry in the first place. And, inevitably, I always failed.

“We aren’t letting you go anywhere, Bunny,” Wolfe told me with a serious look on his face. “We just don’t want to keep you in the dark about what your father’s doing. That will just bite us in the ass later on.”

“We’ll keep you in the loop,” Kip added, “as long as you do us a favor.”

“...okay.”

“No feeling bad about the stunts he pulls. No feeling guilty that he’s trying to come for us. That’s what he wants. He’s using us to get to you. We knew it would happen.”

“We’re here to protect you,” Wolfe said.

“From everything,” Jas agreed. “Even dickhead fathers.”

It took me a minute to realize tears were dripping down my face. I’d never had anyone willing to stand up for me this way. I crawled over onto Wolfe’s lap and he settled me against his large chest.

“Agreed?” he asked.

I nodded. My gasp was loud in the room as he lifted me in his arms as he stood. “What are you doing?”

“It’s time to make you ours.”

My core flared to life as desire at his words pounded inside my belly. I had a feeling I knew exactly what that meant and I was finally ready for it. They’d already proven they would never do anything to hurt me. Now I wanted to see how much pleasure they could bring.

CHAPTER 28



Bailey

In one way or another, I'd already been with each of these men, but the idea of all three of their attention being on me at the same time had nerves fluttering in my chest.

I wasn't about to say anything. I'd wanted them for so long and this was finally our chance. They were going to 'make me theirs'. I cuddled closer to Wolfe's chest. There was no way they'd let anything bad happen. I trusted them completely.

He kicked open the door to his room and sat me down on the bed. Kip came and sat next to me and kissed me. My lips softened for his as he brushed his tongue against mine. I wanted everything they were going to give me. Excitement had my core clenching and goosebumps rising on my skin.

Wolfe was turning off the harsh light over head, then flicking on the lamp, giving a soft glow to the room.

My heart swelled. They wanted to make this good for me and even though Jasper was watching me like he wanted to pounce, he was holding back. Kip's kisses were drugging, pulling me under as his hands roamed over my body.

It took me a few minutes to realize there were more hands than just his. His lips left mine and he grinned when I let out a whimper and tried to follow him to keep the pleasant sensations going.

Jasper stripped off my shirt and that yanked me out of the spell Kip had woven over me. I blinked up at him, folding my arms over my chest. I still had my bra on. It was more reflex than anything. They'd already seen me naked.

The bed shifted under Wolfe's weight as he moved in behind me. He tugged my arms down. "Don't hide from us, Bailey."

Jasper unhooked my bra and pulled it away while Wolfe pinned my arms to my side. They looked their fill and the appreciation that was there in their gazes had my skin warming.

"Someone touch me," I demanded. Later, I'd look back and wonder who this girl was? But right now, in the moment, I wanted their hands and mouths on me. Wanted it so badly it felt like I was going to spiral out of control.

Wolfe's hands cupped my breasts and I let my head fall back against his shoulder. His fingers toyed with my nipples, causing me to suck in a breath, then sigh with pleasure.

Jasper was already working at the jeans I was wearing. It made me wonder if they had roles in all of this? Was Jas the one who would always get me naked?

I couldn't help the smile that formed at the thought.

"What are you laughing about, Beauty?" Kip asked.

I shook my head, then turned it so that our lips met again. I wanted them to whisk me away to a place where thoughts didn't matter. My hips lifted, allowing Jasper to remove both my jeans and panties in one swoop.

Before I could say anything, I found myself lying on my back, my head pillowed in Wolfe's lap. Kip leaned over and sucked one of my aching tips into his mouth. Moaning, I squirmed as Wolfe pinched my other nipple.

They kept me distracted long enough that it was a shock when Jasper gave my pussy a long, slow lick. My head rose and I looked down at him where he was lying between my thighs.

There were so many hands and mouths all over my body, it was hard to process who was doing what, but they were slowly building up the flames, stoking my passions. My hips were rocking against Jasper's mouth as my tongue danced with Wolfe's. He was bent nearly in half as he kissed me and I felt his hard dick beneath my head. I wanted to roll and free it from its confines.

I wasn't going anywhere until these men allowed me to, though. Kip's hand was pinning down my hip. Jasper's were spreading my thighs wide so he could suck on my clit, and Wolfe had one massive hand wrapped around my neck.

I was drowning in the pleasure they were creating. The sensations swamped me as they lifted me higher. I broke apart against Jasper's tongue, crying out into Wolfe's mouth as my orgasm shattered me.

There wasn't time to be grateful it wasn't Kip between my legs—because he'd already be building me back up toward another orgasm—because Jasper flipped me over.

I gasped, catching myself on my hands and knees as Jasper shoved off his jeans. His shirt had already disappeared. I looked at him over my shoulder, eyelids heavy as I watched him kneel behind me and line his cock up with my body. We'd already had the sex talk and we knew we were all clean and that I had an IUD. There was no reason to stop him as he manhandled my body into the position he wanted so he could fuck me.

We both groaned as he pressed inside of my slick pussy, filling me to the brink of pain. A hand in my hair forced me to look forward again and I saw Wolfe reclining backward, his own pants shoved down, dick waiting for attention.

I licked my lips, eyeing it as Jasper sank fully into me. Leaning forward, I teased the head of Wolfe's cock, enjoying the salty flavor of his pre-cum. Masculine groans were like music to my ears as I let my mouth sink down on his shaft.

"Fuck she looks so good swallowing you down," Kip muttered.

I cast him a sideways glance and found him on his side, his hand wrapped around his own cock as he watched me get spit-roasted by his friends. After a few strokes, he grabbed my hand and wrapped it around his dick.

My left forearm and knees were holding up my weight and I moaned around Wolfe's cock as Jasper slammed into me so hard it rocked me forward.

Wolfe groaned as the tip of his dick dipped into the back of my throat. I gagged and backed off, but Jasper's next thrust set up a pounding rhythm, one they both seemed to be enjoying.

Wolfe's hands were buried in my hair, preventing me from shifting and easing off his enormous dick. I was forced to swallow it down or choke on it as Jasper's cock slammed against a spot inside me that was hurtling me toward my second orgasm.

I couldn't focus on all three of them at once, but Kip didn't seem to mind. His hand was over mine, forcing me to jack him as he watched me get fucked. His eyes took on a wicked glint when he caught me watching him and his free hand sank down between my thighs.

Gasping around Wolfe's length, I tried to wiggle away from Kip's finger. He was stroking my clit and I was so close to coming. The intense pleasure that was barreling down on me was frightening. I wasn't sure I'd make it through this orgasm. Kip wouldn't let me move away, though, and Jasper's hands were gripping my hips so hard, there was nowhere to go even if Kip did allow the small movement.

The friction Jasper was building inside of me was setting me on fire. I'd wondered before how I'd feel, making love to three men at once. I was a dirty girl, because I fucking loved it.

Wolfe grunted, my only warning as his cum started gushing into my mouth. I was swallowing that down when Kip pinched my clit, causing my body to break apart. I cried out, spasming around Jasper.

It set off a chain reaction, because Jasper thrust into me as hard as he could. I could feel him unloading inside of me. I shuddered as I felt his cum bathing the walls of my pussy.

He pulled out and I was about to slump down onto the bed when Kip hauled me up over him. “My turn, Beauty. I want to watch you ride me.”

My eyes widened, but his hands forced me down onto his long, curving cock and I moaned as he filled me. There’d been a moment after Jasper had pulled out where I’d felt empty. I had a feeling I’d likely never feel that way again. Not with three men all ravenous for me.

His hands urged my hips to move and I gasped as he scraped against my front wall, causing my clit to throb and twitch. I was going to be sore tomorrow, but it didn’t seem to matter. I was already searching for that next orgasm, greedy and drunk on the pleasure, wanting more.

I’d never been one to be insatiable in bed, but these guys changed that for me. Soon I was bouncing on Kip, his eyes and hands roaming over my body as I rode toward the finish line.

A pair of arms wrapped around me, pulling me back against a hard chest. Tipping my head back, I kissed Wolfe as Kip surged up into me, keeping the pace I’d started. Wolfe’s fingers plucked my nipples, causing sharp twinges to dart directly to my clit. I moaned against his tongue, begging for more.

One hand slid down and he began rubbing my clit in time to Kip’s thrusts. They somehow knew exactly what I needed. How my body would respond to their touches. I belonged to them.

I came again, screaming my completion into Wolfe’s mouth. The orgasm was so strong it bordered on pain and all I could do was ride the wave and shake as I felt Kip come along with me.

Wolfe lifted me into his arms and I snuggled close, not caring where we were going. He started the shower and I let

him wash me as the others changed the sheets on the bed.

I didn't care that my hair was soaked as we climbed into bed and he wrapped his arms around me. The other two flopped down on either side of us and we ended up lying there in the silence together.

CHAPTER 29



Jas

“Ten bucks says you get in trouble,” Kip wagered with a grin on his face.

Looking up from the massive box I was wrapping, I held out a hand. “Deal.”

We shook on it and I went back to folding the wrapping paper in impeccably neat lines. Gift wrapping was no different than making your bed. Keep it tight, fold the corners precisely, no wrinkles. I honed in on that level of detail while I was in basic training. It stuck with me.

