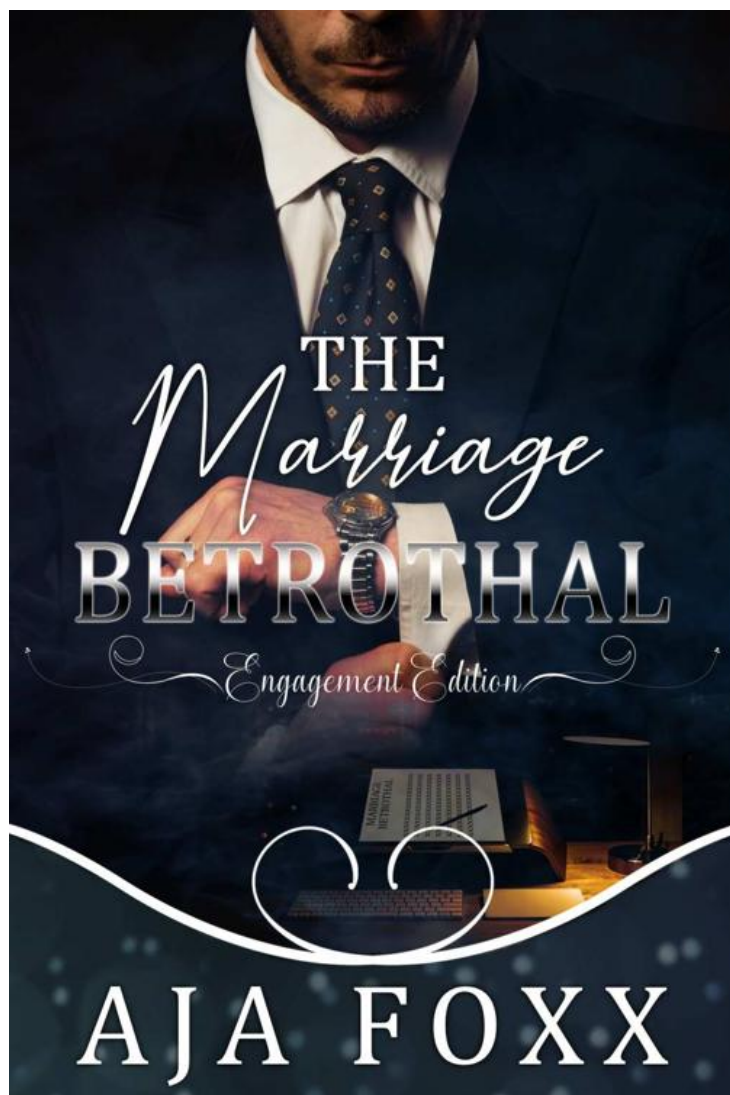


THE
Marriage
BETROTHAL

Engagement Edition

AJA FOXX



The Marriage Betrothal

~ Kyue ~

Finding out that I was engaged was a bit of a surprise, especially since I hadn't agreed to it. Finding out that my fiancé was business tycoon Lucas Kincaid was a shock. Family betrothal agreement or not, I may end up murdering this guy before I marry him.

I liked my life just the way it was. I did not need some arrogant jerk coming in and trying to dictate to me how I should live it. Yes, he was sexy as hell, but that didn't mean I was going to follow his orders. Maybe it was time to show my new fiancé who he was really engaged to. Not sure he was going to survive the introduction.

~ *Lucas* ~

I'd known for years that there was an old family agreement that betrothed me to Kyue Panich. We each came from socially elite backgrounds, were well educated and reasonably attractive. We both knew the score so I did not see what the problem was, but Kyue had been a thorn in my side since our first meeting.

Now that the wedding plans had started, maybe it was time to show Kyue that his little temper tantrums wouldn't get him very far with me. I had a reputation to uphold and I refused to allow some mouthy little brat to tarnish it. I was fairly certain that I could find a paddle somewhere.

Warning: *Gay erotic romance. The material in this book contains explicit sexual content that is intended for mature audiences only. All characters involved are adults capable of consent, are over the age of eighteen, and are willing participants.*

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The Marriage Betrothal (Engagement Edition)

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First Electronic Edition February 2023

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The Marriage Betrothal

Marriage Mayhem

~ Engagement Edition ~

AJA FOXX

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Chapter One

“You want me to do what?”

My grandfather sighed as if entire the world rested on his shoulders and he was buckling under the weight. “Son, it was an agreement made between our family and theirs when you were just a child. You can’t say no.”

“The hell I can’t!” I snapped. “I’m not marrying some man I’ve never even met.” I didn’t care if I was gay or not. Marrying some guy I had never met just wasn’t going to happen.

“I’m afraid it is not a choice, Kyue. If you don’t marry Mr. Kincaid, we lose everything. Is that what you want for your family?”

“No, but...”

“Lucas Kincaid is a very wealthy businessman. He was educated at Harvard, and then took his father’s business and turned it into a multibillion dollar company within the first five years. He is very smart, and he also understands that this agreement is legally binding.”

“No judge would uphold that,” I pointed out. “You can’t sign an agreement like that when a kid is underage and then expect them to follow through with it when they become an adult. It’s against the law.”

“Legally forcing you into marriage was never part of the agreement, son.”

Wait, I didn’t understand.

“Then why—?”

“The engagement agreement states that if you and Lucas do not marry by the time you turn twenty-five, then the Kincaid family gets everything. It does not say that you have to follow through with the engagement.”

Holy fucking shit!

“Then you are forcing me,” I whispered as I dropped into the chair across from my grandfather.

“No, this has to be your decision.”

Yeah, didn’t sound like it to me.

I groaned as I leaned forward and buried my head in my hands. “Do I really have to do this, Grandfather?”

“No,” he replied in a much more even tone. “You don’t, Kyue. I would never force you into something like this, agreement or not. But I’d like you to consider it. Lucas Kincaid isn’t a bad man. I think the two of you would do well together.”

I still wasn’t sure I had much of a choice in the matter. “Can I at least meet him before I agree to anything?” I asked. I still wanted to refuse, but as my grandfather had pointed out, this was for the family.

“I can arrange a meeting if that is what you’d like.”

I nodded before lifting my head. “Please.”

“I’ll arrange something for this weekend, a dinner party, maybe.” My grandfather grimaced as he looked me up and down. “I assume you can find something more appropriate to wear. A suit, maybe?”

I glanced down at my cream-colored sweater and tan slacks. These weren’t appropriate enough? I had to put on a suit, too?

This was turning into a freaking nightmare.

“A haircut wouldn’t hurt either.”

“No!” I snapped my head up to meet my grandfather’s eyes. “I’ll call this whole thing off right now if you make me cut my hair. I don’t care if the family does sink into oblivion.”

My hair was my pride and joy, but not for the reasons anyone else thought. Giving me a haircut was the last thing my

mother had done before my parents died. She had loved my hair. I refused to cut it except to keep it healthy and long.

Thankfully, my grandfather chuckled. “Okay, okay, but at least tame it somewhat.”

“I can do that.”

Maybe.

I wasn’t going to place any bets on it.

I had a lot of hair.

* * * *

“Straighten your bowtie, dear.”

“Yes, Grandmother.” I clenched my teeth and reached up to straighten my bowtie. They were lucky I was even wearing a bowtie, let alone a tuxedo. I felt like I was being strangled by the damn thing.

Oh my god, it itched.

My grandmother smoothed down the lapels with her hands. “You look very nice, Kyue.”

I looked like an idiot in a tux.

“Thank you, Grandmother.”

She smiled at me, her dark eyes twinkling. “You’ll do fine, Kyue. Just remember your manners.”

“Yes, Grandmother.” Like I could ever forget. Manners and etiquette had been drilled into my head by the time I had

learned to crawl. It was all part and parcel of growing up in an elite family.

“No slouching, speak in a polite voice, and whatever you do, don’t tell him of your training.”

My eyebrows briefly lifted. “Seriously?”

“There are some things Mr. Kincaid must discover on his own.” That sparkle was back in my grandmother’s eyes, but it was accompanied by a bit of a mischievous glint and a sly smile. “Your grandfather had to learn on his own.” She winked at me. “Took him awhile. Not too bright sometimes, that man.”

“Talking ill of me, my dear?”

I glanced up to see my grandfather walking into the room. I had no doubt that he had heard every word my grandmother spoke, but he had a smile on his face, so I didn’t think he had been offended by what she said.

When he brushed a kiss across her cheek and smiled indulgently down at her, I knew he hadn’t.

This was why I hated the idea of an arranged marriage so much. I wanted a marriage like theirs. I wanted to experience love that was true and enduring.

I’d been so young when my parents died that I barely remembered them. I had been raised by my grandparents and they showed their love for each other every single day. I wanted that, not some cold heartless marriage with a man I didn’t even know.

“No, darling,” my grandmother said. “I’m merely reminding our grandson of his manners.”

My grandfather grunted. He knew as well as I did that that was a pile of crap. He was just smart enough not to call his wife of almost fifty years out on her lie.

“Our guests are arriving,” my grandfather stated. “It’s time to go downstairs so we can greet them properly.”

Oh, yippee.

Can you feel my enthusiasm?

I followed my grandparents out of my room and down the hallway to the stairs. Even though I no longer lived at home, they always kept the room I’d grown up in ready for me. I guess they wanted me to know I always had a place in their home.

In most families like ours, they stayed together in one large home. I had been the odd duck that decided to go out on my own and explore the world. Still glad to have a safety net, though.

A few people had already arrived for the dinner party my grandparents planned. I was glad that there would be other people around when I met the man I was supposed to be getting married to, and I wasn’t at the same time.

With more people there, I knew better than to be ill-mannered. If we were alone in our meeting, I might say something I shouldn’t, and then my grandparents would strangle me.

On the other hand, it felt a little weird for a whole slew of people to be around when I was meeting the man I was supposed to marry for the very first time. At this point, I didn’t even know what he looked like.

It wasn't hard to figure out when he arrived, though. I knew who he was the instant he walked into the room. There was really no way to mistake his identity. He had a tall muscular frame, broad shoulders, tall timber-like legs, and an arrogant set to his jaw.

He filled out his black tuxedo in all the right places.

Besides the fact that he strolled in with a commanding air as if he owned the place and everyone in it, I'd never seen so much primping and propping from those around him in my life. It was obvious that the woman wanted him and the men wanted to be him.

I wanted to punch his lights out.

This was never going to work. I could tell that right now. This man was way too egotistical for me to deal with for the rest of my life. It was in everything he did from the way he walked to the way he looked at people.

He looked as if he thought everyone else was beneath him and they were taking up his valuable time. I expected him to look at his watch any minute now.

My grandfather left me and my grandmother standing there to walk across the room and greet him. They talked for a few minutes. There was even a chuckle or two, but most of those came from my grandfather. The other guy merely nodded, not a smile in sight.

Pretty sure his face was set in stone.

As soon as they started for me, I dropped my gaze. I kept my hands clasped in front of me, my head tilted down, my

eyes cast to the floor, and my lips sealed so I wouldn't speak and say what was really going through my mind.

It wouldn't go over well.

"And this is my grandson, Kyue Panich," my grandfather said. "Kyue, this is Mr. Lucas Kincaid."

The silence was deafening. Was no one going to say a word?

I started to lift my head when I heard Lucas.

"Does he speak?"

What the fuck?

Did I speak?

What was I...a dog?

Who asked that kind of crap when first being introduced to someone, especially someone they might potentially be getting married to? He hadn't even given me time to say hello.

Wouldn't he be shocked as shit if I barked.

It was all I could do not to bat away the hand that reached out and lifted my chin. I wanted to shout at this man that he had no business touching me, especially without my permission. I didn't care what the marriage agreement stated.

There was something to be said about personal bubble space.

My gaze briefly flickered up before going back down in what I'm sure he thought was a submissive pose.

It wasn't.

I was just so damn stunned by the steel-hard blue eyes that had been peering down at me, I needed a moment to recover.

“A very pretty China doll,” the man whispered low enough that I could hear him, but I doubted anyone else could.

I’m Thai, you shmuck.

“Aren’t you going to look at me, Kyue?” Lucas asked. I didn’t see it on his face, but I could hear the smirk in his voice.

Oh yeah, this guy was going to die.

I doubted he could see the anger simmering inside of me when I glanced up. I was very good at hiding my emotions, especially in the fishbowl world of the socially elite.

With the exception of my grandparents, there wasn’t a person in this room that knew the true me and the life I lived, and my grandparents didn’t even know all of it.

Lucas smirked. “And there he is.”

I gave a bow of my head in acknowledgement of his greeting, or lack thereof. “Good evening, Mr. Kincaid,” I said in the most polite voice I could muster while thinking thoughts of murder. “I hope your drive was a pleasant one.”

There was no way in hell I was going to say it was nice meeting the man, because it wasn’t. I probably could have gone the rest of my life without meeting this idiot.

Lucas’s steely blue eyes flickered with something for a moment before going hard once again. “Traffic coming up from the city was abysmal, but thank you for asking, Kyue.”

I clenched my hands and smiled sweetly, but god, I hoped every moment of his drive here and his return trip sucked.

“As we discussed,” my grandfather started. “Kyue was not aware of the agreement between our families until recently. It was him who asked to meet with you before making any decisions.”

“Decisions?” One dark eyebrow arched up on Lucas’s forehead. “I wasn’t aware that there were any decisions to be made.”

“As Kyue wasn’t aware of the agreement, he wanted to take some time and think about it,” my grandfather said. “I felt that it was the least I could do for my grandson. I don’t want him to go into this with any regrets.”

“Kyue comes from a long line of social elite. The Panich family has been well established here for many generations. Our families have been close even longer. The agreement between us was made many years ago, but I will uphold it and I expect the same from your grandson, regrets or not.”

“I understand that, Lucas,” my grandfather replied, “but surely—”

“I have my own misgivings about this arrangement. It’s merely out of respect for you and my family that I am even here tonight.”

It was all I could do to stay still when Lucas’s eyes roamed up and down my body. There wasn’t a single expression in his eyes or on his face. I had no idea what he was thinking.

It was a bit unnerving to be honest.

“Kyue is not someone I would have normally considered marriage with.” Lucas slid his hands into the pockets of his

slacks and sighed. “But, under the circumstances, I suppose he’ll do.”

I snapped my mouth closed so hard my jaw cracked. Who in the hell did this guy think he was?

I’d do?

Seriously?

If he checked my teeth, I swear to God, family agreement or not, I’d lay his ass out right there on my grandmother’s mahogany floor.

Chapter Two

~ Kyue ~

“Dinner is served, Madame.”

I grimaced as I glanced at the servant that had made the announcement and then tried to send him a reassuring smile. This wasn't Fred's fault, but now that the meal had been announced, I seriously doubted there was any way for me to escape this fiasco.

“Kyue, are you coming?” Lucas asked as he held out his hand.

I had to eat with the guy, too?

Oh, man, my night just kept getting better and better.

I gave him a serene smile before stepping forward and taking the hand he held out to me. I shivered as he wrapped my hand around his arm. Lucas's hand was cold to the touch, which wasn't surprising since he was a snake in a fancy tuxedo.

“We'll speak after dinner.”

I glanced up at Lucas through my eyelashes. He was giving out commands already? This was going to be the shortest engagement in the history of engagements. Pretty sure I was going to end things when we talked.

Murder had a way of doing that.

Lucas escorted me into the formal dining room before leading me to one of the chairs near the head of the table. The man was polite if nothing else. He pulled out my chair for me before sitting down beside me and everything. He even spread the cloth napkin across my lap, almost as if he thought I didn't have two brains cells to rub together.

If he started cutting up my food for me, I was going to dump my plate in his lap.

The moment dinner was served, Lucas started up a conversation with pretty much everyone else at the table except me. He didn't say a word to me. He didn't even look in my direction.

Upside, I didn't have to talk to him.

"How is the salmon, dear?"

I glanced to the seat next to my grandfather and smiled at my grandmother. Despite tradition being her at one end of the dining table and Grandfather being at the other end, they had always sat right next to each other, my grandmother on my grandfather's left-hand side. My grandfather always said her place was closest to his heart.

"It's fine, Grandmother."

Her eyes flickered down to my plate. I knew what she was looking at. I had hardly eaten anything. Kind of hard to swallow down food when I was so busy swallowing down angry words.

"You need to eat, Kyue," Lucas said. "You're too skinny as it is."

I drew in a fortifying breath and then speared a forkful of salmon and brought it to my mouth. Maybe if I took a few bites, they would leave me alone.

I turned my attention to the woman on my right. I didn't know her well. She was an old friend of my grandmothers. "How are you, Mrs. Callaway? I heard your grandson got into the school he wanted."

The older woman brightened and smiled. "He did, and we couldn't prouder of him. He wanted into that drama program so badly. We're just thrilled that he made it."

"I'm sure he'll do wonderful. If I remember correctly, Charles was always a good actor." I should know. He had acted as if he liked me for a whole three dates before I figured out he was more interested in my family's connections than me.

We chatted a bit more before she turned her attention to the person sitting on the other side of her. Sitting between her and Lucas, I kind of had no one to talk to, which was fine by me. I just needed to get through this meal, the talk afterwards, and then I'd have my freedom back...maybe.

The salmon was actually pretty good, and I did eat a fair portion of it before dinner was over. When Fred came in and announced that after dinner drinks were being served in the salon, I just wanted to escape. Even if it was just for a few minutes.

When everyone stood, Lucas pulled my chair out and then offered his hand once more. Manners dictated that I take it.

Damn it.

Instead of escorting me to the salon, Lucas led me out of the dining room and then down the hallway to my grandfather's office.

Obviously, he'd been here before.

A man that had arrived at the same time Lucas had stood outside the door. When we reached him, the man handed a tablet over to Lucas and then opened the door.

"Thank you, Foyt."

I pressed my lips together when he led me inside and then shut the door, leaving everyone outside and us inside alone together.

"Have a seat."

Seriously?

I made sure he couldn't see me roll my eyes as I sat down on one of the couches. I arranged myself as my grandmother had taught me. Legs pressed close together, stiff back posture, feet pressed firmly on the floor, and hands folded together in my lap.

Yes, it was just as uncomfortable as it sounded.

Lucas sat down on the couch across from me, crossing one leg over the other before staring at me with eyes like a hawk. There was an intense look in them that I couldn't quite decipher.

It was a bit unnerving.

"You've spoken with your grandfather concerning our betrothal and marriage?"

“I have,” I admitted because there was no point in lying. My grandfather had already told him he had talked to me about. I kind of wasn’t sure why he was asking.