I’d spent more than a month researching this gift for Bailey’s birthday. No way was I losing this bet. Kip didn’t know that, though. I treated gifts with the same level of attention I gave to everything. Presents were another mission. *Understand the target—Bailey—understand the objective—make her squeal with happiness—and the plan just unfolds itself.*

A couple months had passed since she’d come to live with us and with each day that went by I knew more and more that she was everything I’d ever wanted. I’d never thought it was truly possible to fall in love. She’d blown that theory right out of the water and sunk my heart right along with it. She was sweet, kind, gorgeous, and so giving we had no problem making room for her in our lives. It was like she’d clicked right in, like a piece of the puzzle we never knew was missing.

Tonight was her birthday. We'd asked Jean and Ray to hold off on the huge family celebration—that was tomorrow night—so that we could give her a night from just us.

As we'd learned more and more about her we realized all the ways her father had hurt her over the years. And yet, somehow she was still incredibly kind to others.

“Would you quit breathing down my neck?” I snapped at Kip, shooting him a glare. “Aren't you supposed to be making her a cake?”

“I did.”

My brows shot up. “You already baked and frosted a cake for her?”

“Like it was hard,” he said, a smug smile on his face.

“You're an idiot,” I replied with a chuckle. “Choosing to bake the cake for a baker.”

“Better than making dinner. Wolfe got the short end of the stick. Though I don't think it's fair that all you had to do was hang up some decorations.”

I shrugged. “Should have been quicker when Wolfe offered up the duties.”

We both looked up when we heard a car door slam outside. Bailey had gotten a job at a bakery up the road. We'd had a serious talk about what she wanted to do with her life and she'd admitted to us that she didn't want to finish out her degree. She wanted to use her time to gain as much experience as she could and one day open her own bakery.

We were fully on board with that. It was easier to keep an eye on her that way. Not that there'd been any trouble. We'd settled into a routine, but I was on edge, almost like I was waiting for the other shoe to drop. Wolfe had put us in for a mission that kept us stateside for up to six months, possibly longer. That meant we wouldn't have to leave Bailey alone. At least not until we figured out if what had started in Colombia was the end of things. The closer the senator's re-election came, the more trouble we expected. It was only a few months away now.

I hefted the huge box into my arms and followed Kip out of the room. Setting the box down in front of the couch, I went into the kitchen and pulled Bailey out of Wolfe's arms, giving her a deep kiss. "Hey, Brat. Happy Birthday." I grinned down at her.

Her beautiful green eyes sparkled up at me and my heart tried to punch its way out of my chest. "What's all this?" she asked.

"Birthday celebration," Wolfe said. "You get the rest of the family's tomorrow."

Her happy laugh echoed around the room. "You guys are spoiling me."

"Probably," I admitted.

We listened to her talk about her day while we ate the steaks that Wolfe had grilled. As soon as dinner was over Kip presented the cake he'd made.

He frowned down at the mess of frosting that had dripped off the cake and onto the platter. Bailey had her hand over her mouth as she smothered her laughter. I didn't bother. It roared out of me as I saw the confused look on his face and the sad lump that was the cake.

"What the fuck did you do to it?" I wheezed out between laughs.

"It's okay," Bailey said, giving Kip a side hug and glaring at me. "You just tried to put the frosting on while the cake was still warm. Happens all the time."

Kip gave her an apologetic smile. She patted his arm and blew out her candles, then forced us to eat a piece of Kip's cake. It wasn't one of Bailey's that was for sure. I wondered if it was considered poor form to have the birthday girl make her own cake from now on? Probably. We'd just have to buy one. None of us were skilled enough for this shit.

My heart picked up speed as we sat her in the living room. It was time for gifts. I'd taken a risk, but I was betting on it paying off. If I knew my brat, she was going to love it.

Wolfe gave her his gift first. She gasped in delight at the airline tickets he had in a small box. It'd be our first trip together, all four of us, because no one was fucking counting Colombia.

Kip gave her a diamond necklace and she blushed as he put it on her. It suited her perfectly. We'd all chipped in on each of the gifts, pooled our money together, though we each chose our own. It was her first birthday with us so no expense was spared.

I shoved the heavy box over the wood floor until it sat in front of her. She studied it and then looked up at me with her brows pulled low. I motioned for her to open it.

She happily tore at the wrapping and as soon as the box underneath came into view she froze. Her eyes whipped up to mine. "You..." She trailed off and stared down at the box again. "This isn't like something else in this box right?"

"Nope," I told her, my grin growing huge.

"You're serious? Like, this isn't a joke?"

"Nope."

She burst out crying. Like full on sobs and the smile died on my face.

Kip leaned over and muttered. "I told you not to get her anything with a cord. It's like a rule, bro. It's *the* rule."

I punched him in the arm, then got up and went to sit next to her. Before I could say anything she flung herself into my arms.

"Thank you!"

Relief about caused my lungs to collapse when I realized she wasn't upset. "These are happy tears?" Tears coming from women were a pretty normal thing for me. Happy tears, that was new.

"Oh my God, yes!" She wiped the tears and sniffed, then shifted the paper away from the box fully. "I can't believe you got me an Ankarsrum Mixer!" She paused, then looked over at me. "How did you know I've been wanting one?"

“I spoke to Gina,” I admitted. Bailey’s boss had been all too happy to tell me which appliance my girlfriend had been drooling over. The fact that the huge bastard had come from Sweden had been a bit of a shock, but I’d made it happen.

“Thank you,” she said again and hugged me.

“Well if she’s excited about that wait until she sees the vacuum we got her,” Kip said.

We all looked over at him, Bailey was glaring, and we shot him bemused looks. He winced when he saw Bailey’s expression.

“You just can’t help yourself, can you?” Wolfe asked him. Kip just shrugged and gave Bailey a winning smile.

“Thank you all,” she said, looking around at us. “I love all of my presents.” She hesitated, then seemed to come to some kind of decision. “I have one for you, too.”

Wolfe narrowed his eyes. “That’s not how birthdays work, Bunny.”

She got up and went to her purse, pulling something out and handing it to him. He froze, then his eyes shot up to hers. He handed it off to me while he stood and pulled her into a rib cracking hug.

I stared down at the pee stick I was holding, shock freezing me as well. I didn’t recover as quickly as Wolfe had. “You’re pregnant?” I asked, voice sounding a bit choked.

She looked worried. She didn’t need to. I was fucking thrilled. I tossed it at Kip and leapt off the couch. It was my turn for a hug and I twirled her around.

“I thought you had an IUD?” Kip asked, confused.

“I do,” she said, shaking her head. “I don’t know what happened.”

“Jesus,” I muttered. “Is that safe for the baby?”

“I mean he or she managed to implant despite the birth control, so I can’t imagine it’s too dangerous, but I have a

doctor appointment on Tuesday to get it removed and check everything out.”

“We’ll go with you,” Wolfe offered, pulling her back into his arms after Kip had a round of hugs.

She looked around at us. “Are you...okay with this?”

“Fuck yeah!” Kip said with a grin. “This is awesome.”

“What he said,” Wolfe replied with a chuckle.

“We want you, Brat,” I told her. “Forever. Starting a family with you is exactly what each of us wants.”

It was like all the stress left her body all at once. “I don’t really know how to navigate this. We’ve really only just begun this relationship and now we’re adding kids.”

“We’ll figure it out together,” Wolfe told her, then gave her a kiss.

CHAPTER 30



Bailey

I touched my rounding belly. It had been months since I'd told the guys I was pregnant and they were treating me like a literal queen. Breakfast in bed. Foot massages. I almost wasn't looking forward to giving birth because I wasn't sure it would all continue. Then I remembered the prize I would get and would get excited all over again.

There had never been a time in my life when I'd been so content. So damn happy. I had three men who loved me. Their family who I adored. And soon we'd be starting our own. I hadn't heard much from my father. Just a few voicemails here and there about how I was ruining his life and was going to lose him this election. Then there would be the random two AM rant about how my whoring with three Marines would ruin his reputation forever. *As if that would bring me back to his good graces.* He really thought he could shame me back to him. He had no idea about how happy I was.

Honestly, I hadn't been following his campaign trail. I didn't care one way or another how it ended. I was just looking forward to it being over with. The election was a week away. After that, I would be free. He'd have no reason to call anymore. At least not until the next time, but hopefully by then he'll have chalked me up to a failure and moved on without plans to use me.

As far as I knew everything with Peter Coleman was finished, too. I hadn't heard anything from the authorities, but the guys mentioned it could take a while before his trial. I mostly just tried not to think about him. He was locked up and couldn't get to me. Or so I hoped. I knew my guys weren't going to let anything happen to me and I refused to live in fear.

It was my day off and I was lounging in a pair of sweats and a tank top while reading in front of the fireplace. The weather had turned cold and the threat of snow was in the air.

I snuggled further under my blanket, swept away in the pirate fantasy book I was reading. She and the pirate lord were just about to kiss when a loud pounding yanked me back into the present and made me jump.

"What the hell?" I grumbled, getting up to go to the front door. Wolfe's family used the back door more than the front typically. They also rarely knocked without sticking a head in and calling out for us.

The guys were at work, though I knew they had their dad watching over the property and house. Jean wasn't ever very far away either. It'd been six months since my kidnapping in Colombia, and I finally had settled and wasn't jumping at every shadow. Sleeping with one of the guys each night helped with that. No one would dare to pry me out of their arms.

I got off the couch and approached the door. My jaw dropped when I saw through the windows who was standing outside. Unease filled me as I debated on what to do.