“Excellent.” Lucas opened the tablet and stared down at it as he moved his finger across the screen. “I wasn’t sure if you had a tuxedo, so my assistant set an appointment for the tenth to have you outfitted for one. The wedding is scheduled for the fourteenth, but the tailor assures me they can have it done on time.” Lucas’s brow furrowed for a split second before he glanced down at his tablet again. “I expect the earrings to be gone as well. It’s not appropriate.”

My jaw dropped at the man’s sheer arrogance of this man. Did he seriously think I was going to take my earrings out simply because he had ordered it so?

He was out of his damn mind.

“Judge Rittenhouse has agreed to come to perform the ceremony,” Lucas continued. “You will, of course, need to meet with my lawyers before then to sign all the necessary paperwork including the prenuptial agreement.”

What the hell?

All attempts at the manners my grandparents instilled in me flew right out the window as I jumped to my feet and snapped, “Back up a minute. I don’t remember agreeing to marry you.”

Lucas sighed as he lowered his tablet. “Kyue, we both know that it is in your family’s best interests for you to follow through with the marriage. Arguing about it is pointless, and

frankly, I don't have the time. I still have return to my office to complete some work after this dinner party.”

I waved my hand toward the door. “Well, don't let me stop you.”

My grandparents were going to kill me.

Lucas's sigh sounded like it was heaved from the tallest mountain. “Really, Kyue. All of this posturing is simply that, posturing. It's a sound business matter if this marriage goes through. It will greatly benefit both of our families. Fighting against it in this manner is unacceptable.”

Lucas glanced at his watch and then frowned. “I've already taken enough time on this discussion. I expect you to be at the tailor shop on time. My assistant will send you the schedule. If there is nothing else?”

Oh, there was.

“Do you know sign language, Mr. Kincaid?”

Lucas's brow furrowed. “I know seven languages fluently and can passably speak three more, but sign language is not one of them.”

“Well, I do.” I smirked as I raised my middle finger and flipped him off. “Would you like me to interpret this for you, or can you figure it out on your own?”

I didn't wait for a reply. I simply turned on my heels and walked out of my grandfather's office with my head held high. That gesture was probably going to come back to bite me in the ass at some point, but right now I simply did not care.

Lucas Kincaid could go chase a rolling donut down a gravel driveway for all I cared. I'd even buy him the damn donut.

I ran upstairs long enough to grab my jacket and then hurried downstairs to the garage. My tux had been waiting for me when I arrived tonight, but I didn't want to take the time to change back into my regular clothes. I just needed to get out of there.

I did need to call my grandmother first. Or send her a text. Either way, I needed to let her know I had run away from home.

I swung my leg over my motorcycle and pulled out my cell phone. After typing out a text to my grandmother, telling her I'd developed a migraine and decided to head home early, I stuck my phone back into my jacket and then pulled it on.

Luckily, I had hidden my motorcycle in the garage where no one could spot it, so it was fairly easy to get out. Despite the number of cars parked in the driveway, none of them were blocking the garage doors.

I did see several men in suits standing around the luxury cars parked in the driveway. Having grown up in this world, I knew they were either bodyguards or drivers or maybe both.

Yes, I was stereotyping, but these guys deserved it. Every damn one of them were wearing black suits. I was surprised they didn't have keys hanging from their lapels.

After closing the garage door, I straddled my motorcycle again and then pulled my gloves and helmet on. I would have felt a bit safer if I had my riding boots, but they were upstairs

in my old bedroom. Hopefully, I could pick them up tomorrow.

Several people turned to look in my direction when I started my motorcycle and then drove down the driveway, but no one tried to stop me. They probably thought I was one of the hired help since I hadn't come in one of those fancy cars.

I was on the street and headed back for the city within minutes. My mind raced as I weaved in and out of traffic—probably driving a little too fast—and fought with the thoughts swirling in my head.

There had to be another way to deal with this situation. I did not want to spend the rest of my life married to a man that thought our marriage was a business arrangement. There wasn't anyone currently in my life that I wanted to spend eternity with, but I had hope that I would find that special someone some day.

Lucas Kincaid was not him.

My jaw firmed as I stepped on the gas and sped up, making me really, really glad I had invested in a good quality helmet when I bought my bike. I wanted to feel the wind in my hair, not the bugs in my teeth.

I also wanted to head home and dig my fingers into some clay so I could just forget about everything for a few hours. I had no doubt that come morning—if even that late—my phone would be ringing off the hook.

I so did not want to deal with any of that right now.

Maybe never.

Definitely never.

Still, I knew it was going to happen.

Chapter Three

~ Lucas ~

I wasn't sure how long I sat there staring at the empty spot on the couch where Kyue had been sitting before I heard a knock on the door. It could have been minutes, hours, or even days.

I admit I was in a bit of a state of shock.

I wasn't sure I had ever been spoken to in that manner in my life. People didn't question my decisions or say no to me, and they certainly didn't flip me off, and yet Kyue had done all of those things.

Who in the hell did this man think he was talking to me like that?

When someone knocked on the door again, I snapped my gaze away from the empty couch and stood. I smoothed down the front of my tuxedo and straightened my bowtie before grabbing the tablet and walking over to open the door.

I held the tablet out. "Foyt, see to it that my fiancé receives a copy of the wedding schedule as well as the address to my tailor."

Foyt had been working for me as my personal assistant for over five years and he hadn't let me down yet, so I knew he wouldn't this time.

"Of course, sir," Foyt replied as he took the tablet. "I'll see to it immediately."

Foyt stood back against the wall as I walked past him, leaving the way open for me to head back down the hallway. He was right on my heels as I walked into the salon, but he stayed by the door.

Playing nice in a room full of people wasn't something I wanted to do right now, but I knew that was not a choice I could make. Kyue's grandparents had put this dinner party together. I had a duty to attend and be respectful.

Ten minutes should do it.

Plastering a smile on my face simply wasn't something that was ever going to happen, but I did give a respectful nod to several of the people I passed as I headed across to the room.

Kyue's grandfather glanced at me when I approached and then beyond me. "Where is Kyue?"

"I'm afraid I did not see where he went after he left your office. I can have Foyt track him down if you wish."

"No, it's fine." The man had a pensive look on his face for a moment before smiling at me. "Knowing my grandson, he probably went somewhere he could take his shoes off."

I squinted. "His shoes?"

"That's something you'll need to learn about Kyue. He hates shoes. It was all his grandmother and I could do to keep them on his feet when he was growing up." He let out a little chuckle. "He'd walk barefoot in the snow if he thought he could get away with it."

My smile was polite and barely there, but that was the best I could muster. "I'll talk to him." There was a time and place

to not wear shoes, and being outside in the frigid snow was not one of them.

That little scene in the office hadn't been good either. I was actually kind of impressed that he'd had the balls to talk to me like that. In my experience, people tended to give in to my demands. Kyue had outright denied them and then flipped me off and walked out.

It was becoming obvious to me with every passing moment that Kyue had been indulged just a little too much all his life. I suppose with doting grandparents it couldn't be helped, but it did need to stop.

Kyue was an adult and he needed to start acting like one. If he didn't know how to do that, I would show him. I refused to spend my married life with a brat.

I hadn't gotten to where I was in the world by letting others disrespect me. I suspected Kyue was going to be very surprised by my reaction to his temper tantrum. I was going to paddle that little brat's butt.

I actually smiled at that thought.

"Lucas, I wonder if I could have a moment of your time."

I glanced at my watch and then sighed before nodding to Aat Panich. "Of course." This man was basically going to be my in-law since Kyue's parents were not longer around. It was in my best interests to be polite.

"We can talk in my office." Aat leaned over and pressed a kiss to his wife's cheek. "We'll be back in a few moments, my dear."

The woman simply nodded before going back to her conversation with another woman. I followed after the man, stopping long enough to tell Foyt to have the car started up. I was going to be ready to go after this.

I was ready to go now, but again, future in-law.

“Scotch?” Aat asked when we reached his office.

“Yes, thank you.” I took the same spot I’d had before, casually crossing my legs. My eyes were instantly drawn back to the empty spot where Kyue had been sitting.

Where was he?

Aat handed me a small glass of scotch before sitting down right where his grandson had been sitting. He took a sip of his liquor before regarding me with an expression I wasn’t quite sure I understood.

“You have something to say?” I asked to speed things up a little. I still had work to get back to.

“Kyue isn’t like other people.”

Oh, I was quite aware of that.

“While I have every confidence that he will adhere to the agreement made between our families, life with him will not be what you expect.”

I squinted and angled my head just a little as I regarded him. “How so?”

“Kyue is a free spirit. He’s willful, stubborn, and quite frankly, a pain in the butt on a pretty regular basis. He’s given me half the gray hairs that I have.”

He sounded like a brat.

“If he considers you someone he cares about, there is nothing he won’t do for you, which is why I believe he’ll agree to the marriage. But if you get on his bad side, there is nothing in this world that will sway him. He will cut you out of his life, marriage or no marriage. You need to be aware of that going into this or you will lose him.”

I wasn’t worried. “There will be a prenuptial agreement. We will both retain what we go into the marriage with.”

Aat’s smile was mysterious and amused. “If you say so.”

“Am I wrong?”

“Kyue is not a business agreement, Lucas. He is a man with a hard outer core and a soft gooey center.”

What did that mean?

“Aat—”

“Because I believe that this marriage will be good for Kyue, I will give you one piece of advice. Don’t underestimate him. The Kyue you saw tonight is the public version. It’s the man behind that version that you will be marrying. You should take the time to get to know the real Kyue.”

“The wedding is scheduled for the fourteenth. I have a business trip to London starting next week, but I should be home by the tenth. I can schedule a meeting for sometime around then.”

It would be tight, but I could spare a couple of hours if Aat thought it was so important.

Aat chuckled before swallowing down the rest of his scotch. He stood and then walked over to put his glass on the

sideboard. When he turned back to me, his lips were curved up in that mysterious and amused smile again.

I wasn't sure what was going through the man's mind, but I was equally sure that it didn't matter right now. The betrothal agreement between our families had taken place the summer I turned fifteen. I'd known for the last eighteen years that I would eventually be marrying Kyue.

I had planned accordingly.

I set my glass down on the coffee table between the couches and stood. Maybe Aat was worried about his grandson. It would be a simple matter to reassure him. "I will take good care of Kyue. He will want for nothing."

"Lucas, I think you will find that what Kyue wants is a lot different than what you want. Love is a luxury that cannot be given a monetary value. If you do not treasure it for what it is, it will lose its worth."

"As you are fully aware, Aat, this marriage is a business merger. In exchange for the loan your family gave to my family all those years ago, I agreed to be collateral and marry Kyue when he came of age. I know the agreement was put in place partly to protect Kyue and partly to insure repayment of the loan. I have fulfilled my side of the agreement. It's simply time for Kyue to fulfill his."

"At the time, it made sense to make that agreement," Aat stated. "Kyue's parents had just died, leaving him one of the richest six year olds in the state. Betrothing him to you not only brought our two families together, but kept Kyue safe from every gold digger out there looking to land a rich husband."

“And I understand that. I understood it at the time when I agreed to the betrothal. But the clause my parents insisted on it almost up. If Kyue doesn’t marry me by the time he turned twenty-five, you will lose a large portion of your family’s wealth, and none of us want that to happen.”

“I don’t think it will come to that.”

I wasn’t so sure. I didn’t want the old man’s money, but I did want Kyue to go through with the agreement that had been made between our families. In this day and age, keeping one’s word was important.

“At your request, I did wait until he graduated from the university to claim him. Now, it is simply time that we both fulfilled that agreement. Love has nothing to do with this.”

While I disliked talking in such terms with Kyue’s grandfather, I refused to lie to the man. I did not love Kyue, and he did not love me. I didn’t even know the man and, except for a few pictures here and there, I hadn’t seen him since he was a young child.

We had both been raised in the same society and social circles, we were both educated men, and our families were close.

In terms of looks, Kyue was an attractive man so I doubted our married life would be a hardship on either of us.

When I had escorted him to dinner, I’d noticed how frail and delicate his bone structure was. His body was rather slim, which concerned me. I was a little worried that he had been coddled so much that he really wouldn’t be able to function in the real world.

“Well, you seem to know what you’re talking about.” Aat chuckled as he shook his head and headed for the office door. “I’ll bid you good evening for now, Lucas. I need to go make sure we’re stocked up on popcorn. This is going to be quite the show.”

I cocked my head, frowning at the man’s amusement and his words. Why did that sound so ominous?

What did he know that I didn’t?

* * * *

“Bernice, get me the Mendelssohn file.”

“Right away, sir.”

I dropped my hand from the inner office intercom and went back to my computer screen. There was something off about the numbers I was looking at, but I couldn’t quite figure out what they were.

The contract being proposed for a new research and development center would be a very lucrative deal for my company. I wanted it to go off without a hitch. And, if I could just figure out what was wrong with the numbers, it would.

When my cell phone rang, I glanced at the caller ID, but didn’t recognize the person calling. I picked it up and then swiped my finger across the screen before holding the phone to my ear.

“Hello.”

“Mr. Kincaid?”

A smirk spread across my lips as I sat back in my chair. “Kyue, I assume you are calling to tell me you’ve made a decision.”

It wasn’t a question. Why else would he be calling?

“I’ll agree to the marriage, but I’m unavailable on the fourteenth. You’ll have to schedule the wedding for another day.”

“I’m afraid that won’t be possible, Kyue. The wedding has already been scheduled for the fourteenth.”

“Then un-schedule it or find another groom.”

My nostrils flared as I attempted to reign in my anger and not snarl at the man. “Why can’t you be there on the fourteenth?”

“I have other plans.”

“Then change them.”

“Nope,” Kyue replied, with a heavy emphasis on the “p”.

“Kyue—”

“Look, Mr. Kincaid, I’m not trying to be a pain, but that date has been scheduled for me for over three months and a lot of people are depending on me being there. I will not let them down.”

That might put a slightly different spin on things simply because I could respect a man that held to his responsibilities.

“Very well.” I opened my schedule on my computer and checked my availability. “I can reschedule for the following Saturday at four in the afternoon. Will that be acceptable?”

“Yes, thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

“See you on the twenty-first then.”

“Kyue, wait a—” I heard a distinctive click.

He hung up on me.

I stared down at my phone for a moment before a small chuckle escaped my lips. At least now I had his phone number.

Chapter Four

~ Kyue ~

I stared down at the cell phone in my hand, feeling like I was holding a hand grenade without the pin in it. I had just sold myself for the family fortune. My grandparents would be thrilled, as I was sure Lucas's family would be.

Me, not so much.

I seriously did not want to spend the rest of my life with this guy. He was attractive enough if you liked tall, dark, and breathtakingly handsome—and I did—but, oh my god, he'd have to speak at some point and then I'd have to murder him. I did not give good odds that I wouldn't be spending some part of my life behind bars.

I had been honest with Lucas when I told him that I had plans for the fourteenth. There was a super-sport road race that day that I would be participating in.

Not only would winning the pot help with some of my operating costs, but I was testing out a new type of fireproof polymer fabric for a friend. It looked like a pair of blue mesh long johns and it was worn under my racing suit. It was supposed to help riders keep from dying if they crashed, and I was all for that.

I also had people on my team that were depending on me to be there and win the race. They had helped me design my new racing bike. If it worked out like we hoped, the prototype

would launch us into the high-stakes world of professional super-sport road racing.

There was no way I could miss this to marry a guy I didn't even like.

I groaned as I tossed my phone down on the table. This couldn't be happening at a worst time. Not only did I need to get ready for this race, but I had a gallery showing in ten days that I had to prepare for. How was I supposed to do all of that and plan for a wedding?

There just were not enough hours in the day.

Wait.

Was I supposed to plan the wedding?

"Uhg." I grabbed my phone and redialed Lucas. He was the last person I wanted to speak to, but it wasn't like I had much of a choice.

"Kyue."

"Who is planning the wedding?"

"My executive assistant, Foyt."

Figures.

"Can I have his number?" I frowned when my question was met with silence. "Mr. Kincaid?"

"Must you always call me by my surname?" Lucas asked. "We are officially engaged to be married, Kyue. It is permissible for you to call me by my given name."

I grinned, barely holding back my chuckle. "Mr. Kincaid will do for now."

Simply because I knew it irked him.

Lucas's voice sounded a little sharper as he stated, "I will have Foyt contact you."

My chuckle escaped when the line went dead. I wasn't sure if Lucas had hung up because he had business matters to get back to or because he was angry at me, but I knew what I was hoping for.

I set my phone down and sat in front of my computer again. As much as pissing Lucas off was starting to delight me, I did need to get back to work. If I wasn't ready for this race come the fourteenth, all of this will have been for nothing.

"I got the diagnostics, Kyue," one of my team members said as they walked into the room, "but I'm a little concerned with some of the readings."

I took the tablet Bobby handed me and read over what he had. I could see where his concerns were.

"We need to take this part right here"—I pointed to a bearing on the back wheel—"and check it for cracks. The vibration may have damaged it in the last test race. See if Parker can get the microscopic camera up and running. I want high-intensity pictures."

"You got it, Boss."

I grabbed a rag and headed for the motorcycle. My tool chest was already there so hopefully this wouldn't take long.

I made it two steps before my phone rang. I briefly considered not answering it, but it could be important. I stepped back over to the table, grabbed the phone, and answered it. "Hello?"

“Good day, Mr. Panich. My name is Foyt. I am the executive assistant to Mr. Lucas Kincaid. I was told you requested I call.”

“Oh, right.” I leaned my hip against the table to get comfortable. I didn’t think this conversation would take long, but I couldn’t be sure and I had been on my feet for several hours straight. “Thank you for calling me back so quickly, Mr. Foyt.”

“Just Foyt, sir.”

Right.

“Lucas mentioned that you are planning the wedding?” I asked.

“For the twenty-first, sir, yes.”

“Is there anything I need to be doing?” I was pretty much hoping for a simple “stand in front of the judge” type of ceremony. I didn’t need all the fanfare that seemed to go along with people getting married.

“No, sir. I have taken care of all the details. You do have an appointment on the tenth with the tailors, though. I believe Mr. Kincaid has ordered you a new tuxedo and you need to be properly fitted for it.”

“Yeah, don’t worry about that. I have a tuxedo already. I was just worried that there was planning aspects of the wedding that I might need to be involved in. I have a very busy schedule over the next two weeks so if there is something I need to meet with you about or anything, just give me a call and I’ll see where I can fit you in.”

“Of course, sir,” Foyt replied. “Oh, wait. There is one thing, sir. You need to sign the prenuptial agreement. Mr. Kincaid’s lawyer has it in his office. When can I schedule you an appointment to meet with him?”

Damn.