Dad took the decision out of my hands and opened the door and stepped inside, huddled inside his thousand-dollar coat. "Really, Bailey. Did I teach you such poor manners that you'd leave a guest cooling his heels on the porch. A man could freeze to death out there."

We rarely locked the door since we were so far outside the city. Our property wasn't in the nearby town and usually it was only Wolfe's family out here. From now on, I was going to start locking that.

My jaw moved but no sounds were coming out of my mouth. I'd only heard angry rantings from him over the last few months so I never expected him to show up here.

His eyes narrowed on my stomach and his jaw clenched. "I see I'm going to be a grandfather."

My brows shot up. When I'd told him I was dating all three of my Marines he'd blown a gasket and threatened us. Then he'd tried to get them fired from their jobs. He failed. I should have known that he wouldn't just stop there. "Why are you here?" *Playing nice. Being fake.* I kept those thoughts to myself.

"I want a relationship with you," he snapped. He moved over and sat down on the couch.

Everything inside of me was screaming to offer him some coffee. I had been taught manners, but it'd been by the butler—Mr. Ferguson—and his wife, not by Dad.

I sat down in a chair across from him, wariness forcing me to swallow any show of thoughtfulness. He'd burned me too many times. And here he was barking at me as usual. The words might have been sweet, but his tone soured everything. "Why?"

"Why do you think?" he all but growled at me.

"If I had to make a guess I'd say that the press was wondering why your daughter is never around anymore and you're desperate to make them believe nothing's wrong." I bit back the sarcastic tone and the words came out a bit robotic, but I truly believed them.

He glared at me. "Shows what you know. The press hasn't said a word about you. I made sure of it. What else could I do when you're shacking up with three men?"

Shacking up. That was his attempt to say it nicely. I could see the judgment, the disgust in his eyes.

I gritted my teeth and gave him a hard look. "If you're going to speak badly about me, you won't be doing it in my home. You can leave."

The fact that my simple words left him looking so shocked told me just how much I'd always given into him. I'd done so much growing in the last six months, without him there to verbally beat me down, I almost didn't recognize the woman I was anymore.

"I need your help," Dad finally admitted.

"With what?"

"There's a ball-"

"No." I shook my head when he gave me an imploring look. "I'm finished with your political world, Dad. If you want some kind of relationship with me and your grandchild it will only be one where we stay out of the press. I'm not putting my kid through what you did to me. My child will not be a pawn for campaigning."

"As if you had that bad of a childhood," he responded with a disgusted snort.

I didn't bother to argue with him. "If you want a relationship it will have nothing to do with politics, the press, or events."

The silence was heavy between us as he studied me. "Fine." With that, he got up and walked out the door.

I sat in my chair, numb. There was nothing he could do that would shock me anymore. Him walking away, honestly, was a blessing. One I'd take happily.

Getting up, I made myself a cup of hot chocolate. I settled back down in front of the fireplace, determined to get back into my book. In reality, I stared at the words until they blurred in front of my eyes, not really seeing them.

Was this how it would be? Him randomly popping up out of nowhere, forcing me to reassert my boundaries every time and making me miserable? God. I hoped not.

The fire was smoldering embers by the time I was shaken out of my trance like state.

"What the fuck, Brat? It's freezing in here," Jasper barked, yanking me against him.

I blinked and looked around. My mug of untouched chocolate was sitting on the glass side table and it was dark.

“Why are all the lights out?” Kip asked.

Wolfe was watching me with narrowed eyes. “What happened?”

“Sorry, I was just...thinking.” I cringed when anger washed over all of their faces.

“How long have you been sitting here like this, Beauty?”

One hour? Three? I wasn't about to tell them that. They'd just worry. “Not long.”

“Do we need to keep one of us here every day to make sure you're taking care of yourself?” Wolfe asked, voice low and dangerous. “Because we will.”

“No. Really, I'm fine.”

“Then explain what happened.” He looked pissed and I understood why.

I hadn't been like this for a while. Not since being in contact with my father. They all suspected what I was about to say. “Dad stopped by.”

A chorus of cursing cut me off and I shook my head. “I sent him away. Everything is fine.”

“Is it, Brat? Is that why you're sitting in the cold dark house staring at a dying fire like you've been drugged?”

“I wasn't drugged, Jasper. You're overreacting.” My eyes widened when something dangerous flashed over his face. That had been the wrong thing to say.

“Overreacting? I'll show you overreacting.” He pulled me up into his arms, carrying me bride-style upstairs. I had zero doubts that if I wasn't pregnant he'd have tossed me over his shoulder like a caveman. I spent more time than I cared to admit dangling over their shoulders.

I watched Jasper suspiciously as he set me gently down on Wolfe's bed. He wasn't usually the gentle type, though this pregnancy had shown that he certainly was capable of it.

My lips rolled in and I bit them to keep from groaning as the three of them stood in front of me, tearing off their clothes. Light shined off washboard abs and tattoos and I was seconds away from drooling.

As soon as my bump had started making an appearance I'd begun getting self-conscious of my changing body, but the guys didn't seem to mind. In fact, they went out of their way to compliment everything that was happening to me while I grew our child.

Kip sat in front of me on the bed and cupped my breasts. "I can't wait until these have milk in them." He licked his lips before leaning down to nibble at one, then the other.

"You're gross," I told him on a gasp.

"Naw, just always wanted to see what it tastes like from the tap. As an adult," he added, then winked at me.

I couldn't respond to his playful teasing because Jasper was kissing me. They took my breath away. All of them. Somehow I'd been lucky enough for lightning to strike three times for me.

CHAPTER 31



Wolfe

I took my time taking off Bailey's clothes while the other two distracted her. Kissing along each area of skin I exposed, I relished the little sounds she was making.

My bed was the biggest of all of ours and so we always came in here, but I was considering getting a bigger one. There was only just enough space for the four of us on it if we were careful and one of these days I wanted to have a free for all on here. It'd have to wait until after she'd given birth so that we could be a little rougher. Somehow I knew she'd be down for that.

I planted my wide shoulders between her legs and gave her a testing lick. She tasted so fucking good. I could eat this pussy all night and never get enough. I knew the others agreed with me because there were times when Kip did exactly that.

It didn't take long before she was rocking against my face, begging for more while the other two teased and tormented her nipples. Rolling onto my back, I picked her up and settled her down over my hips.

Her dark eyebrow rose. "I'm not sure I can get you all the way inside of me in this position," she teased.

She liked to give me shit about how big my dick was—as if that was anything but a compliment—but she wrapped her fist around me and guided herself down.

My eyes closed as she sank down onto my length. The feel of her silky cunt squeezing me was almost enough to make me blow my load without any other movement. When I was fully seated inside of her she leaned over and kissed me. We were chest to chest and she gave me a wicked smile, before looking over her shoulder.

“I want you all inside of me.”

The look on Jas and Kip’s faces made me laugh, but my dick kicked inside of her, throbbing at the idea of what she was asking for.

“You sure, Brat?” Jas asked.

She moved her hips—causing me to groan—and essentially waving her ass at them.

“Jesus,” I muttered, trying to restrain myself. It was taking all my control not to flip her over and pound into her until we both came.

There were quick mutterings from the other two as they figured out where they were going and then Kip shuffled around until he was at our heads, facing us.

“If you drop your nuts onto my forehead, I’ll fucking rip them off,” I warned him, glaring up at him.

A quick look of disappointment shifted over his face, telling me that’s exactly what he’d planned to do, before he shook it off. “Just here to get my dick sucked by a beautiful woman,” he said. “Fuck off and mind your own business.”

I snorted and shook my head, looking forward. There wasn’t going to be any coming for me if I had to stare up at his fucking balls the whole time. Instead, I’d look at my beautiful girlfriend’s tits as they bounced. Flexing my hips, I shifted her to get the right sway I wanted from her breasts.

Jas was behind her with a bottle of lube and my balls tingled when I thought about fucking that sweet little ass. One of these days it’d be my turn, though I’d happily let them open her up a little before that day came.

The sound of her sucking on Kip had me shutting my eyes in frustration. I was ready to feel her sliding over me, but needed to wait. That wasn't easy when she was gagging herself on his cock. She'd gone from this sweet naive little woman to a complete fucking siren. We'd shown her what we liked and she never hesitated to do it. She took pride in wringing our souls from our bodies at every available opportunity.

Her gasp was loud and had my eyes snapping open. She turned her head and looked back at Jas, her eyes wide. "Oh, God."

"You asked for it," I told her with a smug grin. Wrapping my arms around her, I held her down against my chest. Kip's dick would have to wait until Jas had his cock fully seated inside her ass. We'd been playing with her for months now, but this was the first time she'd asked to go all the way. If she changed her mind we'd listen, but I was secretly hoping she didn't.

"Oh, fuuuuck," she moaned out.

Jas's face was set in a mask of torment as he tried to slowly slide into her. Her body was so fucking hot and welcoming it wasn't easy to do anything slowly, but he managed.

We were all panting hard by the time his hips were resting against her ass cheeks.

"How does she feel?" Kip asked, a dangerous look in his eyes.

"Fucking perfect," Jas growled, flexing his hips a little.

Her pussy tightened around me at the movement and I groaned. "I'm not going to be able to fucking hold still for long," I warned.

"Give me a minute," she said, breathless.

We'd give her as long as she needed to adjust, but it wouldn't be easy.

I gritted my teeth as Jas started slowly withdrawing and pushing back into her. Her body was sliding against mine, but I forced myself to stay still while he opened her up so he could thrust harder.

“Fuck that looks hot,” Kip commented. “You like taking two dicks, Beauty?”

Her moan vibrated across my chest. She was face down in my neck, breathing heavily as Jas moved inside her ass.

“Tell him if it hurts,” I ordered her.

“It doesn’t!” she cried out as Jas thrust a little harder. “It feels so...good.”

That was because we’d been preparing her and I knew from the lube dripping down onto my shins that Jas had all but used the entire bottle to ease his passage. We wanted this to be mind blowing for her, not traumatizing.

Her body rocked against mine as Jas fucked her and something inside of me broke. I couldn’t hold it anymore. My hips flexed, fucking up into her hot little cunt.

Kip’s hand passed my field of vision and gripped her hair, pulling her torso upward until he could stuff her mouth full of his cock. “You like having all your holes stuffed, Baby?”

I snarled in pleasure at hearing that. Kip was the fucking talker...in every situation, including the bedroom. It wasn’t like she could answer him since his dick was rammed down her throat, but all of us enjoyed hearing the dirty, nasty, things we were doing to her vocalized.

“You like having your asshole stuffed full of cock?”

My fingers tightened on her hips as she mumbled around his shaft. Fuck that was so sexy. One of these days I’d have to install a mirror above our bed. I wanted to watch her get fucked by us.

The idea had no sooner entered my mind than she was crying out and coming around us. A chorus of our cursing told me that her body clamping down on them and spasming was

doing the same to them as it was me. I buried myself as deep inside her wet pussy as I could and came.

I rubbed my hand up and down her spine as the others disentangled themselves then flopped next to us. Limbs were everywhere. We'd get up soon and clean up, but for now we all just laid there enjoying the aftermath.

* * *

I TAPPED my finger against my leg as I waited for Z to pick up the phone. For once, I was letting Jas drive. Kip was pouting in the back because he never got to drive. We'd seen his 'skills' on the emergency driving course when we'd cross trained with a local police unit. Neither of us were willing to take the chance after that day and he'd been banished to the back seat despite his many excuses.

"Wolfe! Thanks for calling me back."

Z had left a voicemail that I'd gotten once we'd made the decision to pay a visit to Bailey's father.

"No problem. I appreciate that you're still looking into this for me. I crossed all the names off the last list you sent." Z had sent me about sixty names and we'd painstakingly crossed each and every one off by paying the people on it a visit. They were all clear. There was just something bothering me about the whole thing. Coleman was in solitary and had been since he'd been arrested. They claimed he jumped a guard and couldn't be trusted. That meant we hadn't been able to get in there and talk to him. Only his attorney was allowed to visit at this point.

It was bothering me not knowing why he'd go after Bailey like that. He didn't know her. What kind of trade secrets could she have overheard in the tiny span of time she told me about that would make him believe she was a threat.

Since the police had their man they were finished with the investigation, but I wanted to be as thorough as possible. If it was Coleman, then so be it. He would get tried and sentenced and I'd be glad for it.

“I only have three left. If it wasn’t one of these three,” she paused, then sighed, “then I’m going to have to say it really was Coleman who kidnapped your girlfriend.”

“The fact that you’ve continued to help us at all is appreciated Z. Especially after your newest addition arrived. Congrats by the way.”

“Thanks Wolfe. You’re the sweetest. Listen...I sent the names over to your cell.” It dinged in my ear. “There’s a name on there that...well I don’t know how you’re going to feel about it, but I wanted to be thorough. The only way this would have been someone else means they had to have the power and connections to be able to frame Coleman. That’s why I added the name on there. Though I don’t know what kind of man would do that sort of thing to his own flesh and blood, he’s the only one on the list that meets that criteria.”

I thanked her again and disconnected the call. Pulling up my text messages, I stared down at the names and couldn’t help but laugh.

“What’s so funny?” Jas asked.

“Z is down to the last three names on the list for us.”

“Okay...” Kip replied, waiting for the funny part.

“Senator Michaels is the last name.”

I turned in my seat and looked over my shoulder at Kip. His jaw was hanging open as his mind processed what that meant.

“He wouldn’t have... Would he? ...That’s fucking cold. Even for him.”

“Ever see what happens when a candidate gets attacked on stage, or has cancer? Or has a wife or kid die while they are campaigning? They almost always get elected. Sympathy vote,” I said. Now that the idea had been planted in my head, it made total sense.

“Given the last few months, I wouldn’t put it past him,” Jas growled, his hands tightening on the wheel until his

knuckles were bone white. “And if he did, I’m going to pound the shit out of him.”

“And I’ll let you,” I agreed.

The rest of the drive was made in silence. The tension in the air was so thick you could cut it with a knife. Each of us was lost in our own thoughts, but I knew we were all contemplating what this would do to Bailey if it was the truth and she found out.

“If it’s true...” Jas said as he pulled into the wide gravel drive that led up to the senator’s mansion. “Maybe...”

“We don’t have to tell her,” Kip finished.

I sighed. “We’ll see.” I’d rather not tell her either, but if her father was going to continue being a threat then she’d need to know. Besides, the truth always had a way of getting out, and we’d promised not to lie to her.

We got out of the SUV as it pulled to a stop and made our way up the steps. I didn’t bother to knock, just pushed open the door and walked into the foyer.

Senator Michaels was putting a coat on and he looked genuinely shocked to see us. “If you came here to tell me to stay away from Bailey she did a pretty good job of letting me know where I stand by herself.” He gave us a disdainful look.

“That’s originally why we were coming here,” I told him. “Then we learned something else and needed to speak to you.”

He handed his hat over to the butler, who then disappeared. “What’s that?”

“Did you finish the investigation into Bailey’s kidnapping?” I asked.

“Yes, and they arrested Peter Coleman. What is this? I don’t have time for stupid games.”

“Did you bother to look at anyone other than Peter?”

“Why would I? He was the only one who had any kind of motive.”

Except we don't know what that motive is. He is telling lies. “There was at least one other person.” Why hadn't I seen it before? He looked nervous. I guess I just hadn't considered that her father would take things that far. What father would?

“The Secret Service disagrees.”

The Secret Service were a bunch of lap dogs. They wouldn't know what they were looking for if the person responsible was standing in front of them. Like now. Convenient that they weren't even there when it happened.

“Did you pay off the embassy guards and Salazar? Did you pay someone to frame Peter Coleman, then sick the cops on him?”

Senator Michaels froze in the process of brushing lint off his jacket. His angry eyes met mine. “I beg your pardon?”

“You heard him,” Jas snarled, butting in. “Did you set it up so your daughter would be kidnapped?”

It was all right there in his eyes. Oh, some people would read the emotion there as anger that we'd be so bold to accuse him. No. He was pissed that he'd been caught.

“I paid them off to get her back,” he insisted. “Never got the money back either after you killed them. Coleman was responsible for all of this. Frame him for it,” he muttered as if the idea was preposterous. His acting skills needed work.

He hadn't paid Salazar. Zinnia had triple checked. He'd never sent the money that Salazar had requested.

“Kip,” I murmured.

He nodded and moved out of the room. He was going back to speak with Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson. They would be the only two of Senator Michaels' staff on tonight. We knew his routines better than he did himself.

“Where's your Secret Service detail?” I asked.

“Late. The idiots are always late,” he grumbled. Then his eyes narrowed as he realized that Jas and I were spreading apart, making it hard for him to get past us. “What are you

going to do? Kill me?” There was genuine fear in his eyes, probably the first time the bastard felt like this in a long time.

“No. We won’t kill you. But we’ll do just about anything else to get you to admit the truth,” I replied.

He lifted the phone in his hand and hit a number before we could do anything. “Do it.”

Jas hit him a second later. If that had been 911 he wouldn’t have had a chance to get off a call for help. Only, it hadn’t been.

I walked over and stared down at the senator, who was struggling beneath Jasper’s body weight.

“Get off me! You’ll rot in prison for this!”

“Not when we tell the cops that you were responsible for your daughter’s kidnapping.” I knelt down until we were almost eye level. “Did you know Salazar had no intention of letting Bailey go?”

His face paled. “What?” He shook his head. “I was paying the ransom.”

“Then why didn’t you?” I rubbed my chin. “I’ll tell you why. It’s because you set the whole thing up. Salazar and his men were to take her, hold her for a few days, then bring her back, unharmed. Right? Only Bailey told us about that call that he made to you requesting more money. He was blackmailing you and if we hadn’t found her, they would have killed her. You banked on us finding her before that happened so you wouldn’t have to send the money.” It was all falling into place. Why hadn’t we seen it before? It was right there in front of us the entire time. “What you didn’t know was that they were already threatening to kill Bailey once they got the money. She was as good as dead either way.”

“You cheap fuck.” Jas said, with a punch to the ribs to emphasize. “You orchestrate your own daughter’s kidnapping, just to boost your numbers in the polls, and then you use us to rescue her so that you don’t even have to pay the kidnappers. Big surprise that they were going to betray you.”

Fire sparked in his eyes and his face went red with fury. “You don’t know what you’re talking about! You can’t just go around accusing people-”

“We have proof,” I said, cutting him off. We didn’t yet, but by the time Z was finished we would. That took the wind from his sails and he deflated right there underneath Jas. “What I don’t know is why? Why would you trust some scumbag criminals with your daughter? Why set this up at all?”