As much as I didn’t want to schedule anything, I had things to protect and there was no way in hell I was letting Lucas Kincaid get his hands on them.

“Would Tuesday morning work? I have a race at ten so it would have to be early.”

“I can schedule for eight in the morning if that would work for you, sir.”

“Sounds good, thanks.”

“I’ll send the information to your phone, sir.”

“Thank you, Foyt. You’ve been very helpful.”

“That is my job, sir.”

I’m sure it was.

I just wished he’d stop calling me “sir”.

“Thank you anyway, Foyt.” I hung up, tossed the phone on the table, and started for my bike again.

Phone rang before I got two steps.

“Oh my god, what is with people today?” I stepped over and grabbed the phone. I recognized the number, and almost didn’t answer it, but I was pretty sure Lucas would keep calling until I did. I swiped my finger over the screen. “Yes, Mr. Kincaid?”

“What race?”

I chuckled. “Goodbye, Mr. Kincaid.”

I hung up, but this time I turned the ringer off.

* * * *

~ Lucas ~

He hung up on me.

Again.

“Foyt.”

“Yes, sir?”

“Find out what race Kyue was talking about.”

“Yes, sir.”

I let out a sigh as I stared down at my phone. Was this what Aat meant when he said Kyue wasn't like other people? Or was this the part where he was a pain in the ass?

Pretty sure I knew the answer to that question.

“Foyt.”

“Yes, sir?”

“Go buy me some padded handcuffs and a ball gag.”

“Sir?”

I glanced up. “I might need a paddle, too.”

Foyt's normally staid face changed completely when his eyebrows shot up to his hairline and his eyes widened. "A paddle, sir?"

"Aat did warn me that Kyue was going to be a handful."

"Yes, sir."

A smile broke out across my face as I stared down at the phone. I wasn't sure what Kyue was up to, but I was bound and determined to find out.

I had a lot of work to do before then.

I opened the Mendelssohn file and started comparing the numbers with the one in the contract proposal. I needed to make sure they matched so I could figure out why they felt off.

When my phone rang awhile later, I absently looked at the screen and then picked it up. "How can I help you today, Mr. D'Amato?"

The low chuckle I received made the tension in my shoulders release.

"I wanted to talk to you about the Mendelssohn merger, Lucas. Something is off about it."

I frowned before looking at the file again. "Yes, I know. I was just going over it to compare the numbers."

"Why don't we meet up and we can go over it together? Two heads are better than one."

I glanced at the clock on the wall. The dinner hour was a ways off so it should give us enough time to go over everything. "Your office, six o'clock?"

“Oh, could we make it three o’clock? I promised Jai I’d be done with work on time tonight. We have dinner plans at eight.”

“Fine.” I kept my sigh to myself. “I’ll meet you at your office at three o’clock.”

“Is everything okay, Lucas? You sound off.”

Not really.

“Everything is fine, Jake,” I replied. “Thank you for asking.”

“You know, just because we haven’t been at the university in over a decade doesn’t mean we’re not frat brothers anymore. If you have a problem, I’m here to listen.”

“I know, but this is just something I need to figure out on my own.”

“Oh, so there is something wrong.”

Damn.

“Are you sure Miles and Joe are the attorneys and not you?”

“I didn’t get where I am today by not reading between the lines,” Jake replied. “Come on, Lucas. Tell me what’s going on. Maybe I can help.”

Considering the man was the CEO of a billion-dollar company that he built from the ground up, he might know what he was talking about. He was pretty good at reading situations and people.

God knows I wasn’t.

“I’m getting married.”

There was a bit of awkward silence before Jake asked, “Is that the old family agreement thing you told us about back in the day or is this someone new?”

“Both?”

“I’m slightly confused.”

That made one of us. I was totally confused.

“I knew Kyue when we were younger, but I haven’t seen him since he was like six or seven years old.” I breathed in deep as an image of Kyue came to mind. “Until last week.”

“Okay, and are you still engaged to him or...?”

“We’re getting married on the twenty-first.”

“And I didn’t get an invite because?”

“Oh.” Damn. “Foyt is in charge of the wedding. It’s just going to be a small affair at my house. I wasn’t really planning on inviting anyone.”

There was that awkward silence again.

“You’re not inviting anyone to your wedding?” Jake asked.

“No.”

Why would I?

“What about your fiancé? Is he inviting anyone?”

“I don’t believe so. If he does, I am sure Foyt will make the arrangements.”

“Lucas—”

“Jake, its fine,” I hurried to reassure my friend. “This is not that kind of wedding. Hell, it’s not that kind of marriage either.”

“Is that something you really want, Lucas? That sounds pretty cold to me.”

“It is what it is, Jake. This agreement between our families was made ages ago. Our family owes them a lot and this is the way we pay them back for how they helped us.”

“Yeah, but to give up your freedom like that for a man you don’t even know.”

“Like I said, it is what it is.”

“So, tell me about this man you’re going to marry. What’s he like?”

“You know, I thought I knew, but I’m starting to suspect that I might not know anything about him.”

“Oh?”

“His grandfather told me that Kyue isn’t like other people. I’m still trying to figure out exactly what he meant by that, but after talking to Kyue I ordered Foyt to go out and buy me a set of padded handcuffs, a ball-gag, and a paddle.”

My smile turned up a notch at Jake’s laughter.

“He intrigues you.”

I grunted. “He pisses me off.”

Jake laughed again. “He does intrigue you.”

Yeah, maybe, but I’d never admit that out loud.

Chapter Five

~ Kyue ~

I tossed my copy of the prenup on my desk and then headed to the bathroom so I could change into my riding clothes. I'd done as Lucas had asked and gone to meet with his lawyers so I could sign the paperwork. I'd had to change a couple of small things before I could sign, but it was done.

My race was four days away, the gallery opening was the day before the wedding, and the wedding was eleven days away. It made my head ache even thinking about all I had to do in the next two weeks.

If Lucas expected me to go on a honeymoon, he was shit out of luck. I'd be recovering from working myself to death.

After changing into my racing suit, including the new polymer under-suit, I left the top of the outer suit down, tying the sleeves around my waist. That thing could get hot as hell at times.

My phone was ringing when I walked back into my office. I picked it up and glanced at the screen. I sighed as I answered it. "Good morning, Mr. Kincaid. I hope you're not calling about the changes to the prenup."

"I am not. I had no issue with the changes you made. My concern is where you are."

"Where I am?"

What did that mean?

“We have an appointment at eleven o’clock today to see the tailor and be fitted for our tuxedos.”

The urge to murder Lucas was coming back.

“We’ve already discussed this, Mr. Kincaid. I don’t need a tux. Therefore, I will not be joining you today. I’ll see you at the wedding on the twenty-first.”

And hopefully not a moment before then.

“Kyue—”

“Goodbye, Mr. Kincaid.” I took a great deal of satisfaction in hanging up on him, especially since I could hear his angry shout just before the line went dead.

My phone started ringing again almost immediately. I rolled my eyes after looking at the screen. This guy was turning out to be such a pain in the ass.

A slow burning anger ignited in my gut as I swiped my finger over the screen and then held the phone to my ear.

“Kyue, you—”

“I don’t know about you, Mr. Kincaid, but I have better things to do today than talk on the phone. For the last time, I am not going to the tailors with you. My tux is perfectly acceptable to wear for the clown show you have planned on the twenty-first. I am not buying a new one. Now, goodbye, Mr. Kincaid.”

This time when I hung up on Lucas, I almost threw my phone across the room. I really needed to not let this guy get to me or it was going to make married life really interesting.

Maybe I could convince him that we didn't need to live together. We'd get married as required by our families, and then go back to our own lives. I was beyond certain that he wouldn't enjoy having me in his, and I could say the same for myself.

Besides, I didn't want to go to prison.

I glanced up when I heard a knock at the door. "Come."

The door opened and Bobby stuck his head in. "Hey, Boss, you ready for the first test run?"

"Yeah, I'm coming." I set my phone down on my desk, grabbed my helmet and gloves, and then followed Bobby out of the room. I had a bike to ride and test. I was sure I would be riding the track more than once today.

When we reached the main floor, we walked over to the area just in front of the garage where the bike was located. "Parker, did you get that new part installed?"

"Sure thing, Kyue," Parker replied. "I got it installed last night and already ran the diagnostics." His grin almost filled up his face. "The numbers check out this time, Boss."

Freaking fantastic.

"Okay, let's get this show on the road."

"Bike is ready, Boss," Parker said. "Time to make history."

I snorted out a laugh. "I don't think things will go that far unless I crash. It's just a test run."

I walked to just outside of the garage doors to stand next to the bike while I finished suiting up. Once I had the suit buttoned up tight, I swung my leg over the seat and sat down. I

started up the bike to warm it up before I pulled on my helmet and gloves.

Once I was ready, I gave the engine a few good revs.

Damn, she purred like a kitten.

“Comm. check.”

“We hear you loud and clear, Boss,” Bobby called out through the earpiece built into my helmet.

“Set the lights,” I ordered as I drove the bike over to the starting line. To be fair, this was a timed race to see how fast the bike would go and if there were any issues while traversing the racetrack. I wasn’t racing against anything except the clock.

I revved the engine a few more times as the red lights counted down, trying to clear my mind of everything but the track in front of me. The second the green light lit up, I hit the throttle and the bike shot forward.

I’d driven this track too many times to count so I knew every corner and every dip in the pavement. I kind of felt that it was cheating because if this went the way I hoped and we were able to sell a quality racing bike, the people buying them might be racing them on unfamiliar tracks.

On the other hand, this was just a test ride.

“How’s she handling, Boss?”

I grinned with utter delight. “Like a dream.”

“Your time is good, but you might want to slow it down a bit at those curves.”

“Not a chance in hell.”

My grin grew wider as I put on more throttle. There was something freeing about being on the back of a motorcycle. It didn't matter if it was on a racetrack or a street, it was you and the machine you commanded beneath you, and nothing else.

It was almost as good as sex.

Almost.

I raced around the track, zipping through the straight-aways and swaying through the curves. By the time I reached the finish line, my pulse was throbbing, my heart thundering in my chest.

“Woohoo!” Bobby shouted through the comm unit. “You hit one-seventy-nine, boss.”

Yes!

One hundred and fifty miles an hour had been our target goal for the one-mile track. Not only had we surpassed that, but there had been no undue vibrations like the last couple of test runs.

“There were no vibrations this time. I think we fixed it with that new gear,” I said as I drove back toward the open garage. “I want a full diagnostic before I take the next test run. Front to back.”

I pulled the bike to a stop and turned it off. After kicking out the kickstand, I turned the engine off. I pulled off my gloves and then my helmet, handing them all off to Bobby before letting my head fall back on my shoulders, closing my eyes, and just breathing for a moment.

My adrenaline spiked every single time I raced my bike. Sometimes it could be a bit overwhelming, especially when

the results of all our hard work over the last year were finally starting to pan out.

“Kyue.”

I knew that voice.

My eyes snapped open as I lifted my head and glanced around. “What the hell are you doing here?” I asked as soon as I spotted Lucas standing by the edge of the garage.

And how had he found me?

“Since you won’t answer my phone calls, I had to come to you.”

“No, you didn’t. You really didn’t.” I swung myself off the motorcycle and headed into the garage.

“Kyue.”

“Go home, Mr. Kincaid.”

“We have an appointment at eleven. If we leave now, we might make it on time.”

“I’m not leaving.”

“You are if I say you are.”

I crossed my arms and stared up at Lucas with an amused smirk on my face. “I’d like to see you try.”

“We have an appointment at the tailors, Kyue. We are expected.”

“No, you are expected.” I pointed to the computer on the draft table next to some diagrams and motorcycle parts. “I have a bike to get ready for the next race.”

Lucas grabbed me by the wrist. “We are leaving.”

I stared at the long thick fingers wrapped around my wrist and then slowly raised my eyes to glare at the man. He was invading my personal bubble space again.

“Do you really want to do this here, now, in front of all these people?” I didn’t care, but I knew Lucas would. Image was everything to this man.

Despite them narrowing, I could still see the rage burning in Lucas’s steel blue eyes. If we had been alone, I had no doubt he’d be paddling my ass at that very second.

Could be fun, but I didn’t have time right now.

“Our appointment at the tailors to get our tuxedos fitted is for eleven. It would be rude to miss it.”

I jerked my hand out of his tight grasp. “If you want a new tuxedo, I suggest you go get one. I’m busy.”

“Kyue—”

I jutted out my chin. “No!”

A tic pulsed in Lucas’s jaw as he leaned in close to me and lowered his voice to almost a whisper before speaking. “I will buy this entire racetrack and burn it to the ground if you do not go with me right this second.”

“Good luck with that.” I snorted. “I own the track and I’m not interested in selling.”

It had been a good investment.

Lucas blinked at me for a moment before straightening to his full height. “You own this racetrack?”

“Yes, I do.”

God, it felt good to say that.

Lucas's brow flickered, and seeing it, I knew he must be really confused. From what I had seen since I'd met him, Lucas never showed his emotions on his face, so he must really be feeling it.

"How could you afford to buy a racetrack?"

I shrugged because there was no way in hell that I was telling him that. "Just lucky I guess." Too bad that luck seemed to only appear in my business portfolio. My personal life sucked. "Now, if that is all, Mr. Kincaid, I need to get back to work. I have a race on the fourteenth I need to get ready for."

Lucas started to frown as he glanced from me to the computer to the motorcycle. By the time he got back to me again, there was a deep scowl on his face drawing his eyebrows down low over his narrowed eyes.

"You're not racing."

I snorted again and bent over to get a closer look at the information on my computer screen. "Goodbye, Mr. Kincaid."

I thought I had gotten rid of him until I felt a solid presence brush up behind me and then Lucas's hot breath blew out across the back of my neck. "Be very careful, Kyue. I will only be pushed so far."

I straightened up and turned around, tilting my head back so I could look up at the tall man. I don't know what Lucas saw in my eyes, but he took a step back, and then another one.

I followed him step for step.

“Do you think you scare me, Mr. Kincaid?” Tilting my head to one side, I slanted a look up at him. “News flash. You don’t.”

Lucas’s jaw clenched and his eyes began to blaze. This was a new side of him that I hadn’t seen before. He was always so emotionless, never giving away anything of how he was really feeling.

This fiery side of him was actually kind of awesome to watch.

Not so much when he grabbed me, swung me around, and slammed me into the wall. Granted, he’d used his hand to cushion my head so I wouldn’t hurt myself, but it had still been an unexpected action.

“What the hell do you—?”

Lucas slapped a hand over my mouth, and that widened my eyes and gave me my first sliver of unease. Maybe poking the bear hadn’t been my best option.

Chapter Six

~ Lucas ~

What was it about this man that drove me so insane? I wanted to shake him as hard as I could and demand he give me the answer at the same time that I wanted to wrap him up and demand that he never go near another motorcycle again.

I had arrived on the track right after he drove his bike to the starting line. I'd been witness to the entire ride and it scared the hell out of me. With the way my chest ached, I was pretty sure I still wasn't breathing.

Certainly felt like I wasn't.

But I had also seen the pure joy on Kyue's face after he took his helmet off and tilted his face up to the sun. As much as I wanted to forbid him to ride and stop putting his life in danger, how could I?

Whatever oxygen I had left in my body seemed to catch in my throat when my eyes met Kyue's. His were as dark as ebony, but there was a glint in them as if he knew something the rest of the world didn't, and he was amused by that.

I slid my hand off his mouth and along the side of his cheek to the back of his head until I could grab a handful of his long black hair. I wrapped the other arm around his slender waist.

I delighted in the small breath of air that flew out of Kyue's mouth when I jerked him flush with my body. It was

only fair that he felt the same confusion and discomfort that I did.

All I wanted to do was kiss him and touch him and strip him naked right where he stood so I could gaze upon him at my leisure. Considering how little I actually knew about the man, that seemed wrong to me for some reason.

I had no issues with one-night stands. I'd had plenty of them in my day. But it just didn't feel right to think of Kyue in those terms. Maybe it was because he seemed so innocent at times, even if his temper tantrums didn't.

I lowered my head and brushed my nose along the satiny skin on the side of his face, breathing his heady scent in until I reached his ear.

“Remember, little Kyue,” I whispered. “You will be mine in eleven days and no one will be able to stop me from reddening your tight little ass with the flat of my hand, not even you.”

His quiet gasp brought a smirk to my face.

“Be careful how you rile me, Kyue.” I angled my head just far enough to suck the lobe of his ear between my lips, and then I bit down until I felt Kyue shudder in my arms. “I bite.”

I had years of learning how to control my emotions, but everything I knew wavered inside of me as I released Kyue, turned, and walked away, especially since that was the last thing I wanted to do.

I had barely reached the side of the building before I heard something crash against the wall and Kyue's outraged yell.

My face split into a wide grin.

“Sir?” Foyt asked as he gazed toward the garage doors.
“Should we...?”

“It’s fine, Foyt. Kyue is unable to join us at the tailors today. He apparently has more pressing matters to deal with.”
Like cleaning up whatever he had just thrown against the wall.

“Very good, sir.”

Yes, it was.

I walked to my waiting car and climbed inside. Foyt climbed in the other side. Once the doors were closed, he gave instructions to my driver Jefferson, and then sat there quietly going over whatever was on his tablet.

See, this was one of the reasons I liked Foyt. He knew when to talk and when to keep quiet. Right now, he needed to keep quiet. I had too many thoughts swirling around in my head to be able to converse right then.

It was becoming glaringly apparent that I knew nothing about my soon-to-be husband. Maybe it was time for me to start taking an interest in who he was.

“Foyt.”

“Sir?”

“Find out everything you can about that damn racetrack.” I still wanted to know how Kyue had afforded it considering he hadn’t taken a single penny from his grandparents since the day he had graduated from the university.

“Of course, sir.”

“And find out if he owns any other property.”

“Sir?”

“I’m starting to think Aat was right and there is more to Kyue than meets the eye. I want to know what that is.”

“Of course, sir.”

Suddenly, I had no interest in going to the tailors. “Call the tailor shop and reschedule.”

“Yes, sir.”

I pulled my cell phone out and dialed. “Jake, this is Lucas. Do you, Miles, and Joe have time to meet for lunch?”

“We can make the time,” Jake replied.

“Our usual place?” I asked. “Say eleven o’clock?”

“We’ll meet you there.”

I hung up and put my phone away before glancing out the window again. “Jefferson, take me to the ballpark.”

Jefferson didn’t reply, but the car did turn at the next corner and start heading to the ballpark where our little gang of frat brothers used to hang out in our university days.

It wasn’t so much the park, but the bar across the street from the park that I was headed to. A little hole in the wall type of place that served what I considered the best ice-cold beer and burgers in the entire state.