He swallowed hard and I thought for a minute he wouldn’t say anything, but they couldn’t ever help themselves. They always needed people to know what assholes they were and he was no different. They would always tell you the details, tell you how smart they were, then they would give you a sob story to justify it. “I was losing in the polls.”

My eyes narrowed, but I didn’t say anything to interrupt him. Jas stayed quiet, too, recognizing the importance of doing so.

“I needed to gain some sympathy and one of my former colleagues had a kidnapping scare years ago. His numbers had risen drastically in the polls. Mine did too, I took the lead after she was kidnapped.”

None of us had even been paying attention to the press or the campaign or maybe we’d have realized what Senator Michaels was up to. Who would have thought that he’d do something like this though?

“You almost got your daughter killed for votes?”

All three of us looked over at Kip. There was murder written all over his face. He rammed Jas, knocking him off the senator and began whaling on the man.

It took both Jas and I to drag him off. “Wait! You fucking asshole I need him coherent!”

That seemed to penetrate the fog of rage that was clouding Kip’s mind. It wasn’t like I didn’t want to beat the life out of the man myself. “Who did you call?” I asked, glaring down at the bleeding broken man on the marble floor.

He groaned, a fountain of blood spraying out of his mouth. He was being dramatic. He'd have bruises and a busted nose but he'd live.

“Who did you fucking call?”

His eyes met mine and he gave me a bloody smile. “You’ll find out.”

We looked at each other and raced outside to the SUV. Whatever his cryptic words meant, we knew it wasn’t good. We needed to get back to Bailey. I tossed Kip the keys. Turned out there was one time when I’d allow him to drive. When it didn’t matter if we got there in one piece, as long as we got there fast.

I dialed Brando first. “I need you to call in our plates to local law enforcement. Tell them it’s an emergency and not to pull us over. Kip’s driving.”

“Oh, fuck. Do you have a death wish?” I heard something rustling over the line then Brando was back. “What’s going on?”

“We think there’s going to be another attempt on Bailey. My dad is with her, but that’s it. We’re at least forty-five minutes out.”

“Thirty-two minutes,” Kip said as the SUV lurched forward, slinging gravel everywhere.

“We’re rolling that way too, but we’re not much better, twenty minutes,” Brando told me. “I’ll get the cops over there as soon as possible.”

“Thanks, Brando.” I hung up and held on while Kip wove in and out of traffic trying to get us home before it was too late.

CHAPTER 32



Bailey

I sighed and stared at the book in my hands. The guys had gone to confront my dad about coming here to our home despite me asking them not to. I'd already taken care of it, but they were so overprotective it was like they couldn't help themselves.

"They'll be fine," Ray said, patting my knee.

Smiling over at him, I covered his hand with mine. "I know." I didn't know. There were very high odds that they could end up in jail. My dad had a lot of pull and didn't like to be thwarted. We'd thumbed our noses at him more than once. I was worried that without me there, things could escalate. "I appreciate you waiting here with me. You must get sick of babysitting duty."

"Never. Besides, it's good practice for when my next grandchild comes along."

I laughed and laid a hand over my belly. Everyone had been thrilled when we told them we were expecting. I'd been nervous as hell because I figured everyone would pepper us with questions like, "who's the father?"

No one did. They understood that all three of the men were the fathers. It didn't matter biologically, just that my baby was going to be surrounded by doting parents, grandparents, and

the rest of this huge family. I couldn't be happier. Well, I could if my father would just get out of my life.

I opened my mouth to ask Ray a question when a flash of something at the window made me pause. It was dark outside so I wasn't sure I'd really seen something. "Did you see that?"

He glanced over at the window and frowned. "What?"

Shaking my head, I laughed. "Nothing, I guess."

Ray's eyes narrowed on my face. "What did you see?"

"I don't know. A flash. Like someone ran by."

He didn't ask anything else, just stood up and pulled a gun out from the back of his jeans. He stalked toward the front door as my mouth dropped open.

I knew he was former military. Wolfe had told me that was why he'd gone into the Marines to begin with, but my dad had also been a Marine and he had never run toward anything with a gun drawn. He let Secret Service handle that. It was such a stark contrast with these men and it left my dad looking like the weak one in comparison.

Standing, I made my way closer to the wall that split the kitchen and the living room. My guys had been teaching me things over the months we'd been together. I shoved a picture hanging there aside and grabbed the pistol that was tucked back into an alcove in the wall.

My hand was shaking, but I wasn't about to get caught in just my pajamas this time. I'd go down fighting if I had to. My heart was racing, blood pounding in my ears as Ray turned and motioned for me to get down. He wanted me to hide.

Nibbling my lower lip, I tucked myself into the corner of the room, but remained standing. I wasn't going to let him get hurt if there really was a threat out there.

The door splintered inward, sending Ray flying backward. The force of the blast froze the scream in my throat and all I could do was gasp. My ears rang wildly as men in black outfits spilled through the door.

My mind started working overtime. There were no distinguishing marks on their clothes. These weren't cops. Not that I could imagine cops using some kind of bomb to bust open a door. My eyes flashed over to Ray, who wasn't moving beneath a pile of debris. *Oh God. What if he's dead?*

Anger washed over me at that thought and I clicked the safety off the gun in my hands. These assholes didn't get to come in here, hurt my father-in-law—unofficially—and get away with it.

Wolfe had been showing me how to shoot, though the lessons had stopped once we found out I was pregnant, but it all flooded back to me. I aimed the weapon and let off one round. My entire focus was on the front sights of the gun. I waited for the kick to bring my rear sights back into alignment with the front then fired again.

Bodies dove in every direction, except the one I'd shot. He crumpled to the ground. *I shot a man.* I swallowed back bile at the realization. They'd broken into my home. Hurt my family. Who knew what their plan for me was. I was going to shoot way more than one.

I ducked low and ran over to the couch. Thankfully, I wasn't too heavily pregnant yet or this squatting business would have been impossible. Peeking over the top of the couch, I saw movement. I waited long enough to determine whoever it was had on black, then fired again.

The kick of the weapon, the deafening sound of the gun, the slamming of my heart against my ribcage. It all mixed together and formed a giant ball of numbness in my belly. It was almost as though I was watching this happen. I didn't have the training my guys did, only a few afternoons spent at the gun range, so I knew I couldn't hold these men off for very long. Not to mention my pistol wasn't going to have as many bullets as those rifles they had.

I was buying time, hoping that one of Ray's other sons would hear the commotion and come running. I let my finger squeeze the trigger again. My worry wasn't so much about hitting anyone at this point, but stalling. I wanted to keep them

stuck in their hiding places. Somewhere in the back of my head I realized they were here to take me, not kill me. I didn't have the same restrictions, I could, and would, kill them if given the opportunity.

With my left hand, I let go of the gun and dug in my pocket for my cell.

"Bailey. Are you-"

One of the guys across the way started to move so I shot one handed toward him. A lamp a few feet from his head exploded and he quickly scrambled back into his hole.

"Wolfe. There's men here. They broke in. Your dad's hurt."

"Breathe, Baby. Did they say who they were?"

"No. I didn't give them a chance."

"That a girl," Kip said in the background. "Kill them all, Beauty."

My lower lip trembled. "I can't."

"We know, Baby," Wolfe soothed. "Do your best. We're trying to get to you."

Someone snatched the phone from my hand and with a cry I spun, gun pointing toward him. Strong hands gripped the weapon and yanked it from my hands. They'd circled around behind me while I was distracted.

Another man yanked me to my feet by my hair. I bit my lip, refusing to cry out again. They weren't going to see me sweat. My eyes widened as one of the men pointed a gun at Ray. He was still unconscious on the ground.

"No!"

Head's turned toward me. I glared at the man with the gun. "If you kill him I'll fight you every step of the way. You don't even know how loudly I can scream, asshole," I threatened. "Leave him here. Alive. And I'll go with you. I won't fight. I'll do whatever you want."

The man's eyes flicked to the one who'd taken my gun. He must be the boss. I couldn't turn my head to look at him because the jerk behind me was still gripping my hair. I'd yank every strand from my scalp if that was what it took.

"Let's get out of here. We don't want to be here when they get back."

"And him?" The man motioned to Ray.

"Leave him. Let's go princess," the man said with a feral grin.

The one behind me dropped my hair and prodded me with the barrel of his rifle.

Holding my head high, I picked my way across the debris in the room and walked out the door. Without a backward glance, I quietly got into the waiting black sedan. Two of the men squeezed into the back with me, two in the front, and the rest got into other cars that were parked nearby.

I was being taken again. It made me want to cry, but I refused. I wouldn't roll over and let them kill me. We'd get far enough away that Ray was safe and then I'd figure something out.

My Marines would come for me. I just had to stay alive long enough for them to find me. A quick inventory made my heart drop. I didn't have my phone or my gun. There was nothing on me that would help me escape, but at least I had shoes on this time.

See Bailey, you're already starting at an advantage. Stay positive. You know how this ends, you've seen it before.

The landscape passed by in flashes lit up by streetlights as we drove. It didn't take long before I began contemplating what I should do. I couldn't jump out of the moving car, even if I could get past the two gorillas on either side of me. The last thing I wanted to do was accidentally harm the baby. My arms folded protectively over my stomach.

That meant my only chance was when we stopped. Before they got me inside of wherever they were taking me, I needed

to get away from them. I sat quietly, listening to them talk occasionally. The leader was giving directions on where to go.