It wasn’t five-star cuisine by any stretch of the imagination, but it was damn good, and cheap, and no one really paid us much attention there. It was one of the few places I felt as if I could let my mask come off and just be me. A simple guy with simple tastes.

There was no doubting the fact that I had been born into a rich family. The spoon in my mouth wasn’t silver. It was solid

gold. Growing up, that meant boarding schools, servants, and living in the fishbowl world of the social elite.

Seven course meals were the norm when I wanted a juicy cheeseburger, fine wines from France instead of ice-cold beer, high fashion instead of comfortable leisurewear, and glittery mansions instead of a quiet place to rest and relax.

It was the life I had been born into and one I continued to live in to this very day. In fact, I had worked very hard to make sure that life continued. I'd worked night and day for years to turn my father's real estate development company into a billion-dollar multi-national corporation.

I deserved the rewards that hard work brought me.

But it was a lonely place.

While others might see my life as a dream, I saw the truth of it. I trusted very few people. It didn't matter if they were relatives, friends, or merely acquaintances. People saw dollar signs when they looked at me and were willing to do almost anything to get some.

Maybe that was why Kyue had caught my interest. He didn't seem to care about the money. He wasn't nice to me so he could get expensive gifts. He didn't kowtow to my every word. He definitely wasn't a "yes man" type of guy. He was actually downright rude to me.

I didn't see gold digger when I looked at him and I was pretty damn good at reading people, but not as good as Jake, which was why I wanted to meet with him and the others. I was hoping they could tell me if I was seeing things when I

looked into those mischievous eyes that were as beautiful and as dark as black satin.

Was his wide-eyed innocence merely a smoke screen? At the moment, that was the most pressing question I had, and I didn't have a freaking clue how to get the answer.

When the car stopped, I reached for the door to open it before Jefferson could get out and do it for me. "Why don't the two of you go eat or something? I'm not sure how long I'll be, but I'll call when I'm done with my meeting."

"Of course, sir," Foyt replied. "I'll be waiting for your call."

I climbed out of the car and then made my way into the bar. I doubted the others had had time to get here yet as I had driven straight here. They still had to come from wherever they were.

I went inside and ordered a cold beer before making my way over to one of the tables near the back. After taking my suit coat off and draping it over the back of my chair, I sat down and then loosened my tie.

Once I could breathe a little more freely, I settled back and took a long sip of my beer. I shivered a little as the icy cold goodness slithered down my throat. They really did serve the coldest beer here.

I glanced up when a statuesque blonde in a rather revealing thigh length blue sundress slid into the seat across from me. When she just smiled at me, I cocked an eyebrow. "Can I help you?"

"No, but maybe I can help you."

When she reached for my hand, I yanked it back. “Not interested.”

Surprised flashed in her eyes for a moment before her smile became coy. “Oh, don’t be like that. What does a girl have to do to get a handsome man like you to buy her a drink?”

“Engaged.”

Her eyes dropped to my hand. “I don’t see a ring.”

Damn, how could I forget about the rings?

“Doesn’t mean there isn’t one there.” It might be invisible, but that connection to Kyue was as strong as steel rebar.

The woman winked at me. “He doesn’t have to know.”

“I’d know and—” Wait a minute. I shot out and grabbed her wrist. “How did you know my fiancé was a man?”

I’d never mentioned it.

There was a brief widening of the eyes before the woman shrugged. “He, she, what does it matter?”

No, she’d been more specific than that. I in no way looked like the stereotypical man people cast in the gay community, and I knew that. It was a shitty standard, but it was there. And yet this woman had gone straight to me being engaged to a man.

That wasn’t right.

I kept a tight grip on her hand as I pulled out my cell phone and dialed. “Foyt, I need you and Jefferson back at the bar, now.”

“We’re on our way, sir.”

I hung up the phone but dialed another number instead of putting my phone away. “It’s me. I need you guys to double time it. I think I’m going to need a lawyer.”

“A lawyer?” Jake asked. “Did you kill someone?”

I narrowed my eyes at the woman sitting across from me. “Not yet.”

“Well, we’re about ten minutes out. Wait until we get there. We can be your alibi.”

“I’ll do what I can, but I make no promises.” I hung up, but before sticking my phone in my pocket, I took the woman’s picture.

“Hey, what are you doing?” she snapped. “I didn’t give you permission to take my picture. Delete it immediately.”

“And I didn’t give you permission to fuck with me or my fiancé, and yet, you did.”

She tried to yank her arm out of my grasp, so I just tightened my fingers. “You’re not getting away until you answer my questions. Who are you, who hired you, and why are you doing this?”

“I don’t have to answer anything. This is kidnapping. I can call the police right now and have you arrested.”

I pulled my phone back out and wagged it back and forth. “Do you want to call them or shall I?”

Chapter Seven

~ Lucas ~

Twenty minutes later, I was sitting with Jake, Miles, and Joe, all of us watching as the police took the woman away. I still didn't have the answers I wanted, and I doubted I would get them from her. She had clammed up after I threatened to call the cops on her.

As it was, I doubted the cops would hold her. It was only due to who I was that the police even arrested her. She would probably be booked for harassment and then let go.

At this point, I was simply hoping to get a name, and then I could put Foyt on investigating her. He could pretty much find out information on anything or anyone.

It was one of the reasons I employed the man.

“What exactly is going on here, Lucas?” Jake asked. “Who was that woman?”

“I have no idea.” I quickly explained the situation as I knew and why it unnerved me so much. I didn't think I was over-exaggerating, and apparently my friends didn't think so either.

Jake instantly called up his executive assistant, an intimidating and gorgeous woman named Stella Dumont. She used to work for the CIA, and still had a lot of friends in low places. She'd most likely be able to get any information that Foyt couldn't.

“I have her picture, Jake.”

Jake nodded. “Send it to my phone and I’ll send it to Stella.”

I quickly did as he asked, and then I thought about it for a moment and sent the picture to Kyue before calling him.

“I’d think naked dick pics would be more your style, Mr. Kincaid. Not pictures of stunning blondes.”

There was a bite to his voice that made me smile.

“Do you recognize that woman?” I asked when I really wanted to ask if he was jealous.

“Forget the name of your date?”

“This is serious, Kyue. I just had her arrested for harassment. I need to know if you’ve ever seen her before. Has she ever approached you or said anything to you?”

Kyue sighed and was silent for a moment and then he said, “No, I’ve never seen this woman before, but...”

“But?”

“She looks vaguely familiar. I just can’t place why.”

“But you’re sure you’ve never seen her before?”

“No, I don’t think so. Maybe I’ve seen her in passing or something and that’s why she looks familiar. We could have attended the same parties or events. She looks as if she has money, so anything is possible.”

“How can you tell that from her picture?” I asked.

“Her clothes,” Kyue replied. “They are name brand and they fit her well, so she probably bought them at one of those

specialty boutiques.”

I glanced at the picture again. Huh. He was right. Not sure if I would have picked that out without Kyue’s help though. “If you remember where you’ve seen her, can you please give me a call?”

“Yeah, sure.”

The line between them hung heavy with silence, but since Kyue hadn’t hung up or told me to go fuck myself, I didn’t hang up.

“Kyue?” I asked after a moment.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, I’m. Just a bit confused.”

“By what?”

“Unlike you, I know for a fact that I have never seen that woman before a day in my life. She sat down at my table and hit on me. When I told her I was engaged and not interested, she said that *he* never had to find out. She used the word *he*, Kyue. Not she.”

“Okay and this is weird why?”

“Do I look like the stereotypical gay man that women picture in their heads?”

“Uh... I’m not sure how to answer that since I’m not a woman, but you’re what I picture when I think of a gay man.”

My mouth parted but didn’t drop. “I am?”

“Come on, Mr. Kincaid. You know you’re hot so stop fishing and tell me why that was weird.”

Kyue thought I was hot?

“Um, well, in my experience, women come on to me a lot. They don’t look at me and think gay man. This particular woman hit on me. When I turned her down because of you, she said he and not she. So, how did she know I was engaged to a man?”

“Oh.”

“Now you see why I find it weird?”

“Kind of?”

He didn’t sound like it, and I was past trying to explain it to him. “Look, if you remember where you saw this woman, just let me know. I’ve got to go. I’m having lunch with some friends.”

I did not expect him to hang up on me without saying a word.

I ground my teeth together and drew in a deep breath to try and calm the anger simmering under my skin. I don’t know what it was about that man that made me so angry so quickly. I wasn’t known for losing my cool, but Kyue made me want to rage.

“So, who is this guy you’re marrying?” Jake asked. “You mentioned him before, but you never really said who he was.”

“I’m not sure exactly who he is.”

“Come again?”

“Kyue is not what I expected.” Big understatement. Huge. “His grandfather said he was different than other people, but I

can't help wondering if he knows just how different Kyue really is."

"How so?" Miles asked. "What makes him so different?"

"He looks like a China doll and yet he races motorcycles."

"Really?" Joe asked. "I've always wanted to ride a motorcycle."

"When I saw him last, I overheard some of his team. They were all excited because Kyue tested over a hundred and fifty miles an hour on the track."

"On a motorcycle?" Joe exclaimed.

I nodded.

"That's insane."

"That was nothing. The night I met him not only did he basically tell me to go fuck myself, complete with hand gesture, but he just walked out of our meeting."

There was more than one dropped jaw.

"When I saw him at the racetrack, I had gone to get him because we had an appointment to get fitted for our tuxes. Kyue refused to go. When I threatened to buy the racetrack and burn it to the ground, he got this smug look on his face that I doubt I will ever forget, and then informed me he had no intentions of selling."

"He owns the racetrack?" Miles asked.

"Apparently."

Joe's chuckle was mean. "I want to meet this guy."

"Why?" I asked. "So he can flip you off, too?"

It was a very real possibility.

“No, because he has you flustered, and I’ve never seen you flustered before.”

I sat up straighter and then straightened my tie. “I am not flustered.”

I didn’t know the meaning of the word.

“Have you lost that legendary temper of yours yet?” Joe asked.

I huffed, heavily. My temper was not legendary. In fact, I hardly ever lost my temper. “I had Foyt order a paddle.”

And a couple other things.

Joe, Miles, and Jake roared with laughter.

I was not amused.

“I’m free tomorrow night,” Jake said. “Why don’t we all get together for some drinks? I’ll bring Jai and you can bring Kyue.”

“That sounds like a great idea,” Miles said. “If I can pull Sam away from his easel, we’ll be there.”

“You’d know better than me, Jake,” Joe added, “but I don’t think Jayce has anything pressing in the lab. Pretty sure we can be there, too.”

“You are serious?” I asked. “You all want to get together and meet Kyue?”

“Of course,” Jake replied. “You’re going to be marrying him and we’re your oldest friends. We have to meet him.”

“Especially because you seem to think you’ll need a paddle,” Miles added. “That’s pretty much a staple at my place.”

I did not need to know about Miles’ kinky sex life.

“Okay, fine, I’ll give him a call.”

* * * *

~ Kyue ~

I glanced down at my phone when it rang and then groaned when I saw Lucas’s name flash across the screen. I picked it up and answered as politely as I could, “Yes, Mr. Kincaid?”

“I need you to be ready to go out tomorrow night at seven. Wear something appropriate for drinks out.”

“No.”

“Kyue—”

“I’m busy,” I said and then immediately hung up the phone.

It rang again within seconds.

Ugh, this man.

I angrily swiped my finger across the screen and answered it. “I told you I’m busy, Mr. Kincaid.”

“Do you think under the circumstances, you could be a little more polite to me?”

“Do you think under the circumstances you could ask instead of demand?”

Silence.

I just stayed on the line, not saying anything.

“Kyue,” Lucas said after a moment, “some close friends of mine are getting together for drinks, and I would like you to accompany me so I can introduce you to them.” Lucas cleared his throat. “Please.”

I ground my teeth together and drew in a lungful of air before replying in a somewhat calmer voice, “I’m afraid that I really am booked on Wednesday. There’s an event I am scheduled to attend.”

“Are you racing?” Lucas asked.

“Yes.” I saw no reason to deny it.

“I see.”

See what?

“Tell me where it is so I can come watch you race.”

My eyebrows suddenly became level with my hairline.

“You want to watch me race?”

“I want to watch you win.”

A slow grin began to cross my face. “Racetrack, tomorrow night, eight o’clock.”

“I’ll be there.”

I took a breath to calm my nerves as I stared down at my phone in confusion after Lucas hung up.

That had been a very weird conversation. An oddly primitive warning sounded in my brain. Lucas was up to something. I was sure of it.

* * * *

~ Lucas ~

I twisted my lips around to try and keep them from spreading into a grin. I shouldn't be so amused by Kyue's temper tantrums, and yet, I was finding that I was. I kept holding my breath waiting to see what he would do or say next.

He was a disrespectful little brat wrapped up in a deliciously sexy package. If anyone had told me a week ago that I was be intrigued by this slip of a man, I would have laughed myself silly.

I sighed as I tucked my phone away and then glanced at my friends, who were all watching me with strange smirks on their faces.

Didn't know what that was about.

“Would you like to go to a motorcycle race?”

Chapter Eight

~ Kyue ~

“Hey, man, there’s some guy in a suit waiting outside for you.”

Some guy in a suit?

Lucas.

I was surprised he had actually shown up. I hadn’t really expected him to.

“It’s my fiancé. You can tell him he can come in.”

Parker cocked his head, frowning. “Your fiancé?”

“Lucas Kincaid.”

“I didn’t know you were getting married, Boss. When did that happen?”

I chuckled. “Recently.”

Very recently.

“Wow, well, congrats.”

I nodded my thanks and finished putting on my racing boots. The race was due to start soon, and I needed to be ready. This wasn’t a huge race, just three riders, but it was an important one.

If I won, I was one step closer to getting a lucrative contract to produce my motorcycle. I’d done all the regular

testing. Now, I was supposed to be testing it against other riders.

My stomach was one big knot just thinking about it.

I was a good rider, and I knew it, but my passion lay in creating the bikes, not winning races with them. Although I did feel that I needed to know what it was to race a bike in order to envision creating one.

“Kyue.”

I glanced up to see Lucas standing in the doorway...in a black three-piece suit. “Do you own anything else?”

“Anything else?”

I waved my hand at him. “Anything comfortable to wear. All I ever see you in is suits.” I tilted my head curiously and narrowed my eyes. “Do you sleep in them?”

Lucas’s lips thinned for a moment before he replied. “I have several sets of very nice silk pajamas that I sleep in.”

I stared for a moment, not believing what I was hearing. “You actually sleep in pajamas?”

“Yes, don’t you?”

“No, Mr. Kincaid. I sleep naked.”

“Kyue!”

I turned away to grab my jacket so Lucas wouldn’t see the amusement on my face. Sometimes, he was too easy.

I carried my jacket over my arm as I turned to look at him again. “Parker can show you to the stands where you can

watch the whole race. I'm sure you'll have a good vantage point from there."

"Yes, my friends are already there waiting for me."

"You brought your friends?"

"I wanted you to meet them."

Right.

"Well, I would be happy to meet them after the race."

"Could you do me one favor?" Lucas asked. "No, make that two favors."

I frowned.

Lucas held his hand up and then lifted one finger. "One, don't crash."

"Wasn't planning on it." Although the general rule when riding was not if you crashed, but when you crashed, because it happened to every biker at least once in their lives.

I just wasn't going to tell Lucas that.

"And two?"

Lucas held up another finger. "When you meet my friends, could you convince Joe that it's not a good idea to ride motorcycles?"

"No," I said without hesitation. "If your friend wants to learn how to ride motorcycles, then he should. There's nothing like being on the back of a bike. It's very freeing."

"Kyue—"

"But he should start with a beginner's class and learn from people trained to teach motorcycle riding. You can't just get on

a motorcycle and hope for the best. There's a lot of training and learning that goes into it."

"How long have you been riding?"

God, I had to think about it.

"I think I had my first motorcycle ride when I was about ten."

Lucas's eyebrows slid up his forehead. "Your grandparents let you ride a motorcycle when you were just ten years old?"

"Of course not." I chuckled because he was crazy if he thought my grandparents would have allowed something like that. "I snuck away from home and went riding with my friends, which is why I know you need lots of training. I must have crashed fifty times in that first year. Even broke my arm once."

Lucas's eyes closed briefly.

"It's dangerous, Kyue," he said when he opened his eyes.

"It is." Just to fuck with him, I walked over to where he stood and then pressed my hand to his chest so I could lean up and whisper in his ear, "But if you think riding a motorcycle is dangerous, I probably shouldn't tell you about some of the other stuff I like to do." I patted his chest right where my hand had been. "I'm not sure your heart can take it."

It would curl his hair.

Motorcycle racing was probably one of the tamer things I did for fun. There was also freestyle rock climbing, kickboxing, parachuting, paragliding, and underwater scuba diving just to name a few.

It was a long list.

I wouldn't say I was an adrenaline junky, but I wanted to live my life to the fullest. I had a duty to my deceased parents to face the world head on and be brave. I couldn't do that if I was afraid to try something.

Not even an earthquake could have kept the smirk off my face when I heard Lucas's breathe catch.

“What other stuff, Kyue?”

I chuckled as I walked out of the room. If we were going to be married, he would probably find out what other stuff eventually. I wasn't going to hide it.

One thing. I had one thing I would hide from him, but that had nothing to do with my dangerous hobbies. It was much more personal than that, and he would never know about it if I had anything to say about it.

I knew he was behind me, so I didn't bother turning around before asking, “What is the plan after we get married?”

“Plan?”

Okay, the confused tone made me turn around.

“Yes, once we're married, what is the plan? Do I call Foyt to make an appointment with you if I have an event coming up? Will you have him call me? I mean, how is all of this going to work? I'd assume there are going to be times when my presence is required.”

When Lucas continued to stare at me without saying a word, I nodded. “Okay, got it. No phone calls.” There was a small twinge somewhere in the vicinity of my chest, but I

ignored it. “That’s probably a better idea anyway. I seriously don’t think our lives will mesh.”

“Why wouldn’t our lives mesh?” Lucas sounded almost offended by my words. “We come from the same background.”

“Because you live in a gold-plated ivory tower, Mr. Kincaid, and I don’t.”

“Your family has money.”

“My family has money. I do not.” Well, not as much as my family did anyway and certainly not as much as Lucas did. My net worth was currently around the ten-million dollar mark. He was worth billions. “I don’t accept money from my family. I haven’t since I graduated from the university.”

Lucas huffed. “Fine, you don’t accept family money, but what does that have to do with meshing our lives together?”