We weren't entering the city, but staying along the outskirts and entering a heavily wooded area. I wasn't sure if that was good or not. There were people I could plead with in the city to help me if I managed to get away. Then again, who knew who I'd end up asking for help. It could be a serial killer. That would be my luck.

We pulled up to a large house, two stories, lit up and shining like a beacon in the middle of a clearing. Woods surrounded it and I started getting flashbacks. If Salazar and Crazy Town stepped out of that house these guys wouldn't need to kill me, I'd have a heart attack right on the spot.

The man who stepped out onto the porch made me suck in a breath. I'd met him at the embassy. Sheffield? No. Shetland. As angry as I was to see him, there was a small bit of relief. I'd rather deal with the devil I didn't know right now than have those assholes come back to life.

As soon as one of the apes got out of the car, I made my move. I slid off the seat and punched him right in the dick. He doubled over and I darted behind him. My feet were crunching on the gravel driveway with every step as I ran as fast as I could toward the tree line.

Salvation was almost within reach when someone grabbed me around the waist and hauled me right off my feet. I screamed and kicked, fighting his hold.

“So much for going quietly. Eh, Princess?”

His hot breath washed over my face and I grimaced. “So much for brushing your teeth,” I muttered. His amused chuckle pissed me off even more so I swung my head backward. My gasp of pain was almost as loud as his grunt as the back of my head connected with his nose.

He dragged me back to the house and held me there. I stared up at the man on the porch. He was dressed in a designer suit and arched a brow at the man behind me. “Is she

too much for you?” The disdain in his voice made the man behind me stiffen.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked him.

“I owed a favor. Bring her inside.” He snapped fingers at the men and I was dragged into the house.

CHAPTER 33



Kip

Cops and family members were everywhere inside our house. The only person who wasn't here was our girl. I saw red as soon as I spotted the door. It was blown to fucking chunks.

We'd already spoken to Bailey so I didn't need to have nightmares about her standing too close to that when it had blown. Ray was already being loaded up into an ambulance and all three of us stopped by his side.

"I'm so sorry," he croaked.

We tripped over each other trying to ease his guilt.

"Don't be sorry, Dad," Wolfe told him, putting a hand over his and squeezing. "You did your best. We'll take it from here." Judging by the debris, he never stood a chance. Hell, even if one of us had been home it wouldn't have made a difference. These were professionals. And there were a lot of them.

"Kill those fuckers." The rage that flashed in his eyes made me feel better. He was going to be okay. The EMTs said something about a concussion and that he was lucky.

I watched as they wheeled him outside, Jean hurrying along with him after giving us hugs.

Wolfe moved over to the cops and the dead body in our living room. "Who is he?"

They looked up, suspicion on their faces, but Brando stepped over. “These are the guys I told you about,” he said to the cops. “This is their home. It’s their girl.”

Suspicion turned to pity. The cop shook his head and stood up. “Sorry. This is a kick in the balls.” We all nodded. “Prints came back to a Fredrick Dennon. According to his rap sheet he’s with The Copper Street Crew.”

“The what?” Jas asked.

“It’s a local crime ring,” Brando replied. “They don’t usually deal in kidnappings.”

“Nope. That’s why this isn’t sitting well. They’re low level thugs. Kidnapping a senator’s daughter a week before the election isn’t really their style.”

“Low level isn’t entirely accurate,” Brando said. “They’re specialty is armed robbery, specifically armored cars. They’re not incompetent. They’re well-armed and they know how to put up a fight.”

“Thanks,” Wolfe told the cop, then pulled Brando off to the side. Weaver and Suave came over as well. “It’s Senator Michaels.”

“What?” Weaver asked, but there was a look of understanding creeping over his face. “Oh shit. He set up the kidnapping?”

“Kidnappings,” I told him. “He’s responsible for both.”

All three men shook their heads in disbelief. “What a fucking douchebag,” Suave muttered.

“He obviously didn’t learn his lesson the first time,” Jas muttered. “How do we know these criminals, this Copper Street Crew, won’t kill her?”

Wolfe growled. “He’s desperate, I wouldn’t put it past him to leave her to their mercy. Dead daughter is a guarantee for re-election.”

“You think he would go that far?” I asked

“I do, that’s why we have to get to her first.”

“How do we do that? They could have taken her anywhere,” I pointed out.

“I’ll pull in Z,” Weaver said. “She’ll help us. We’ll figure out who in Michaels’ life would be able to contact someone from this crew.”

“That could take hours,” I said with a sigh.

“Not with Z on it,” Brando promised. “You guys take a drive toward the city. We’ll get you something as fast as we can.”

“I’ll go with them,” Suave offered. “I’m not much help with the computers like you are.”

“I appreciate the help, Suave,” Wolfe said, “but I have another request.”

“Anything.”

“Could you go to the hospital? Sit with my folks? This crew knows what Dad looks like. They left him alive, but if they change their mind, he’s a sitting duck there. My mom, too.”

“Say no more,” Suave said. He shook our hands and left immediately to follow the ambulance.

“We’ll find her,” Brando promised.

Running upstairs, we grabbed our go bags. Inside was everything we’d need to lay siege to our enemies. Brando distracted the cops as we walked past with the bags and rifles. His eyes about bulged out of his head when he saw us brazenly walking out to the car with the bags. Watching him flail about, arms waving and ranting nonsensically as a distraction would have been humorous under any other circumstances. It worked though, the cops stayed glued to him and we walked right past.

We had everything loaded up and Wolfe was behind the wheel as we, once again, drove toward the city. We’d drive in circles all night if we had to. We just hoped it wouldn’t come to that.

We were only a few miles down the road when Brando called and patched in both Weaver and Z.

“I’m so sorry guys,” Z said. Her voice was thick as though she’d been crying. “If only I’d gotten you those names earlier, maybe we could have prevented this.”

“Don’t do that to yourself, Z,” Wolfe ordered. “This isn’t your fault, it’s her father’s. We need you to focus on finding her for us.”

“I’ve already checked the gang’s usual hideouts,” she said. I didn’t bother to ask how, I trusted her. “They’re empty. The senator must have them hiding with different associates.”

“We’ve got a full list of everyone the senator is connected to,” Weaver told us. He let out a whistle. “It’s a long fucking list.”

“We’re just going to keep you on the call as we work,” Brando told us, “that way if you hear anything you can speak up.”

We listened quietly to tapping keys and them speaking back and forth as they ran background checks on everyone on the Senator’s list. They weren’t kidding about it being long.

“Ryan Shetland,” Z piped up, calling out who she was running next. “Former Governor. Lost three elections to his opponent before being elected last cycle. Pissed him off big time. Almost didn’t get the position at all...”

“Any chance he won last minute thanks to a kidnapping scare?” Wolfe asked.

“Uh... Let me check.” Her fingers flew over the keys. “It’s been buried. This is going to take some time, but you might be right. Guys, shift over and look through old news media outlets and see if you can find anything on Ryan Shetland and his race for Governor.”

It took about twenty minutes.

“Got it!” Z crowed. “You’re right! How the hell did you remember that? He has a daughter. She was taken from school

and no one could find her. She ended up showing back up that evening and talked about a man abducting her.”

Jas turned and we locked eyes. “The senator mentioned one of his colleagues winning his election that way.”

“You don’t think?” I asked.

“Yeah,” Wolfe answered for Jas. “I think it was the Senator who took his daughter. Which means Shetland owes him.”

“I have an address. It’s outside the city.” Zinnia read it off and Wolfe gunned the engine.

“How does Shetland connect to the Copper Street Crew?” I asked.

“Not sure, but by the time you have your girl back, we’ll have answers for you,” Brando told me. “Hmmm...He was one of those tough on crime guys. I wonder...”

“Wonder what?” Wolfe asked him.

“Just a hunch, I’ll get back to you on it.”

“I’m sending you over schematics for the house. Nothing fancy, just a vacation home outside the city. Two stories. Main floor and upper. Six bedrooms, three baths. No outbuildings according to the plans,” Weaver called off.

“Thanks guys,” Wolfe told them. “We’re going dark. We’ll let you know once we have her.”

“Good luck,” they chorused.

Jas crawled into the back seat with me and we started digging through our bags. We shrugged on our bullet proof vests and began attaching anything we might need to the webbing or stuffing it in pockets.

We were going in prepared for anything. We didn’t know how many men they had holding Bailey or what kind of fire power they were rocking, but if our front door was any indication, it was enough to obliterate everything around us.

As we pulled down a long gravel drive, Wolfe cut the lights and drove through the dark. I handed his vest up to him as he slowly put it on.

Jas had his usual AK in his hands and this time we had both chosen to go with the same. We were breaching this house and bringing the hounds of hell with us. These men were going to think they stepped into a fucking nightmare.

We ditched the car further up the drive, leaving it ready to make a quick escape. The gravel crunched under our feet as we hoofed it up to the house.

“Get a visual. See if you can find Bailey first,” Wolfe whispered. “Don’t want to accidentally hit her.”

We moved together, quiet as ghosts from one window to the next, using the dark, moonless night to our advantage.

I shook my head as we went. These assholes weren’t prepared for this. The entire house was lit up like a fucking Christmas Tree. There weren’t any guards outside. That didn’t mean that they weren’t armed and able to put up a fight.

They were operating under the assumption that no one would find them, then they’d be able to just slip Bailey back as if no one would miss her. That had worked for them before, but there was a fatal flaw in their plan. Us.