“Where do you live, Mr. Kincaid?”

My eyebrows went up at the address he gave me. It was a pretty pricey neighborhood. I should know. My grandparents lived up that way.

“Tell me about your house. How many bedrooms and bathrooms does it have?”

Lucas’s eyebrows slowly pulled together. “Fifteen bedrooms and twenty-three bathrooms, I think. Why?”

“I assume you have servants?”

Lucas started to look even more perplexed than before. “Yes, of course, but—”

“I live in a studio loft apartment with one bathroom. I drive a motorcycle everywhere I go. Jeans are a staple in my life. I own one tux and two suits, and I only wear them under pain of death, or my grandmother, which is pretty much the same thing. I don’t have any servants. I cook, clean, grocery shop, get myself ready for work every day, and run any errands that are needed all by myself. Do you even know what a toilet brush looks like?”

Something pulsed in Lucas’s jaw line. “Just because I do not clean toilets does not mean I cannot be a good provider.”

My jaw dropped, but my shock didn’t last long. It was quickly overtaken by a burning anger that could have scorched half the earth.

“Who said anything about being a good provider? I never once asked you to provide for me. I am perfectly capable of providing for myself.”

“Kyue—”

If my glare got any harder, Lucas would be six feet under. I jabbed a finger in his direction and let him see every bit of my anger. “I am marrying you because of the agreement between our families, Mr. Kincaid. Not so that you can put me in that gold-plated ivory tower of yours and take care of me like I am some damsel in distress. I am not. I do not need nor want anything from you.”

“Kyue—”

“You have a good evening, Mr. Kincaid. I have to go now. I have a race to win.” I turned and started walking away.

“You will not walk away from me again, Kyue.”

Yeah, this man didn't know me at all.

Without turning around, I held my hand up and then extended my middle finger. Pretty sure he got the idea when I heard his angry shout.

I kept walking.

“You're still coming to meet my friends after the race, right?”

I had to give Lucas that one. I did say I would go meet his friends, and once I told someone I'd do something, I did it.

This time I waved to let him know I had heard him.

Chapter Nine

~ Lucas ~

“I thought we had lost you.”

I shook my head as I sat down next to Joe. “No, I just went to let Kyue know that we were here. I think he’s going to meet us after the race.”

Joe’s eyebrows lifted. “You think?”

“With Kyue, I am never quite sure.” I sighed as I clasped my hands together and rested my arms on the railing next to our seating area. “What do you do with someone that you want to provide for, but they want nothing from you?”

“Can I get a little more context?” Joe asked.

“Kyue and I had another argument.”

“You two argue?”

“All the time. In fact, I think it’s easier to ask when don’t we argue. I don’t think we’ve had a civil conversation yet. Kyue is very opinionated and stubborn, and he seems to know what he wants out of life and he’s going after it on his own terms.”

“That’s a good thing, isn’t it? It’s not like you want to be married to a doormat.”

“No, of course not, but I always feel like I’m on the losing end with him and I don’t know quite how to deal with that. Every time I open my mouth, I seem to piss him off.”

When Joe didn't say anything, I glanced over at him. The man was staring at me with amused grin on his face. "What?"

"It's just good to see you like this."

"Like what?"

Joe shook his head as if he didn't want to answer. "Tell me about your argument."

"He wanted to know what the plan was for after the wedding."

"Okay, so what is the plan?"

"The plan was that he was supposed to move in with me and we'd be a married couple." That's what married people did. They lived together.

Didn't look like my marriage was going to turn out that way.

"And that changed how?" Joe asked.

"He started talking about making appointments with Foyt if one of us needed the other one to attend some event, like he had no intention of living with me. When I didn't answer him right away, he said it was probably a good idea if we got married and then just stayed out of each other's lives because apparently, I live in a gold-plated ivory tower and he does not, and our lives don't mesh, whatever the hell that means."

"I see," Joe replied. "Let me ask you something, Lucas. Did you ever ask him if he wanted to move in with you? I mean, did you even discuss it with him? Or did you just plow ahead as you usually do and assume that was what was going to happen?"

“Why wouldn’t it happen?”

Joe smiled again and said, “So, you just assumed.”

“Joe—”

Joe turned his chair so he was facing me and then leaned forward to rest his elbows on his knees. “Listen to me, Lucas. In the business world, you are a shark. It’s nothing for you to make a million dollars in a day. I’ve actually seen people pass out from fear when you walk into a room.”

My eyebrows snapped together. “When?”

“My point is, that in the business world, you are top of the class. You took your father’s small company and turned it into a billion-dollar business five years after you took over. I’ve never seen someone work as hard as you to get where they wanted to go.”

I knew all of this, so what was his point?

“In your personal life, you suck.”

“Joe!”

Joe’s laughter rankled.

I gave him an resentful glare. “I do not suck.”

“Yes, you do, Lucas. Except for your close friends and family, you treat everyone around you like their sole purpose in life is to be at your beck and call.”

“I do not.”

There really should have been a lot more indignation in my response.

“Lucas, you’re one of my best friends and I’ve known you for almost fifteen years. I would do anything for you, and I know you’d do the same for me, but you are an ass.”

“He’s right,” Jake said as him and Miles walked up and sat down with us. “You are an ass.”

“Why is Lucas an ass this time?” Miles asked.

“He assumed Kyue would move in with him when they got married and didn’t discuss it with him,” Joe explained.

“Apparently, Kyue called him out on it.”

“He flipped me off again,” I grumbled.

I was getting really tired of my so-called best friends laughing at my expense.

“Man,” Jake said. “I so want to meet this guy. He has you so twisted up in knots, you might never get them out.”

I couldn’t exactly say he was wrong.

“So, how do I get Kyue to talk to me then?” I asked, because according to my friends, I didn’t have that skill set.

“You could start by not assuming anything where he is concerned,” Joe said. “And if you want something, ask him first, discuss it with him. Don’t think your way is better just because you think it is. Kyue may have a different opinion.”

I let out a very rude sound snort, but I didn’t care. “Oh, he has opinions all right, and he likes to share them a lot.”

“So, let him share them,” Jake said. “Doesn’t have to mean you agree with him. There are going to be two people in your marriage, Lucas. You and Kyue. Those are the only two

people that matter and you both have an equal right to your opinions, choices, and basically everything.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“If he wants blue towels in the bathroom and you want green, sit down and discuss it and then mutually come to a decision.”

“Not sure that will ever happen. Kyue is convinced I’ve never seen a toilet brush in my life.”

Joe burst out laughing. “You haven’t.”

I huffed. “I know what a toilet brush is.”

“But have you ever used one?” Joe countered in a teasing tone. “Or do the maids do that for you?”

“Kyue came from the same background as I did. Our families run in the same social circles. I’m sure he had plenty of people do things for him when he was growing up. It’s not like this is foreign for him.”

“What about now?” Joe asked.

I frowned. “Kyue says he lives in a one bedroom, one bath loft apartment, and he does everything himself. He hasn’t taken a dime of his family’s money since the day he graduated.”

“I thought you told us he owns this track,” Jake said.

“I did, and he does. I had Foyt look into it.”

“If he hasn’t taken any money from his family, then how did he buy it?” Jake asked. “The better question is how is he supporting himself?”

“I have no idea.”

There’s a shocker. I seemed to know next to nothing about Kyue, although he had shared a lot more during our last conversation than he had before.

I glanced toward the track when the announcer stated the race was about to begin. I could see Kyue walking toward one of the three motorcycles sitting at the starting line.

“Which one is he?” Joe asked.

There were three motorcycles—red, blue, and black—so I understood the question. I knew which one was Kyue because I’d seen him in his suit when we argued.

“Kyue is in the middle in the red and white racing suit.”
Kyue looked good in that full body suit.

Really good.

My whole body tensed as I watched Kyue straddle his motorcycle and then pull on his helmet and gloves. As much as I wanted to watch him race—and win—I was terrified that something would happen to him.

The second the lights turned green and the bikes took off, I was out of my seat and leaning closer to the railing.

“Here.” Jake bumped me in the arm before holding out a pair of binoculars. “These should help you see the race better.”

I gladly took them and put them to my face and then started searching for the racers. It took me a moment to spot Kyue. He was really whipping around the track.

“He’s good,” Jake said. “Does he do this professionally?”

Another question I couldn’t answer.

“I don’t know.”

“You guys need to talk more.”

He wasn’t wrong.

My heart was racing so fast, it had a good chance of catching up with Kyue. They were starting to come around to the home stretch. Kyue wasn’t in the lead, but he was running neck and neck with the guy that was.

As they rounded the corner before the final straightaway, Kyue’s bike shot ahead. I held my breath as I watched him gain more ground inch by inch.

He was going to win.

Just before he reached the finish line, there was a loud pop. Kyue’s bike went one way and he went the other. They both got through the finish line before the other riders, the bike sliding across the pavement and Kyue tumbling across.

When he stopped, he wasn’t moving.

“Kyue!” I tossed the binoculars to Jake and went running toward the exit of the viewing stand. I ran down the stairs just as fast as my legs would carry me.

Two guys in security uniforms tried to stop me at the gate to the track, but I barreled right past them and kept running. When I reached where Kyue was lying, he was surrounded by people.

“Kyue!” I shouted as I tried to shove my way past people.

“Sir! Sir! Stop!”

“Let me go!” I snapped when one of the guards grabbed me and swung me around. “That’s my fiancé!”

I tried to jerk my arm free, but he had a tight grip on me.

“Let him through.”

My head whipped around. “Kyue?”

That had been his voice I heard, right?

The small crowd parted, and I saw Kyue sitting on the ground, a medic squatting next to him, checking him over.

At least he was sitting up.

I pulled away from the guard and rushed over to Kyue’s side, dropping down to my knees beside him. I wanted to reach for him, but I didn’t know where to touch him that might not hurt him.

“Are you okay?”

Kyue shot me a look like that was a stupid question, and it was. “Fuck no, I’m not okay. My bike is totaled. We’re never going to make the race on the fourteenth now.”

I wanted to strangle him.

“Your bike?” Screw the freaking bike. “What about you?”

I glanced down when Kyue’s hand landed on my arm. “I’m fine, Mr. Kincaid. I promise. Just a few bumps and bruises. Nothing a good soak in the tub won’t cure.”

“I just saw you crash. How can you be fine?” My natural calm demeanor was going right out the window. I wanted to shout at Kyue and shake him until he understood the fear I had felt when I saw him crash. “You almost died.”

“I’m fine.”

I knew I was in panic mode, but I just couldn't seem to stop. "You're not fine!"

"Mr. Kincaid—"

"Your bike went flying through the air one way and you went the other. You could have—"

"Mr. Kincaid—"

"—died. Don't you get that? You could have died."

"Lucas," Kyue bit out in a no-nonsense tone. "Stop."

My lips snapped together.

Kyue grabbed my hand. "I am fine. I swear. I'm not lying to you. Yes, I have a few aches and pains, but nothing is broken and, thanks to the under-suit I am wearing, there is no road rash. In a couple of days, you won't even be able to tell I've been in a crash."

Might not be able to tell, but I knew I'd never forget it.

I tightened my grip on Kyue's hand and scooted close enough to wrap the upper half of him up in a hug. I curved my free hand around the side of his head, pulling it against my chest, and then pressed my face to the lush black hair on top. "You're never riding again. Do you hear me? I refuse to watch you die."

"Mr. Kincaid, who do you think—"

I shoved him back from me so I could see his face. "And the next time you crash, you damn well better do it on the other side of the finish line. There will be no slackers in the Kincaid family. Do you understand me?"

Kyue's big black eyes stared up at me for a moment and then a slow easy grin started to cross his lips. "Yes, Mr. Kincaid."

Chapter Ten

~ Kyue ~

I tried not to groan as Lucas helped me to my feet, but it wasn't easy. Despite what I had told him, I did ache. Pretty much every inch of me. True, there were no broken bones—thank god—and no road rash, but the under-suit I'd been wearing did not prevent bruising.

My entire body was going to be a real interesting color tomorrow.

“I need to check on my bike.”

Lucas's lips pressed thin, but he led me over to where Parker was looking at what remained of my bike.

“What's the damage?”

One of the wheels was bent and it looked as if the handlebar on the left side had broken off at the end. Beyond that, and a lot of scratches, I couldn't really see any other major damage.

Didn't mean there wasn't some.

“Still checking it over, Boss,” Parker replied. “We'll need to get it to the shop before we can do more.”

“I want a complete diagnostic before we take it apart. I want to know why it went out from under me.” The bike had ridden perfectly right up until the end, and then it had suddenly taken a hard turn to the left and I'd gone flying through the air.

“I might be able to tell you that.”

I glanced at the tall black-haired man standing by the back of the motorcycle, and then quickly took a step closer to Lucas. “Who are you?”

“This is Jake D’Amato, Kyue,” Lucas explained. “He’s one of those friends I wanted you to meet.”

“Oh.” I relaxed a little bit, but not much. “It’s very nice to meet you, Mr. D’Amato.”

“Jake, please.”

I nodded. “Kyue.”

Jake glanced at Parker before looking at me with a look on his face that made all that tension come right back. “Can we speak alone for a moment?”

I frowned before slowly nodding my head. “Parker, go get the truck.”

Jake waited until Parker walked off before squatting down next to the back wheel of the motorcycle. He pointed to a small hole in the rubber of the back wheel. “This wasn’t an accident.”

“What?”

“This is a bullet hole, Kyue. Somebody shot out your back tire.”

I just stared at the hole because I couldn’t think of anything else to do at that moment. Someone had shot out my back tire, causing me to crash? Who would do that?

I glanced at Lucas to find his jaw clenched and his narrowed eyes blazing with rage. “Is this one of those blonde

bimbo things?” I asked. “Could this have anything to do with you? Because I can’t think of a single person that would want to shoot at me.”

“If you had asked me that yesterday, I would have said no,” Lucas replied. “After getting harassed by that woman in the bar I’m not so sure.”

Freaking fantastic.

I dropped my head into my hand for a moment and rubbed the bridge of my nose between my fingers. This should have been the culmination of months of hard work and instead I had a sore body and a damaged prototype.

I sighed deeply and then dropped my hands to my hips and glared up at the man I held responsible for this shit how. “Mr. Kincaid, do you think it is possible for you to figure out who is fucking with my life before I get shot at again?”

Lucas’s eyes narrowed.

Like I cared.

“If someone is coming after me because of you”—I pointed my finger at him—“then you need to figure out who it is and stop them.”

“Kyue—”

“I have to go see what kind of damage my bike is in and whether or not it can be saved.” I turned to look at Lucas’s friend. “It was very nice meeting you, Mr. D’Amato.”

With that, I turned and started the long walk back to the garage. Each step made my body ache even more. I should be resting somewhere, recovering.

That wasn't going to happen.

"Kyue, where are you going?" Lucas asked. "You need to go to the hospital."

Yeah, he got the finger.

"You've got work to do, Mr. Kincaid," I called out over my shoulder. "Better get to it."

I did wonder about the laughter I heard after that. I doubted it came from Lucas. I didn't think he could laugh.

Bobby and Parker passed me in the truck as I made my way to the garage. I knew they would be back soon with the bike and we could get to work figuring out if it could be saved.

All I wanted to do was sit down for a few minutes and maybe have something cold to drink. I also wanted to get out of my racing suit.

Oh, I needed to make a phone call when I got back. Someone would want to know how well the under-suit worked. I'd pretty much decided I was never racing without it again.

Road rash was a thing.

When I reached the garage, I made my way to my office. Thankfully, no one was in there. Once inside, I shut the door and then began the slow process of peeling myself out of the racing suit.

Getting out of the one-piece suit wasn't too hard. Pulling on my jeans and tank top afterwards took every last bit of effort I had. By the time I was done, I had to sit down and rest for a few minutes.

Maybe I should have gone to the hospital.

“Yes?” I called out when someone knocked on the door. When it opened, I groaned. “What do you want, Mr. Kincaid? I thought you were supposed to be tracking down assholes.”

Lucas smirked, which was new. “I thought I was the asshole.”

True.

“I give exceptions for people that don’t try to kill me.”

Lucas’s lips thinned. “The jury is still out on whether that will happen or not, especially if you keep taking chances with your life.”

“Mr. Kincaid—”

Lucas held up his hand. “I know, I know, you’re not going to stop racing just because it’s dangerous.”

“No, I’m not. I like racing.” I breathed in through my nose and then huffed as I breathed out. “But I like designing bikes more. I only race to test the bikes I’ve created. I don’t want to race professionally.”

That wasn’t my gig.

“Was that what tonight was?”

I nodded. “Yeah, there were some professional racers and promoters in the stands tonight. If they liked what they saw, they might contract for one of my designs.”

“Then what is this weekend’s race about?”

I chuckled. “That’s just for fun.”

Lucas's eyes rolled, which was adorable as hell. I don't think I'd ever seen the man do that.

I wagged my eyebrows at him. "Next week I'm going paragliding. Want to come?"

"No," Lucas replied vehemently.

"Spoilsport."

"Would you let me take you home tonight so I can make sure you're still breathing come morning?"

"Mr. Kincaid—"

"I have a hot tub."

That perked my interest. "Really?"

Lucas nodded. "I can have it ready and waiting for you by the time we get there."

My shoulders slumped. Taking a soak in a hot tub right about now sounded really, really good, but... "I should really check out the bike."

"Kyue, no one is going near that bike until the police have a chance to go over the scene. Your friends can't even move it off the track right now."

"What?" I started to jump to my feet when a sudden sharp pain in my hip had me almost crumbling.

Lucas leapt forward and grabbed me, keeping me on my feet. "You're going home now."

"Mr. Kincaid."

Lucas raised an eyebrow.

“Fine,” I snapped out. “But I won’t be this easy come tomorrow.”

“You won’t be able to move come tomorrow.” Lucas bent down, grabbed me under my legs and behind my back, and then swung me up into his arms.

“What are you doing?” I asked as I desperately tried to grab a hold of him. “Put me down.”

“Argue with me tomorrow, Kyue.”

“Mr. Kincaid!”

“Kyue!”

I glared.

Hard.

The bastard just chuckled at me and carried me out of my office.

I had to admit, he was nice to lean against. His had a very solid chest and really wide shoulders. His arms, while tight around me, were strangely comforting.

He smelled nice, like sandalwood and musk.

There was a fancy black town car waiting outside the garage doors. I didn’t recognize the man standing next to the driver’s side door, but I did recognize the guy holding the back door open. He’d been at my grandparents’ house the night I met Lucas.

I nodded to the man I recognized. “Foyt.”

“Good evening, sir.”

“Just Kyue.”

Foyt gave me a single nod before turning his attention to Lucas. “Sir, the police would like Master Kyue to come in tomorrow morning to give a statement if he’s feeling up to it.”

Master?

Oh boy.

“A statement for what?” I asked. “I didn’t see anything. I wouldn’t even know what had happened if Mr. D’Amato hadn’t said anything.”

“Yes, sir, but they still require a statement.”

I groaned. “I hate police stations.”

Lucas’s eyebrows were raised up nearly to his hairline when he glanced down at me. “Had a lot of experience with police stations, have you?”

His eyes rolled again when I winked at him.

No, I had not had that much experience with the police, but I had had some. And no, I hadn’t broken any laws. I’d just bent a few.

“Hey, Lucas,” Jake said as he walked up with two other men. “Joe and I are going to stick around here for a little bit and see what we can find out. You should take Miles with you so he can get any pertinent information that the police might need.”

I glanced at the two strangers, just knowing that they were part of that little friend group Lucas had wanted to introduce me to. This was not how I wanted to meet them.

“You must be Mr. Kincaid’s friends,” I said by way of greeting. “I’m Kyue.” I huffed for effect simply because I

knew it would piss Lucas off. “Apparently, I’m supposed to be getting married to this guy.”

There was a brief tightening of the arms wrapped around me, so I knew my remark had hit its intended target.

Yay me.

Jake tucked in his lips and glanced away. The other two men chuckled nervously.

“I’m Miles Cranston,” one of them said, holding out his hand. “I’m a lawyer at Jake’s company.”

I shook the man’s hand before saying, “Oh, that would be why he wants you to go with us.”

Made sense.

“I’m Joe Navarro. I am also a lawyer with Jake’s company.”

After shaking Joe’s hand, I glanced at Jake and grinned. “Need a lot of lawyers, do you?”

Jake shrugged. “From time to time.”

“Don’t let the man fool you,” Joe said. “He works us like dogs.”

“You only say that because Jai is still back at the lab right now,” Jake said.

Lab?

Jai?

“You wouldn’t be referring to Jai Cassidy, would you?”

Joe instantly stiffened and the other two men gave me sharp looks. “He used to be Jai Cassidy. He’s Jai Navarro

now.”

Cool.

“Yeah, he mentioned something about getting married.”

“You know my husband?”

“Sure,” I replied. “Today I was testing out—” I snapped my lips closed. I wasn’t supposed to be talking about that.

“You were testing what?” Jake asked.

I shook my head. “Nothing.”

“You do know that Jai works for me, right?”

I raised an eyebrow. “Your point being?”

Jake stared at me for a moment before glancing at Lucas, frowning. “I get it now.”

“I knew you would eventually,” Lucas replied.

I knew they were talking about me. I just wasn’t sure what they were referring to.

Damn it.

“I’m taking Kyue back to my place so he can soak in my hot tub. If you need me, that’s where I will be.”

“I’ll follow you in my car,” Miles said.

“Wait.” I pressed my hand to Lucas’s chest when he started carrying me toward his car. “I need to talk to Bobby and Parker for a minute.”

Surprisingly, Lucas didn’t argue. He just carried me over to where the two men were standing next to the truck.

“Mr. Kincaid is going to take me to his place to rest. Why don’t you close the shop up and head home. We can start again tomorrow.”

“We’re going to start again, Boss?” Parker asked.

“Well, I want to run diagnostics on the bike and then see what needs to be replaced, or if it’s a total wash. We still have the other frame. If we need to, we can use that to build up a new prototype.”

Bobby gave Lucas a long perusal. “You okay to be going home with him, Boss? I’m more than willing to drive you back to your place or to my place. Mary would be more than happy to look after you.”

I felt Lucas stiffen.

“It’s fine, Bobby. Thank you for your concern, but Mr. Kincaid will take care of me now.”

“If you’re sure?”

I nodded. I wasn’t totally sure, but I wouldn’t go to Bobby’s house for love or money. He had three kids all under the age of five. I liked kids and all, but they were very loud and all I wanted right now was blessed silence.

Lucas carried me back to the car and carefully settled me in the backseat before climbing in beside me. When he went to shut the door, I grabbed his arm.

“I need my shoes and my cell phone. They’re in my office.”

“Foyt,” Lucas called out without climbing out of the car. “Go get Kyue’s shoes and cell phone out of his office.”

“Right away, sir.”

I waited until Foyt left before pinning my gaze on Lucas.
“You need to learn to say please.”

“Foyt gets paid very well. He doesn’t need to hear please from me.”

I wasn’t sure a soak in the hot tub was worth this.

“Stop talking to me, Mr. Kincaid. I’m too tired and sore to deal with you right now.”

Chapter Eleven

~ Lucas ~

I'd been a good boy. I hadn't said a single word on the trip to my house, but not for the reason Kyue probably thought. I wasn't staying silent so he wouldn't have to deal with me.

I was worried about him. Where that worry had come from, I don't know. I'd known about Kyue most of my life. He had agreed to marry me five days ago. We were to be married in ten days.

We barely knew each other.

I also couldn't seem to shake the fear I had felt when I saw him get tossed from that damn bike. Knowing someone had purposely caused it enraged me.

And that was my issue. I was simmering with rage. I wanted to find out whoever had done this to him and tear them apart, slowly. I wanted them to feel the same debilitating fear I had felt, the same pain and agony Kyue was currently going through.

I wanted them to suffer.

My eyebrows shot up as I glanced down at the hand Kyue pressed to my chest. He was out cold, sleeping with his head on my shoulder. I had my arm wrapped around his shoulders to keep him close to me.

Maybe he wasn't as out as I thought he was. He was patting my chest and murmuring to me. I had to bend my head

down to hear his whispered words.

“Sshhh.”

Huh?

“Kyue,” I said as softly as I could. “Are you okay?”

I mean, obviously he wasn't. He'd just been in a motorcycle crash.

When I didn't get a response, I rested my hand on the side of his head, pressing it to my shoulder, and then pressed my lips against his hair. “Just rest, baby.”

Kyue wiggled for just a moment until he apparently got into the position he wanted, and then let out a long sigh and his body went lax, his full weight resting against me.

Like that was a lot. He weighed maybe a hundred and fifty pounds, tops. I bench pressed weights heavier than him. I was at least fifty to seventy-five pounds bigger and half a foot taller.

I was also built with a lot of muscle. Granted, it was usually hidden under my suits, but I worked out every morning to stay healthy and fit. I was no slouch in the buff department.

Kyue looked as if a stiff wind would blow him away.

Maybe that was part of what had freaked me out so much. As slim as he was, I couldn't believe he had survived the crash let alone walked away from it with just a few bumps and bruises.

Paragliding? Seriously?

This man was going to give me a heart attack.

When the car slowed and came to a stop, I glanced up.

We were home.

I unbuckled Kyue and myself. Since he was leaning against me, I wasn't quite sure how to get him out of the car. I decided to open the door first and then lift Kyue into my arms and scoot out.

Like I said, I lifted weights heavier than him.

"Foyt," I spoke softly so I didn't wake up Kyue, "can you please bring in Kyue's shoes and cell phone?"

Foyt looked at me oddly for a moment before nodding. "Of course, sir."

Wonder what that was about?

I carried Kyue up the front steps to the main door, which opened as soon as I reached it. "Good evening, Oliver. Is the hot tub ready?"

"Yes, sir," my butler replied. "I've also taken the liberty of arranging a snack for you and the young master. I've left it on a tray next to the hot tub along with a few bottles of water and some muscle relaxants and pain medication tablets. I've also provided some salve that should help."

Oh yeah, those might be useful.

"Thank you, Oliver."

There were two hot tubs in my house. One outside by the main pool and the other one on the balcony of my personal suite of rooms. I took Kyue up the stairs to my personal hot tub.

When I reached my room, I carried Kyue into the bedroom and laid him gently on my extra wide king-sized bed. As much as I knew he wanted a soak in the tub, I wanted him to rest.

I did, however, want to wake him long enough to get some water and medication down him. Not only would it help him sleep better, but maybe it would help with the pain.

I didn't like the idea of Kyue being in pain.

He wasn't wearing any shoes, so that was the easy part. I thought stripping off his jeans so he would be more comfortable would be just as easy until I unzipped them and realized he wasn't wearing any underwear.

Pretty sure I swallowed my tongue.

I debated on what to do. I really wanted to check him over for any injuries, but I didn't want to invade his privacy or cross a line I hadn't been given permission to cross.

Oliver solved that problem when he knocked on the door and came in carrying a medium-sized oblong box. "Foyt called with the young master's approximate sizes, sir. I've taken the liberty of obtaining something soft for him to sleep in that won't irritate any injuries he might have."

"Foyt told you about the crash?"

"He did, sir, and I am glad to hear that the young master received no serious injuries."

That remained to be seen.

"Would you like me to grab a towel from the bathroom and assist in changing him into these pajamas?"

“Actually, go ahead and grab the towel, but I want to check him over before we dress him. He said the under-suit he was wearing protected him from road rash, but I doubt it did anything for bruises.”

While Oliver went for the towel, I sat on the side of the bed and pushed Kyue’s tank top up so I could lift it over his head and off his arms.

“Holy fuck,” I whispered when I glanced back down at him.

Slender little Kyue had six-pack abs. His muscle definition might even be better than mine. But how? Was it all the activities he was involved in? Pretty sure motorcycle racing and paragliding did not give you a six-pack.

“You are a very intriguing mystery, Kyue Panich.”

When Oliver came back with the towel, I carefully arranged it over his groin area and then tugged his jeans off his legs.

Oliver picked the jeans and tank top up and carried them out of the room. I knew come morning, they would be freshly washed and folded and sitting on the side table outside my door.

With the towel in place, I started checking Kyue over for any injuries, starting at his toes. Up one leg and then the other, and then his stomach and torso before moving to his chest and each arm.

Most of the bruising I found was on his hips, arms, and across his shoulders. I knew those were most likely caused when he went tumbling across the finish line.

I grabbed the salve Oliver had left for me and opened the brand-new tube. I squirted a fair amount out onto the palm of my hand before setting the tube aside.

Little by little, I began spreading it over every single little bruise I could find. I wasn't real sure what the salve would do, but I trusted Oliver to know. He'd been working for my family for years.

Once I was done with the salve, I made a quick trip to the bathroom to wash my hands and then came back to sit on the side of the bed again. I started to reach for the pajamas Oliver had brought until I remembered that Kyue said he slept naked.

Would he be more comfortable that way? I knew I wouldn't, but this wasn't about me right now. I could sleep on top of the covers if need be.

I scooped Kyue up in my arms, towel and all, and yanked the covers down. After laying him on the mattress, I pulled the blankets up, and then I grabbed the towel, making sure I didn't make contact with his skin.

I wanted Kyue, but not in this way. I wanted him to be fully aware of what I was doing to him when I did it.

I sat back down and reached for the pain meds. I read the instructions on each bottle and poured out the appropriate amount. After unscrewing the lid on one of the bottles of water, I leaned down and lifted Kyue up far enough that he could take them without dribbling water all down the front of him.

"Kyue, you need to take these. It's some pain meds to make you feel better." I wasn't really sure anything could

make him feel better at the moment, but maybe it could take the edge off. “Come on, baby, open your eyes.”

Kyue groaned and his eyelids fluttered before slowly lifting. “Where am I?”

“You’re at my house, Kyue.”

Kyue squinted up at me. “Lucas?”

My breath caught in my throat when I heard my name softly whispered on his lips. I had to swallow hard before I could answer him. “Yeah, baby, it’s Lucas.”

“What—”

“You crashed your bike, remember?” I lifted the pills in the palm of my hand. “I need you to take these. Come on.”

When Kyue just stared at them, I carefully placed one in his mouth and then gave him a drink of water. I did the same for the next couple of pills. By the time I was done, Kyue’s eyelids were starting to slide closed again.

I gently lowered him back down to the bed and then tucked the blankets around him. “Rest, Kyue. I’ll be right here if you need me.”

Sitting there watching him sleep wasn’t going to do either of us any good, but I couldn’t seem to look away. It had been less than two weeks and my entire world was starting to get wrapped up in a man that made me so angry I could punch a wall.

How in the hell had that happened?

It wasn’t supposed to happen.

Ever.

I didn't do intimate relationships as a general rule. I had always known Kyue was there in the background and that I would eventually be marrying him, so I had never gotten romantically involved with someone long term.

I always made sure my hook-ups knew the score. They were temporary. There would be no long-lasting relationships with me. Clear cut right from the beginning.

But Kyue was different from the people I had dated or been involved with in the past. He was the one I was supposed to be marrying and developing a long-lasting relationship with.

He scared me to death.

I needed to think about this. I was a smart man. I could find the solution. I just had to figure out what the problem was first, and that might take awhile.

There was a quiet knock on the door. Instead of calling out, I got up and walked over to answer it. "Yes, Oliver?"

"Mr. Cranston is downstairs in your study, sir. Would you like me to sit with the young master while you meet with him?"

"Yes, thank you, Oliver."

I walked over to the bed and made sure the blankets were tucked up around Kyue. I stared at him again for a moment. It was hard to pull my gaze away from him. Not only was he beautiful to look at, especially when he was sleeping, but I was very worried about him.

Maybe a little time away from Kyue would give me some perspective. I seriously needed to get my head screwed on straight.

And god knows I could use a drink.

Chapter Twelve

~ Kyue ~

No, no, no, no! I did not want to be awake right now. My world was one big kaleidoscope of red-hot agony. I gingerly opened one eye. When that didn't hurt, I tried the other one. Okay, I could see without screaming in pain.

Could I lift my head and move the rest of my body?

That was the question.

I wiggled my toes. They worked, so I moved on to my legs. Okay, small pain in my hip, but nothing I couldn't handle. Arms achy, but manageable. Chest was fine, but my upper back hurt something fierce, which made sense if I had tumbled. It probably got the brunt of my flight through the air.

So, I wasn't dead yet.

Good to know.

I held my breath as I pushed myself up and back against the pillows.

Okay, where was I? I didn't immediately recognize the room I was in. It was way too spacious to be my room and I lived in a loft apartment. My place wasn't nearly this luxurious either.

I squinted as I glanced down and then slowly lifted the covers before slamming them back down just as fast as I could. I quickly glanced around to see if anyone was there, but I was alone.

Why was I naked?

“You’re awake.”

I jumped about a mile, clutching the covers to my chest.

“Mr. Kincaid?”

“Oh, we’re back to that, are we?” Lucas asked as he strode into the room dressed in a rather nice navy blue three piece suit. “You were calling me Lucas last night.”

Uh...

“How are you feeling?”

I wasn’t sure how to answer that.

“You took your last pain pills around six this morning so you’re not due for some more for another few hours. Do you think you can hold out that long?”

“Pain meds?”

“Yes, Oliver got you pain meds, muscle relaxers, and salve last night when I brought you home.”

Well, that explained where I was. It did not explain where my clothes were. “Where are my clothes?”

“Oh.” Lucas walked over to his dresser and grabbed a stack of clothes and an oblong box from the top. He carried it back over and set it on the bed next to me. “Oliver washed your clothes, but I thought these might be more comfortable due to the bruises.”

“Bruises?” I knew I probably had a few. “You’ve seen my bruises?”

I wanted to smack the smirk right off Lucas’s face.

“Don’t worry,” he said. “You were decently covered the entire time. No one saw anything. I just rubbed some salve on your bruises and then tucked you in.”

“Oh, well...thank you.”

Lucas’s eyebrows lifted just a little.

I rolled my eyes. “Yes, Mr. Kincaid, I can say thank you.”

I just didn’t want to, not to him. Still, I knew he had taken care of me the previous evening. It was only right that I thanked him for it.

Lucas’s warm chuckle filled the spacious room. “Are you hungry? I can have Oliver make you something to eat.”

“No, not at the moment, but can I use your shower real quick? I feel kind of grungy.”

“Of course.” Lucas waved his hand toward a door to my left. “Bathroom is through there. Help yourself. I’ll be downstairs in my study when you are done. Anyone can show you the way.”

“Thank you.” I stayed exactly where I was until Lucas left the room. As soon as I heard the door close, I grabbed my clothes, tossed back the blankets, and hightailed it into the bathroom, shutting the door behind me.

I took care of my morning business, even to the point of finding a new toothbrush under the sink so I could brush my teeth, and then took a long hot shower.

I never did get to use the hot tub.

After getting out of the shower, I dried off and got dressed. There wasn’t much I could do about my hair right now, so I

simply wound it up into a loose knot on top of my head. I'd have to brush it out when I got home.

When I walked back into the bedroom, my eyes went to the box Lucas had handed me. Curious, I walked over and pulled the lid off.

“Oh.” It was a set of white cotton pajamas. They were silky soft to the touch. They looked as comfortable as hell, and I was disappointed I didn't get a chance to try them out, but they weren't mine and I was leaving.

I carefully folded them and put them back in the box, putting the lid on. I set the box at the bottom of the bed and then went hunting for my shoes and cell phone.

Found my shoes by the door.

No cell phone.

I searched around the room before finally giving up and heading for the door. Hopefully, Lucas knew where my cell phone was located. It wasn't that I couldn't afford a new one. I didn't have time to deal with the hassle right now. The art show was tomorrow, and I needed to be ready for it.

I blew out a breath as I opened the bedroom door and started walking slowly down the hallway. I knew from experience that I was kind of stiff and it would take a little while for everything to loosen up enough for me to be somewhat comfortable.

“Good morning, Master Kyue.”

“Oh!” I jumped, spun around and then pressed a hand to my chest. There was an older man standing behind me wearing a butler's uniform.

“My apologies, sir. I didn’t mean to startle you.”

I was hazarding a guess here, but... “Are you Oliver?”

The man gave me a stiff nod. “I am, sir.”

“Can you tell me where Lucas’s study is located? He said that’s where he’d be.”

Oliver waved a hand down the hallway. “If you’ll just follow me, sir, I will take you there.”

Good god, did this guy ever smile?

Reminded me of Lucas.

“Are you hungry, sir? I can have the cook whip you up something. It would be no problem.”

“No, thank you.”

“Coffee then?”

I chuckled. “Are you going for sainthood, Oliver?”

“Oh, yes, sir. I have to perform three more miracles and then I get my wings.”

Okay, that was funny. So, Oliver might not smile, but he did have a dry sense of humor. I could work with that. “If you get me some really strong coffee, I’ll put in a good word for you.”

“Thank you, sir.”

I liked this guy.

Oliver led me downstairs to a room on the far side of the house, and it was a big house. Even bigger than my grandparent’s house. Maybe they should consider printing out maps.

“I’ll bring your coffee shortly, sir.”