“Wolfe,” Jas hissed under his breath. He made a motion with his hand and we all peeked through the window.

Bailey was sitting, tied to a chair in the dining room and Senator Michaels and Shetland were there arguing. There were eight other men lounging around, looking bored out of their minds. They were dressed up in mismatched black and looked like the discount version of a military group.

“Around the back,” I whispered. “If we hit them from behind we should be able to catch them by surprise. Get Bailey out before she’s hurt.”

Wolfe nodded and motioned for us to go around back. It was about to get interesting. We’d see what their group had in store for us and see how they stacked up against a Marine Force Recon Unit. My money was on us.

CHAPTER 34



Bailey

Tears welled in my eyes as my dad walked through the door. He barely shot me a look as he walked straight over to Shetland.

“You weren’t supposed to destroy a house getting to her!” Dad snapped, glaring at the other man.

“It wasn’t like I was there giving the orders,” the other man shouted back. “I told them to grab her and bring her back here. How was I supposed to know they’d cause such a scene?”

“The bigger the *scene*. The less quietly this will go away,” Dad snarled. “That makes it hard on both of us, Shetland.”

Shetland shrugged. “Too late now. At least we got her.”

“What we don’t have is the money promised to us.” A large intimidating man stepped forward. He glared at the two men in suits.

What was Dad doing mixing himself up with these types? And why was he a part of this plan? My heart was broken. I’d always known he didn’t care for me the way I’d hoped, but to do something like this? My thoughts flashed back to Colombia and it clicked for me. This wasn’t the first time he’d done this. Colombia had been his idea, too. It was too much of a coincidence for it not to have been him. Had Peter Coleman been in on it? Was Dad trying to kill me?

I blinked back the tears, refusing to let them fall for him. He didn't deserve them. I tried to memorize as many faces as I could as they argued over the delayed payment.

"It'll be there," Dad insisted. "It was a large sum. It can take time to transfer."

"Fuck that. We want it in cash," the man growled.

Dad pinched the bridge of his nose. "It's too late for cash. Especially that amount. This is the twenty-first century, no one keeps that kind of cash around. It would take days to get it together."

The man moved closer to me and put a hand on my shoulder. I fought to repress the shudder of disgust his touch caused. The last thing I wanted him to mistake it for was fear. I wouldn't be the weak victim waiting for them to kill me.

My hands were working furiously behind me as I tried to loosen the tape they'd used to bind me. I'd learned a bit from the first time this happened. The most important thing was I needed to stay calm.

"We'll just have to keep her for a few days then. Until you bring us our money."

"You think that's a threat? The election is in a few days, you holding her for ransom is guaranteed to bring me to victory."

"Oh yeah? You saying we can keep her then?" the man asked, cutting him off. He reached over and ripped the tape off my mouth, making me gasp in pain. "What do you think, Sweetheart? Want to come visit ole' Ned for a few days?" He licked his lips suggestively.

I ignored him, my eyes turning to my dad. "Why are you doing this?" I tried to keep the hurt out of my tone.

His eyes shuttered, blocking out any of the emotion you'd expect to see there. "I have to, Bailey. But you're going to be just fine."

"He's going to rape me," I hissed at the man who was supposed to be my father. The one who was supposed to love

and support me.

“He won’t lay-”

The lights cut out and I had to swallow back a scream. Being plunged into darkness with a bunch of dangerous men surrounding me wasn’t the ideal scenario. I doubled down working on the tape. Someone grabbed my hands and my eyes closed. Busted.

“This wasn’t supposed to happen this way,” someone whispered in my ear. I was pretty sure it was Shetland. My wrists broke free and I realized he was cutting me loose. “Run while you can. Don’t trust your father. I did, and look at me now.”

As if I’d ever give Dad the benefit of the doubt again. I edged out of the dark room while bodies stormed around. The leader of the men who’d taken me was bellowing at my father. “Did you do this? If you think we stole your daughter and you’re going to take her back without paying us, you’re in for a surprise!”

“You stupid asshole! It’s those fucking Marines, has to be!” he bellowed at them.

The sound of flesh hitting flesh was loud in my ears as I crept my way through an open door. I had no idea where I was going, but anywhere was better than here. I needed to hide before the lights came back on.

I’d much rather get out of this house, but I had nowhere to run to out here. I didn’t want to take the time to mess with the cars they’d brought me here in. It wasn’t likely they left the keys in them and I didn’t want to get caught.

Dad was right, by the sounds of it my men were here. I didn’t need to escape, I just needed to hide long enough not to get caught in a crossfire. Running as softly as I could, I made my way upstairs. I was searching for either a study or the master bedroom. I found the study first and made my way over to the desk. My eyes had grown used to the dark, but there was no moon to light up the room so when I kicked the leg of a coffee table I froze.

Thankful for my shoe, which had protected my toes, I waited to see if anyone would come charging up the stairs after me. Getting kidnapped with shoes on was so much better than with no shoes. That had made a decent thumping noise. After a few tense breaths, I kept moving across the room, searching for the desk I knew had to be in here.

I grew up with a man like Shetland. There was guaranteed to be a desk. A liquor cabinet. All those things men like them deemed necessary. They were so generic, every one of them decorated their houses the same way. My hands smoothed over cool wood. I could only mostly make out shapes in the dark, but I found the chair and sat in it while I opened drawer after drawer.

“Come on. Be here.” The relief was thick when my hand closed over the handle of a gun. It was small, I ran my hand over it and felt a round cylinder in the center. It was a small revolver, probably five or six shots. *Such a basic bitch, they really did shop from the same catalog.* Dad also kept a small revolver in his desk. Five or six shots wasn’t much, but it was better than nothing.

A loud popping noise from downstairs forced a strangled sound from my lips and I ducked down below the desk. More gun fire followed and my eyes widened. Would Dad help my kidnappers?? A small pang of guilt and fear entered my chest. My father might get killed, either by the kidnappers or my Marines.

He’s also the one who’d gotten you kidnapped. Twice.

I shoved the worry down, determined to focus on myself. If anyone killed him down there, my life would get that much easier. I waited, listening, unsure of when I should make my move. If I waited too long, I’d be discovered here. They might kill me to tie up loose ends or use me as a hostage. The last thing I wanted was to be used against my guys. That would put them in danger. I couldn’t take that chance. I had a weapon now. It was time to get out of this house. My Marines would find me later.

Creeping down the stairs, I tried to regulate my erratic breathing. My heart was hammering at my chest. The sound of gunfire had died down. I wasn't sure if that meant they were all dead or if they were searching for each other inside the house.

Either way, I needed to be careful. I'd just stepped off the platform and into the foyer when a set of arms jerked me backward into a huge chest. A hand covered my mouth as a scream threatened to burst out of my lungs.

“Shhhh, Little Bunny. Don't make a sound.”

All the tension in my limbs drained out, leaving me hanging like a limp noodle in Wolfe's arms. They'd come for me. I had thought, had hoped, that this was their rescue attempt. But until right now I hadn't been sure. I mumbled behind his hand.

“Shhhh. They're still a few alive.”

I nodded my understanding and he removed his hand from my mouth. Turning in his arms, I hugged him close. “Thank you,” I said so quietly the words almost didn't form on my tongue.

“Come on.” He grabbed my hand and led me a few feet away.

I heard the creak of a door and I cringed. We had a summer house much like this one. He'd just opened the little cupboard under the stairs. “No.”

His hands cupped my cheeks. “I can't have you running around the house with these assholes on the loose, Bailey. Get in. Stay there. One of us will come for you.”

Taking a deep breath, I forced myself to climb inside and to breathe through the terror as he closed the door behind me. I'd rather take my chances with the men out in the dark, but then I folded my arms over my stomach. I wouldn't risk my baby. If that meant I had to sit in this creepy little room in the dark, then I would.

I didn't allow myself to worry about what sort of animals might be in here with me. *Rats, mice, spiders, none of them*

exist. I repeated the mantra as the minutes ticked by.

Every once in a while a gunshot would break the silence, causing me to jump. I didn't want to be here. I wanted to be at home, in bed with my guys. Saliva was building up in my mouth as I began to worry about who was being shot. Were my Marines hurt?

I swallowed back the nausea, trying to force myself to think of anything else. Hurling in this little closet wasn't going to do me any favors. The smell would either cause me to keep puking, or force me out of the little hidey hole. Neither was a good option as I'd be too easy to find.

The door to my hideaway jerked open and I gasped, pointing my gun at whoever had just found me. My hand shook, but he was so close, knelt down in front of the door there was no way I could miss. Neither of us said a word for a moment.

"I'd rather you didn't shoot me, Brat."

For the second time all the fear drained out of me and I lowered the gun.

"Where'd you get that?" he asked, reaching in and taking it out of my hand.

"I found it upstairs."

"You really are resourceful, you know that?" Jasper chuckled as he helped me out of the little closet under the stairs.

The lights flicked back on and I squinted against the glare. "What's going on?"

"We took out The Copper Street Crew. All that's left is your father and Shetland and we have them tied up. Come on."

Everything passed in a blur from there. I told them exactly what I wanted to do about my father and left him screaming at me as I walked out of the house. He wasn't my problem anymore.

Wolfe put me in their SUV and I curled in protectively on myself. Blue and red flashing lights woke me up and I

robotically gave my statement to the police. They let me go home a few hours later, surrounded by my Marines.

I snoozed in Kip's lap, feeling safe and loved. It was over. I knew that much. I could move forward with life with the men—and their family—who loved me. It wouldn't be too hard to leave the man who'd raised me behind.

EPILOGUE



Bailey

“*W* here are we going?” I asked.

The guys grinned at each other, but just kept packing up the bags. Jas picked up Nora and snuggled her, making our baby giggle.

“First, we’re dropping this little one off with Grandma Jean and Grandpa Ray,” he said, shifting her over into one arm as he picked up her bag.

She was eight months old and it was still hard for me to leave her but the guys had insisted we needed a trip with just the four of us. I’d relented, knowing I’d have a great time and that Nora would soak up all the attention from her grandparents.

It only took about twenty minutes before the SUV was packed and we were knocking on Jean and Ray’s door. I hugged them both, checking on Ray as I did. There hadn’t been any serious repercussions from my father’s second kidnapping attempt, though I would never forget the sight of Ray’s body flying through the air like a ragdoll. He’d been willing to lay down his life to protect me and that had bonded us in a way I’d never get over.

Pulling Nora away from Jas, I cuddled her close until Wolfe took her and handed her over. I groaned and gave everyone a sheepish grin. “This isn’t easy,” I admitted.

Jean laughed and nodded in understanding. “I still remember the first time, too. We’ll take good care of her.”

I put my hand on her shoulder because I knew that. She and Ray loved our little girl. It was easy to see. “Okay. I’m going,” I muttered when Kip hip bumped me, urging me along.

Soon enough we were driving away from our home and further into the countryside. “Where are we going?” I asked again.

“Cabin. About an hour from here,” Wolfe finally answered.

I frowned, but didn’t comment. By the time we pulled into where the isolated cabin sat, I was getting nervous. “Um, guys. This is super sweet, but I’m the one who was kidnapped and kept in places like this...twice now,” I reminded them with a shaky laugh.

“That’s why we want to replace those memories with good ones,” Kip told me, holding out a hand to help me out of the SUV.

I stepped out and looked around. It was beautiful. The cabin sat right up from a lake and it was surrounded by massive trees as far as the eyes could see.

It was easy to reflect back over the last year of my life while we brought everything into the cabin. It’d been a bit of a roller coaster. My father had gone to jail. He’d definitely lost his Senate seat and I’d pressed charges. I’d contemplated just letting it go, but he’d crossed the line and I wasn’t living life scared anymore. Of course, because he was a senator he’d gotten a reduced sentence and would have been out on parole after only a few months.

Brando had put all the pieces together. Dad used the Copper Street Crew as his personal mercenaries. He’d have them orchestrate kidnappings like he did for Shetland, then use them to attack other criminal gangs. In Shetland’s case, they kidnapped his daughter and helped him get elected. Then Shetland did a ‘war on crime’, making it look like he was

cleaning up the streets. In reality the Copper Street Crew was taking out the competition and got free run of the city.

Peter Coleman had been released from prison and the charges dropped. I could only imagine he regretted the day I'd snuck back to the room he'd been having a meeting in. I'd tried to reach out to apologize for what had happened, but he wanted nothing to do with me. Understandable. I was fine with it and ready to move on as well.

Shetland testified against Dad. The boys didn't even need to persuade him. Guilt was weighing heavily on him and he needed to clear his conscience. Dad never made it to his parole hearing. The inmates in his prison didn't approve of his reelection campaign. I thought I would have been sadder. Turns out I barely cared at all. Not after he'd put me and my unborn child into such a dangerous situation.

The guys had gotten ultra-protective of me and Nora once she'd come along. Life was everything I'd hoped for. I had three men who loved me and the child we'd made and their huge family made it so I never felt lonely. After I found out it'd been my father behind everything it'd been easy for me to cast him out of my life, and after his death I didn't spare him any additional thoughts.

Once things had calmed down, I'd tried to track down my mother's parents. It had saddened me to realize I'd been two years too late to meet my grandmother. She'd died three years after her husband. I'd taken flowers to their grave and said my goodbyes.

* * *

I SPENT the day down on the lakeshore with my Marines, fishing, playing, and somewhere in that time I slowly began to relax. They were right. Coming here was a good idea. I didn't want to be scared of the woods just because of what had happened to me.

We played and frolicked in the water and went on hikes and it wasn't until the very last night that I realized the real

reason they'd brought me out here.

“Want to play a game, Brat?” Jas asked, a twinkle in his eyes.

“What kind of game?” I replied, suspicion coating my words.

“Hide and Seek,” Kip said with a grin.

“For adults,” Wolfe added.

I narrowed my eyes on them. “What do you mean?”

“You run. We chase. Once we catch you, we do whatever we want with you,” Jasper answered, slowly standing up.

They were moving like predators and it made my heart trip in my chest. “You’re crazy. You want me to run through the woods at night?” I’d already done that before.

“Trust us. You won’t get far,” Wolfe said.

A thrill raced over my spine and I gave them a smile before I spun and ran. The sun was slowly sinking down below the horizon and the forest created shadows that danced across the path I ran along. My heart was racing and my breathing was choppy, but I was excited, too. They were right. I needed to replace the memories of running through the woods—terrified for my life—with something that had a better ending.

I didn’t want to make it too easy on them, so I turned off the path, away from the lake, and ran through the trees. The sounds of birds and small animals filled the air around me as I went.

Once my lungs started burning, I was forced to take a break. I hadn’t been running too long, but it was just going to be a short breather. I leaned against a tree, hands on my thighs.

My head lifted as a rustling sound came from my left. No way they would have caught up already. Right?

Wrong.

I squealed as Kip came barreling through the trees toward me. Darting off to the side, I managed to avoid his long-armed

reach, but slammed directly into Wolfe.

“Game’s over, Little Bunny.” He hefted me up and tossed me over his shoulder.

“What now?” I asked, breathless from his shoulder digging into my stomach and from the running.

Jas’s eyes flashed and he gave me a wicked grin. “I told you. We’re going to do anything we want with you.”

“Everything we want,” Kip corrected, with a big toothy grin.

I couldn’t help the answering smile that tugged at my lips. That’s what I was hoping for. Nothing was going to keep me from playing games with my Marines for the rest of our lives. Throughout the years, even after all the kids we planned on having, nothing would force us apart. They were my world. My loves. And I was theirs. I knew that no matter what, they’d always be there to save me.

SNEAK PEEK

Kept By The Agents

Chapter 1

Cat

Looking around, I ducked into a back alley as I followed my intended target. Omar Ibrahim had managed to give me the slip the last time I'd tracked him down and I was determined not to let it happen again.

Being an investigative journalist meant being as tenacious as a dog with a bone. That was me to the 'T'. I traveled all over the world for my job and exposed crimes and corruption wherever I found it. It was a dangerous job, yet it thrilled me to the bone. Not only did I get to help people, but I got to live my life fully.

Sure, it could get a little lonely, but I'd long since given up on finding a man who could understand and accept the need I had to seek out justice for those who couldn't find it for themselves. Quitting my job and settling down into a regular nine to five would be worse than death for me.

I crept along the brick wall, making sure I wasn't seen. My sneakers made soft padding noises as I went, but nothing my target would be able to hear.

Omar was barreling ahead through the darkness like a bull in a china shop. If my source was correct—and she always was—he was late...and in deep shit.

Excitement zipped up my spine as I followed along. He was my ticket. I was about to bust the money laundering operation in Syria. This operation was just the first step. One of their biggest clients was a well known terrorist organization. If I could take out the money launderers, I could possibly take out all of the people they worked for. This was going to make my entire career. I'd been following this lead for over five months and it was finally about to pay off. I'd have my pick of places to work after this. Would be able to leave free-lancing behind and have something more concrete.

I paused a beat as Omar hurried around a corner. The alley way was getting progressively more scummy as we went. Unease was there, somewhere beneath the excitement and eagerness, but I ignored it. Counting in my head, I gave him until ten before I rushed after him.

My gasp was loud in the inky black alley—the moon's wavering light didn't illuminate much—as I slammed into someone.

Shit!

“I don't think you understand just how much trouble you're in, Cat.”

My eyes widened as the familiar husky voice washed over me. “Suave, you asshole!” I hissed. “What are you doing here?”

His huge hands were wrapped around my waist, steadying me after I'd plowed into him and heat pulsed through me. He'd always managed to garner a reaction from me, even when I promised myself I'd never think about him again. This wasn't the first time Darro 'Suave' McDugen had screwed me over.

“Language, Catalina,” a new voice told me.

The darkness concealed the newcomer and I squinted, trying to see who it was. “Who the hell is that?” I asked Suave.

“She's got a filthy mouth. I might have to fix that,” the new man commented.

Anger rushed over me. Who the hell was this other guy? And why did he think he had any influence over what I did?

Before I could ask anything, I felt myself arcing through the air. It took all my willpower not to scream as Suave tossed me over his huge, beefy shoulder. I pounded against his back. "You have no right to do this!" I hissed as he hauled me back the way I'd come.

"I have every right, Baby. You belong to me," Suave said with a chuckle.

Rolling my eyes, I went limp in his arms. There was no way I was going to get away from the overgrown ape. I'd just have to wait to find out what he wanted.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathleen and Frank live in SE Oregon where they have a family farm. They split their days between working with their animals and writing. Both left a law enforcement background to pursue their passions and for Cathleen that meant picking back up a long-forgotten hobby with writing. They strive to bring readers steamy, action-packed stories that provide hours of entertainment.



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