“Thank you, Oliver.” I waited until he walked away before knocking on the door. I kind of wanted to get in, get my cell phone, and get out just as fast as I could.

Besides the fact that I still had a lot of work to do, I was a little uncomfortable with the fact that I had slept naked all night in a strange house. Naked at home was fine. Somewhere else not so much.

The door opened and Lucas stood there, but he was talking on his phone. He waved me in and then went back to his desk.

I stuck my head in and glanced around. If this was supposed to be a study, I wanted to know who designed it. It was big enough to be its own apartment.

It even had a patio.

I stepped inside, closing the door behind me, and then walked over to look at the large floor to ceiling windows on one side of the room. They looked out over what I assumed was the backyard.

Could be wrong.

There was a lot of foliage. Trees, bushes, grass, and... Was that a duck pond? Man, must be nice.

I loved the large open concept of my loft, but the outdoor space was limited, and my building was also sandwiched between two other buildings.

Noisy neighbors were a thing.

I turned away from the window when I heard Lucas’s phone drop onto his desk. “Problems with work?”

Lucas glanced at me. “No, I just got off the phone with the chief of police. While they recovered the bullet from your motorcycle, they were unable to match it to anything.”

Yeah, that sounded about right for my luck.

“They still need you to go down and give a statement. As soon as I’m done here, I can drive you in.”

“Yeah, okay, I can do that.” Even if it took a chunk out of my day. “Do you know where my cell phone is?”

“Oh yes.” Lucas reached over to the far side of his desk. He held it out to me. “It was ringing this morning and I didn’t want to wake you.”

“Who called?” I asked as I took it and started scrolling through my call history.

Lucas squinted. “Bobby?”

I nodded. “He was one of the guys that work for me on the bike project. You met him last night. He offered to let me stay at his place.”

“Right,” Lucas growled.

“He’s married with three kids, Mr. Kincaid.”

“I wasn’t asking.”

Oh, yes, you were.

I quickly texted Bobby letting him know that I was okay, but I had to go down to the police station to give a statement and then work at home, so I wouldn’t be in today. Bobby and Parker could have the day off if they wanted it.

Lucas's phone rang. He looked down at it for a moment before glancing up at me. "Have you had breakfast?"

"No," I replied as I slid my own phone into my pocket. "But your butler said he'd bring me some coffee."

"Good."

"He's a funny dude," I said as I glanced around the office again.

Lucas's eyebrows lifted. "Oliver?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

I turned to look at Lucas, curious about the frown of confusion on his face. "He has a very dry sense of humor."

"Oliver? My butler? That's who you're talking about?" Lucas held his hand out. "Stands about this tall, wears a penguin suit, has gray hair and a beard? That guy?"

"Yes, that guy. He's pretty funny."

"Since when?"

"Uh...well, I'd assume since forever." But I was getting the feeling I might be wrong. I frowned at Lucas. "Have you never joked with your butler?"

"Why would I?"

I was starting to get that murder vibe again.

Time to go.

"Thank you for your help last night, Mr. Kincaid. I need to get going. Can you please let Oliver know I couldn't stay for coffee?"

“You’re leaving? Now?”

“I am, Mr. Kincaid.”

“You called me Lucas last night.”

Yeah, he’d mentioned that already.

“That was last night, Mr. Kincaid. This is today.” And I was back to wanting to strangle him.

I’d almost reached the door when Lucas’s words stopped me. “We still need to discuss our living arrangements for after we are married.”

“Well, you have this big beautiful fifteen-bedroom mansion. I am sure there is someplace here where you can sleep.”

“Kyue, why must you be like this? Can’t we just once have a civil conversation?”

“I don’t know, Mr. Kincaid. Can we?”

“God.” Lucas planted his hands on his hips and tilted his head back to stare up at the ceiling. “You are such a fucking brat.”

Like I hadn’t heard that one before.

“It’s part of my charm.”

Lucas’s phone rang. He quickly picked it up and answered it. When he started talking, I headed for the door.

“We still need to talk, Kyue.” When I glanced back at him, his cell phone was back on his desk, and he had walked around to stand in front of it. “What about dinner tonight.”

“After giving my statement to the police, I’ll be busy the rest of the day trying to salvage my bike.”

Lucas huffed. “Tomorrow night then.”

“Busy then, too.”

“Kyue, I’m trying to compromise here. Can’t you give a little?”

“No, Mr. Kincaid, I can’t. While you may not think much of my life, it is my life and I like it. If I wanted to spend my days waiting for you to get off your phone, I’d stay here with you.” I smiled brightly. “Oh, hey, look at that. I solved our living situation. You stay here and play on your phone, and I’ll stay at my place doing what it is I do. That way, we’ll both be happy.”

I turned around and reached for the door, but I only got it open a little bit before it was slammed closed again.

“Mr. Kincaid!”

Lucas pushed me into the door and then framed me in with his much larger body. His hands slammed into the door on either side of my head. His narrowed eyes skimmed over my face before settling on my lips. My heart thundered in my chest when he started to lower his head.

In that span of time, that single moment, I would have given Lucas my soul if he had asked for it. He was looking at me as if I was his entire world.

His fingers ghosted over my face, his lips slowly capturing mine. Lucas caressed my mouth more than kissed it. He consumed me with one kiss that seemed to go on forever.

I didn't want it to stop.

One of Lucas's arms wrapped around my waist, pulling me closer as his tongue pushed between my lips, demanding entrance. I opened, tasting man and desire as Lucas's tongue swept through my mouth, making me want things I thought I would never be allowed to have.

I grabbed Lucas's shoulders, gripping them tightly as I opened my mouth wider, trying my best to drink Lucas in. Hands cupped and stroked my face before moving back to grip a handful of my hair.

Lucas lapped at my mouth, tasting me, taunting me. His tongue stroked across my lips a second time, and then a third before the man finally lifted his head.

I could barely breathe as I stared up at Lucas, the desire in the man's eyes burning through me like a raging firestorm.

And then the phone rang yet again, and Lucas released me and walked back to his desk.

I stood there in shock, trying to get control of my racing heart, rapid breathing, and a cock that was currently trying to beat its way through my zipper.

I couldn't believe he had just walked away from me like that. He picked up his phone and started talking as if nothing had happened. His voice didn't even change. He acted as if the world hadn't just moved under his feet.

It was just another day in the office for him.

Dawning realization was like a sucker punch to the gut. Maybe he didn't look like he was affected because he wasn't.

Just because I felt as if my world had tilted on its axis, didn't mean Lucas felt the same.

I pushed away from the door and turned to straighten my clothes—and wipe away the stray tear that slid down my cheek—and then started to open the door again.

“Kyue.”

I froze in place. “Yes?”

God, I hope he didn't hear the tremble in my voice.

“Something has come up with work, so I won't be able to drive you to the police station. Foyt will take you.”

I swallowed tightly before speaking to try and keep my voice even. “Of course.”

It took a concentrated effort to get my legs working again and walk out of Lucas's office. There was a part of me that was numb, and I understood that. I wasn't sure exactly what I was feeling, especially when it came from the passionate kiss Lucas had given me, or my response to it.

But I knew I was angry that Lucas had dismissed me so easily.

Enraged really.

Yeah, let's go with enraged.

Chapter Thirteen

~ Lucas ~

“I told you I was busy, Mr. Kincaid.”

I stared down at my phone after Kyue hung up on me once more and had the overwhelming urge to hurl it against a wall. Again. This was the umpteenth time I’d tried to call him and he’d hung up on me every single time.

I was actually starting to get used to it.

I hadn’t heard or seen him in three days. The big race had been yesterday, and I know he had participated because I watched him from the stands. After the race, he’d disappeared from the racetrack before I could find him.

My normal calm demeanor was turning into a frazzled nerve. Something was going to break pretty soon, and I was afraid it was going to be me.

“Sir?”

I shook myself away from my unsettling thoughts and glanced up at my executive assistant. “Yes, Foyt?”

“I need to speak with Master Kyue concerning the guest list, but he hasn’t been returning any of my calls. How would you like me to proceed?”

“He hasn’t returned any of your calls?”

Join the club.

“No, sir. I even sent someone down to the racetrack. Except for the race on Saturday, he hasn’t been seen there since the motorcycle accident. I’ll admit I am a bit concerned. I know you said Master Kyue’s injuries were not severe, but could you have been wrong?”

Cold, dark fear seized me.

I dialed Kyue’s phone number just as fast as I could type and then held it to my ear. “Kyue—”

“I swear to god, Mr. Kincaid, if you continue to call me constantly, I will file a harassment charge against you. I am busy. Leave me alone.”

Yeah, my cell phone went flying the second Kyue hung up on me.

“I’ll get you another phone, sir.”

“Get Kyue’s address!” I snapped as I stood and reached for my suit jacket.

“Right away, sir.”

“And find me that damn paddle.” I obviously needed to apply it to someone’s ass.

I wasn’t quite sure how Foyt did it, but he was waiting by the car when I reached it, cell phone and slip of paper with Kyue’s address on it in one hand and an oblong black box in the other.

“Thank you, Foyt,” I said when I took the items.

Pretty sure I knew what was in the box.

“Shall I expect you back at the office today, sir?”

“I’m not sure. Better clear my afternoon just to be safe.”

“Very good, sir. And if you could have Master Kyue call me to discuss the guest list, I would very much appreciate it.”

I felt an odd smile slide across my lips. “If he can sit down after I’m done paddling his ass, I’ll be sure to do that.”

“Best of luck, sir.”

Not sure what that meant, but whatever.

I climbed into the backseat of the car and shut the door before leaning forward and handing Jefferson a piece of paper. “Take me here.”

“Yes, sir.”

I sat back in my seat as Jefferson got us underway, turning to look out the window. Despite his threats to have me charged with harassment, Foyt had had a good point. What if Kyue’s injuries were worse than I thought? And if they were, why wasn’t he accepting my help instead of avoiding me?

It didn’t make sense.

Of course, nothing had made sense since the moment I got involved with Kyue, and I was confused about what to do about it, which made me even more confused.

I never doubted myself or my actions. I knew what I wanted and I went after it until I got it. The same tactics did not apply to Kyue because he’d just flip me off. I couldn’t cajole or connive. I couldn’t threaten or use my power and prestige to get what I wanted. I couldn’t even use my money.

He simply did not care.

So, what did he care about? What made Kyue Panich tick and how could I utilize that to get the guy to stop telling me to go fuck myself?

That might be the question of the ages.

“We’re here, sir.”

I glanced up at the brick building Jefferson had parked in front of. It wasn’t a bad looking building really. Someone had obviously put some work into restoring it, so it was in good shape.

“The address is for the top floor, sir,” Jefferson said. “Do you want me to wait?”

“Might want to get yourself something to drink. I don’t know how long I’ll be.”

How long did it take to teach a brat to behave?

“I’ll have my cell phone on me, sir.”

“Thank you, Jefferson.” I ignored the surprised look on his face and climbed out of the vehicle. If Kyue lived on the top floor of this building, I was really hoping for an elevator. Four stories wasn’t that tall, but I hated stairs.

I was in luck. There was an elevator that took me all the way up to the top floor. It opened into a small landing with a single door.

Weird, but okay.

I stepped off the elevator and walked over to knock on the door. When it swung open, I simply forgot to breath. I couldn’t. There was suddenly no air in the world, and I mean the entire world.

I swallowed tightly as my gaze roamed down from Kyue's tasseled black hair, to his long slim swan-like neck, to the perfect svelte chest that I ached to run my fingers over. For such a little guy, he had some seriously chiseled abs. He was like a god standing before me in low-slung jeans and bare feet.

And then he opened his mouth.

“What do you want?”

“Go put on a shirt!”

I clenched my hands to keep from reaching for Kyue. I was seconds away from losing control of myself, and Kyue would not be safe, not half undressed and looking sexy as hell.

Kyue's eyes rolled. “Go fuck yourself.”

Anger raged through me when he started to shut the door in my face. I slammed my hand on the cold hard metal and shoved it open again. I was almost concerned when I saw him stumble back several steps until I saw the darkening of his eyes. They blazed with fury in pitch black flames.

“I've had just about enough of you talking to me in this manner.”

Kyue waved his hand toward the door. “You're welcome to leave any time you want, Mr. Kincaid. In fact, I encourage it.”

Not this time.

“I think it's time to teach you some manners, little Kyue.”

I grabbed Kyue, tossed him over my shoulder, and started scanning the large loft for what I was looking for. When I spotted it, my grin grew wider and more determined.

Kyue started struggling almost instantly. I tightened my grip on him with one hand and then brought my other hand down on his ass. “Be still before I drop you.”

“I’m going to drop you if you don’t let me go.”

“I’d like to see you try,” I said as I dropped him on the large bed I’d seen in the corner of the spacious loft. I came down on top of him before he finished bouncing. I settled myself between his thighs and pinned his hands on either side of his head. “Enough, Kyue.”

Kyue stopped struggling, but his nostrils flared with his fury as he glared up at me. “Let me go.”

“No.”

Not a chance in hell.

“Why are you avoiding my phone calls?”

Kyue’s chin jutted out. “Because I don’t like you, Mr. Kincaid.”

I’ll admit it. That hurt.

I released Kyue’s hands so I could trail my finger along the sharp edge of his jaw line. It was very pronounced, but it looked good on him. “Well, I like you enough for the both of us.”

Kyue’s lips parted and there was a little catch in his breath. “I don’t have time for your games, Mr. Kincaid.”

“Good, I don’t either.” And I wasn’t really sure I was playing games, not anymore.

“Don’t you have a phone to go answer somewhere?”

“Probably.”

Damn thing never stopped ringing.

“Then you should get to it.” Kyue pressed his hands flat against my chest and gave me a shove.

I didn’t move.

“Mr. Kincaid.”

“Kyue.”

His eyes rolled.

It was cute.

He was cute.

He was sexy as hell.

“Kyue.” I started to lean in, desperately wanting a kiss from him. I wanted to feel the same exhilaration I’d felt when I had kissed him before. It was like free falling out of an airplane with no parachute and not knowing if or when you were going to hit the ground.

“Don’t,” Kyue whispered.

I stared down at him, wondering if he was really serious considering the lust I could see burning along his flushed skin.

Did he really want me to stop?

I moved in closer, brushing my nose along the side of his face until my lips grazed his throat. God, he smelled good. Hot, sweet, like summer flowers after a rainstorm.

I kissed a small line of skin from Kyue’s ear down to his collarbone. He tasted just as good as he smelled, and I wanted

more. I wanted to strip him naked and drown myself in his heady scent.

When I kissed my way to the other side of Kyue's neck, his fingers sank into my hair, jerking my head up.

Kyue's eyes flashed with a mixture of lust and desperation. "You answer your phone one damn time while you are with me and I swear to god I will shove it up your ass sideways."

Duly noted.

I gave a simple nod.

Kyue pulled on my hair until our lips smacked together. I had been desperate the last time I kissed him, but nothing like this. I simply could not get enough of him.

I wanted to devour him.

There was a burning light in Kyue's eyes when he pulled back from me. I wasn't exactly sure what it was until he rolled to the side of the bed and stood up, holding his hand out to me.

Like I wouldn't take it.

I wasn't that stupid.

Usually.

Once I was standing, Kyue pulled at the buttons on my shirt. I lifted my arms and allowed Kyue to slide it off before tossing it aside. Gentle hands slid down my sides until they reached the button on my slacks. I held my breath as Kyue slowly began to work my pants free.

He stopped momentarily to remove my shoes.

Losing just a bit of the tight rein I had on my emotions, I pulled away from Kyue and pushed my pants down and all the way off, and then I stood there, naked as the day I was born.

My heart quickened when Kyue gave me a sensual smile as he trailed his fingertips down my naked chest.

I found that I had moved closer to Kyue without even realizing it, the exotic scent of the man—hot, sweet summer flowers after a rain—drawing me in, curling around my senses.

I cupped the back of Kyue's head and drew him in for a soft kiss. I ran my hand over his long dark hair, feeling more than just a lustful need. I could barely breathe as I held Kyue in my arms.

"You have no idea how much I want you, Kyue," I whispered.

"Oh, I might." Kyue's black eyes burned with desire as he gazed up at me.

With a tug of my hand, I pulled Kyue back down onto the bed. We both tumbled backward, rolling until I landed on top of Kyue.

I shifted my legs as I straddled his hips and then leaned forward, inhaling Kyue's sweet scent from collarbone to ear, taking in the raw aroma of man. The scent rushed into me in a wave of intoxication.

I loved the smell of this man, I was addicted to it. It was a scent that made me instantly hard every time it was near.

"You smell delicious." Kyue's skin flushed when I leaned forward to nip the man on his jaw. "Simply delicious."

Small pants of Kyue's breath tickled my cheek. It was coming out raggedly, softly, though. Then Kyue groaned. Pure raw need slammed into me at the soft sound, like fur running down my naked flesh.

I tugged at Kyue's cheek until our mouths were only an inch apart, and then moved in to capture Kyue's lips. I shuddered and then nipped Kyue on his bottom lip. My body tightened involuntarily, every bone and muscle in me reaching for Kyue's mouth, the hot draw of his lips, and the moist wash of his tongue.

Kyue tasted so damn good.

Eagerly, Kyue's tongue mated with mine, the spicy sweet taste of man making me grow harder, making me ache. Like a drug addict in the first seconds of a fix, I tried to devour Kyue.

My eyes drifted closed as I licked at Kyue's lips, nibbled at them, drew Kyue's tongue into my mouth, and sucked on it. Kyue arched even closer, his hands gripped my hair, holding me to him as our teeth and tongues clashed. The kiss was hard, hungry, and I urged Kyue closer, deepening the kiss.

I wrapped my arms around Kyue, blunt nails scraping along his back as he arched into me, his body twisting closer, as if desperate to mate every cell in our bodies together.

I opened my eyes, seeing Kyue's grimace of pleasure, the raw lust that transformed his handsome face. I hadn't thought the man could get any better looking.

I was wrong.

So, so wrong.

“You are so fucking beautiful, Kyue.” I ran the palms of my hands up Kyue’s chest and pinched both nipples. “You take my breath away every time I look at you.”

Kyue shivered at the contact. I smirked, playing at those beautiful brown-hued nipples with my thumbs.

A course of lust shot through my groin when Kyue’s lips parted and a moan escaped his lips. I was fascinated by the sight, my dick throbbing in anticipation of what was to come, of what I had been imagining for ages.

I tightened my grip on Kyue’s nipples, squeezing them, rolling them between my fingertips. Kyue bucked underneath me, pressing his chest harder into my hands.

It was the most erotic thing I had ever seen in my life.

I glided my hands up Kyue’s arms, circling around Kyue’s wrists, applying the lightest of pressure. I shifted my weight, pressing my body down until I could nuzzle Kyue’s neck, and then rubbed our chests together, feeling the sensual body beneath me.

I glanced down at Kyue’s tanned and gleaming chest. It was lean, strong, and damn near perfect. I loved the sculpted way Kyue was formed. I stroked my hands over the bare flesh, my nails scraping lightly, small red marks appearing along the way.

Glancing down Kyue’s body, I saw the outline of Kyue’s erection through his jeans. It was full, stretched wide, and that hard bulge left little to the imagination.

I released the snap on Kyue’s pants, pulling the zipper down slowly until I saw the moist head of Kyue’s cock

peeking out.

Kyue flicked out his tongue and licked at my nipple, his lips nibbling sporadically. I gasped as lust nearly ripped me apart, my head arching back as that rough, rasping tongue stroked over my heated flesh.

Oh, that was good, hot, with a gentle abrasion that had me panting as Kyue moved slowly to the other nipple.

I snaked my hand into Kyue's jeans and massaged the heated flesh. It was hard, but felt like liquid silk under my hand, with the pre-cum leaking over my fingers.

I lifted my hand to my mouth and sucked my fingers in, the taste rolling over my taste buds like nectar to a bee. I groaned, licking it clean before I pulled at the waistband of Kyue's pants, pushing the denim fabric down Kyue's legs until I could toss it aside.

Kyue lay there stunningly naked now, exposed to my hungry eyes. I drank the man in as I pushed Kyue's thighs apart. Kyue didn't hesitate. He parted his legs, showing off the sexiest thing I had ever seen.

A male's body was such a sculpted piece of art to me, so perfect, so exotic. I found myself wanting to rub my scent over Kyue. The urge was strong, compelling me to lean forward until my stomach was touching Kyue's erection. I rubbed my body over Kyue's length, feeling the pre-cum trailing over my skin.

"Marking me, Lucas?" Kyue asked.

I gasped at the sound of my name in his sultry voice. It wrapped around me, touching me in the wickedest of places.

The pull to mark Kyue for the entire world to see was almost maddening in my mind. I wanted to sink deep into the man's soul and never come out. It was a need so strong that I let it wash over me and carry me under.

I needed to taste Kyue.

I grinned as I pushed my body down Kyue's until my head was even with his weeping cock. "Oh, hell yeah."

I licked a path to Kyue's cock and then nuzzled in the wiry curls before licking my way up the fully hard shaft and sucking at the engorged head so I could savor Kyue's pre-cum.

As I swallowed, I felt a small hand on my head and looked up to see Kyue's dark eyes gazing at me, burning with a hunger and need as great as my own.

Kyue's fingers caressed my jaw, almost begging me to show him just what I could do with my lips. I eagerly leaned forward, sucking Kyue's cock into my mouth.

Kyue groaned out his pleasure as I swallowed his erection to the root. Using my tongue, I laved the tender depression beneath the swollen crown and then tongue-fucked the tiny slit, licking away the salty taste of Kyue's desires.

I cupped the back of Kyue's thighs, pushing the man's legs apart as I worked my mouth over Kyue's cock. Kyue wrapped his legs around my shoulders, pulling me closer as his fingers dug into the mattress.

I brushed my chin over Kyue's sac and felt it draw close to Kyue's body. Reaching around Kyue, I played at Kyue's hole, pressing my fingers against the throbbing muscle, but not entering.

I reached my hand up, coating my finger with saliva before placing it back at Kyue's entrance, pushing it deep into his tight little body.

I wiggled my finger, pushing it in and out, stretching Kyue, watching as he fell apart in my arms. Since Kyue's legs were on either side of me, I pushed them further apart, opening Kyue wider for me.

"Don't stop, Lucas," Kyue begged. "F—feels so good."

In that moment, I knew that I would give Kyue anything. I would capture the stars and lay them out at Kyue's feet if that's what he wanted. I would buy him the moon if he asked for it.

Kyue shouted, and his hips bucked, pushing his cock to the back of my mouth as hot seed spilt down my throat. I drank it down like a dying man, pulling every last drop from Kyue's thick cock.

After a moment, I let Kyue's dick slide from between my lips and I leaned back. "Lube? Condom?"

Kyue didn't move for a moment, his breathing heavy, and then he pointed toward the nightstand. I nearly pulled the drawer out trying to get to what I needed.

My hands shook as I tore open the condom package and then rolled it down my shaft. After opening the lube, I coated my painfully straining erection. I was so hard and ready that I feared I would come just from lathering my cock. The thought had my head spinning as I tossed the lube aside and rejoined Kyue.

The head of my cock touched Kyue's sensitive hole, but I didn't push forward. Not yet. I watched Kyue in fascination as a shudder ran over him, making his body tremble slightly.

I drew in a shuddering breath, telling myself over and over again to gain control of my body.

I was so damn close already.

Kyue's eyes sparkled with lust, telling me what he truly wanted. I leaned forward, placing my hands on Kyue's chest, my cock brushing along Kyue's crease, and ran my tongue over Kyue's parted lips.

Lifting my head, I reached up and touched Kyue's moist lips, the pads of my fingers running along the smooth and soft skin. "My little Kyue," I whispered. "My beautiful little Kyue."

Kyue nipped at my fingers.

I gripped the back of his neck, pulling him up, plunging my tongue into his mouth.

"I want to ride your cock," Kyue whispered against my lips.

A rumble of pleasure echoed through my chest.

"Yes," I gasped as I rolled us, placing Kyue on top of me. I was twisting in a grip of an erotic heat that was burning me alive. "Ride my cock, Kyue."

Using my biceps as leverage, Kyue lifted his hips as I guided my cock to his hole. I hissed when the head of my shaft touched Kyue's entrance, my body growing tense.

Kyue rolled his hips backward, pressing his body down onto my cock. All I could do was shudder when my cock slid into that tight, wet heat.

It was me who cried out, my arms shaking as I placed my hands on Kyue's thighs. I was overwhelmed at the feeling of being inside the man and the look of pure ecstasy on Kyue's face as he impaled himself on my cock.

I gripped Kyue's buttocks as he fully seated himself on me. I held tight to that ass as I pulled back, leaving only the head inside before thrusting my full length up into Kyue's ass once again.

Kyue's body arched up, his mouth opening on a low cry as he shuddered. His nails pierced my arms, his legs tightened around my hips as I thrust in and out of the silken grasp encasing my cock.

"Harder, Lucas." Kyue's voice was low and husky, sultry. "Fuck, Lucas, you feel so damn good buried in my ass."

Kyue was breathing heavily, his chest rising and falling in hard breaths. His body was hot and wild as he raked his nails down my chest. Kyue began to bounce on my cock, his own shaft jumping around freely.

I held the man's ass as Kyue used me, taking his pleasure from my body. I was just a toy, a plaything for the little slip of a man riding me, and I didn't give a damn.

"That's it, Kyue. Pleasure yourself on me, take what you want."

Kyue's movements were slow and measured, then quick and uncoordinated, then back to slow and measured. He was

driving my need crazy. I wasn't sure what drove me more insane, the fast bouncing or the leisurely movements.

Kyue swiveled his hips, impaling himself on my cock over and over again. I was coming unglued, falling apart at the seams as Kyue took what he wanted, what he needed.

Staring up at this man in the midst of passion, I knew I would never see anything so beautiful. His beautiful black hair a sinful halo around his head. His skin flushed and sweaty. His lips parted as if a groan of ecstasy was hovering on them.

I was fighting not to plunge deep inside of Kyue.

And then I almost lost my mind when Kyue clenched his inner muscles, encasing my cock in a tight vise-like grip. There was no other way to describe the growing madness inside of me.

I began to move inside Kyue, watching him as I slowly thrust into him, pulling almost completely out and then pushing back in.

Unable to stand it anymore, I quickened my movements and soon I was fucking Kyue with passion, ramming my cock hard and deep into Kyue's ass.

It was the most amazing feeling in the world. I could die that very second and know that I had visited heaven already.

Kyue began to slide back up my cock, the grip like an iron fist as my body trembled. I growled gently, looking to where our bodies joined together, watching my cock reappear from Kyue's giving flesh.

Kyue's legs tightened around my hips, locking me into place as he slammed his ass onto my cock. Kyue's head rolled

from side to side, his back arching as he let out a throaty groan.

The muscles in my thighs grew tight as I watched the beautiful sight above me. I traced my fingers over Kyue's chest, touching each dip as I rocked my cock in and out of Kyue's body.

Kyue suddenly arched his back, his nails digging into my skin as he let out a loud guttural sound as hot liquid spread across my chest.

I kept going.

Kyue's ass was pulsing, milking my cock with a ferocity that rocked me to the very core. A primal growl built in my throat, the need to possess Kyue, to mark him in some manner, overwhelming everything.

It was a powerful feeling and one I had never felt before. I wanted to possess, to claim, and let Kyue know that I was playing for keeps.

Giving my hips a few more plunges, I held tight to Kyue's hips as I came unglued. My mind fragmented as I shoved my cock deep into Kyue's ass, my seed forcefully being pulled from my body and filling the condom.

I was exhausted and panting heavily as I pulled my cock free, carefully tugged the condom off and tied the ends, and then tossed it into the garbage can beside the bed.

I curled up on the bed next to Kyue, pulling the covers up over the both of us. I wasn't sure exactly what had happened because that had not just been sex. I'd had sex before, lots of

times. What Kyue and I had just done changed the very foundation of my life, but at the moment, I didn't care.

All that mattered to me was feeling Kyue curl up to my chest, wrap an arm around me, and pull me close. It was enough for me to relax and let the tiny aftershocks settle me.

I could solve the world's problems tomorrow.

Chapter Fourteen

~ Kyue ~

I stretched my hand out across the mattress before my eyes had even opened fully, searching for the man that had rocked my dreams all night long...the empty mattress.

I jack-knifed up. My heart thundered in my ears as I stared down at the spot beside me. It was cold to the touch.

Considering I was buck-ass naked except for a sheet and there were empty condom wrappers on the nightstand next to the bottle of lube, it didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what had happened here last night.

I had sex with Lucas.

More than once.

I groaned as I flopped back against the pillows. "Oh, fuck my life."

How could I have let this happen? The mere fact that Lucas wasn't here still curled up beside me told me just about everything I needed to know.

My world had been rocked to its very core, and he'd had sex. That's all. Just sex. The fact that we were engaged to be married was immaterial.

I could have been someone he picked up in a bar, fucked, and then left just as fast as he could. If he hadn't known my name before hand, I doubted he would have asked for it.

Wouldn't be surprised to find money stacked on my dresser.

I grabbed my pillow, pressed it over my face, and screamed into it before tossing it to the side.

God, men sucked.

Yeah, yeah, I know. I was a man, but I didn't hit and run. I'd had a few one-nightstands in my time, but I was polite enough to say goodbye when I left. I didn't sneak off in dawn's early light.

I narrowed my eyes as my disappointment and heartache turned into a burning hot anger. I hadn't asked Lucas to come to my loft last night. I certainly hadn't asked him to fuck me into oblivion.

This was his fault.

He needed to die!

I started to roll over when a glint of silver caught my eye. I frowned as I stared down at the ring on my finger. It was silver just like the earring in my ear. In fact, they looked eerily similar. Simple, with a scroll design etched into them.

I picked up my cell phone off my nightstand and dialed the only person that could have put it there. "Did you put a ring on my finger, Mr. Kincaid."

"Good morning to you, too, Kyue. Why yes, I did sleep well. Thank you for asking."

Smart ass.

"Did you put a ring on my finger?" I asked again in a much tighter voice.

It was all I could do not to shout at the insufferable man.

“Yes, Kyue, I did. That is your engagement ring. You’ll get another one when we get married this weekend.”

Well, damn.

“I didn’t get you one.”

Lucas sighed and his tone of voice changed, turning... softer? “I know, and that’s fine. You don’t have to get me a ring.”

It obviously wasn’t fine.

“Mr. Kincaid—”

“I need to take this call, Kyue. I’ll talk to you later.”

“Yeah, whatever.”

I hung up and tossed my phone on the bed. I flipped the blankets back and rolled out of bed. The first thing I needed to do was take a shower and clean up the mess from the previous night. I didn’t want any signs remaining that might remind me of how colossally stupid I had been.

My shower took a little longer because I needed to give myself and extra hard scrub down. I was not pleased when I stood in front of the mirror a little while later and saw all the bite marks and scratches along my skin.

If nothing else, the sex had been good.

I dressed in my usual jeans and tank top, going with a black one this time. My mood felt black right now.

Murderous.

I also needed some food.

I pulled my black biker boots on, grabbed my wallet and cell phone and put them in my pockets, then pulled on my jacket. I picked up the keys and my helmet near the door and then headed out.

There was a really good diner not too far away. They served a great steak and eggs, their coffee could bring the dead back to life, and they were relatively cheap.

All plusses in my book.

When I opened the front door of the building and stepped out onto the sidewalk, I just stood there, staring.

Maybe glaring.

“What do you want, Mr. Kincaid?”

“Back to Mr. Kincaid, I see,” Lucas mused.

I rolled my eyes and headed for my motorcycle. I swung my leg over the seat and sat down, pulling my gloves out of the helmet before sliding my hands into them.

“Headed anywhere specific, Kyue?”

“Breakfast.”

“Sounds good. I haven’t had anything to eat yet.”

Oh my god, the gall on this man.

“You’re not invited, Mr. Kincaid.”

“That’s okay,” Lucas replied. “I don’t mind tagging along.”

My mouth parted in surprise as I slowly turned to look at the man. Lucas stood on the sidewalk next to my bike, his hands casually in the pockets of his slacks.

“You don’t have a helmet.”

“I can get one.” Lucas pulled his cell phone out of his pocket and wagged it back and forth. “Just tell me what kind to get.”

“Mr. Kincaid, you—” I frowned and glanced down when my cell phone rang. I pulled it out of my pocket and looked at the screen before answering. “What’s up, Bobby?”

“Man.” Bobby sounded almost breathless. “You got to get back to the shop like now. A rep from Kawasaki is here and he wants to talk to you about the prototype. He said he saw you at the race before you crashed, and your numbers were great. I think he wants to talk a deal.”

“I’ll be right there. Ten minutes.” I hung up and stuck my phone back in my pocket. “Rain check, Mr. Kincaid. I’m about to go sign my life away.”

“Kyue, where are you going?”

I grabbed my helmet and pulled it on and then started my bike. I waved to Lucas before merging into traffic. It was a couple of blocks before I realized he was following me in his car.

Whatever.

I didn’t have time to deal with him right now.

If I could sell my prototype for enough money, it would give me the working capital I needed for the next one. I’d been playing around with an idea for a motocross racing bike for while now, but it was still all just ideas and hastily drawn diagrams. I wanted to turn it into something real.

Lucas and his driver were still behind me when I reached the garage. I ignored them as I parked my bike and then climbed off. I pulled my helmet off and then my gloves, sticking the gloves inside the helmet, and then carrying it inside the shop.

“Bobby!”

Bobby came running out of the office, gesturing wildly. “He’s in there.”

“Alone?”

“God, no, I know better than to leave a stranger in your office alone. Parker is in there with him.”

Not sure that was much better. Parker could get lost in his diagrams if he wasn’t careful. I handed my helmet to Bobby and then gestured to the front of the garage where Lucas stood, fuming.

“Go help Mr. Kincaid find a helmet for his big fat head.”

I knew he could hear me.

The man that was waiting for me in my office was surprisingly not in a suit. He wore jeans, a nice button-up blue shirt, and regular shoes.

I liked him already.

“Hello.”

The man stood. “Mr. Panich?”

“Yes, I’m Kyue Panich.”

He smiled and held out his hand. “I’m Robert Tanaka. I’m a representative from Kawasaki Heavy Industries. We’d like to

discuss your prototype with you.”

I waved Parker away and then sat down behind my desk, making myself comfortable. “I’m listening.”

“Do you know our Ninja ZX-RR?”

“Of course.”

Who didn’t in the super-sport racing world?

“We’d like to discuss modifying your prototype to fit our brand-new Ninja ZX-X that we’d like to take into production in the next year. It will have an 850cc four-stroke inline-four DOHC. We’d like to have a bike ready for the 2023 MotoGP season.”

Damn.

“We’re willing to offer you a ten-million dollar contract for the exclusive rights to your modified prototype. We’d also like to be in line for first right of refusal for any further prototypes on a contract-by-contract basis.”

Mr. Tanaka opened his briefcase and pulled out a rather large file. He set it on the desk in front of me. “This is the contract. Once you go over it, if the terms are acceptable to you, we’d like you to sign with us.”

“He’ll need to have our lawyer go over it first.”

I glanced toward the door. “Mr. Kincaid—”

“Kyue, you create motorcycles. I am a businessman. Let me help you make sure you understand everything in that contract.” Lucas pointed to the large stack of papers on my desk.

“You do know I have a business degree, don’t you?” I asked.

“I do, but do you have a law degree?”

I sighed. “No.”

“Then let me help you.”

“Fine.” I sent him a hard glare before turning back to Mr. Tanaka. “This is my fiancé, Lucas Kincaid.”

“Lucas Kincaid of Kincaid Enterprises?”

Lucas nodded. “I am, but I am not here representing my company today, Mr. Tanaka. I am just here as moral support for my fiancé. He’s the brains behind this project. I’m just the window dressing.”

Mr. Tanaka looked confused.

Lucas just shook his head and moved to lean against the wall behind my desk, crossing his arms. It was a little unnerving to say the least, but I was kind of glad he was there.

Mr. Tanaka and I spoke for about another hour about the prototype project before he finally left. Our conversation had given me a little more insight into what his company was looking for, what they expected, and when they expected it.

All doable things.

“Fuck, a ten-million dollar contract.” I tipped my head back on my chair and stared up at the ceiling. “The things I could do with that.”

“What would you do?” Lucas asked as he trailed his fingers over the edge of my jaw.

“I’ve been working on this idea for a motocross dirt bike for some time now. We could really get some good work time in on that if I sign that contract.”

“Do you think you can make the modifications they requested?”

I nodded. “It’ll take a few sleepless nights, but it’s possible.”

“I’ll help you however I can. I’ll even send Oliver down with food if you need it. But I ask one thing.”

I frowned up at him. “What?”

“Can you wait until after the wedding to disappear?”

“The wedding is in five days, Mr. Kincaid. I probably won’t even sign the contract for another couple of weeks.”

“That does not mean you won’t disappear into your bat cave before then.”

Okay, that was true. My mind was already percolating with ideas and my fingers were itching to get to a drawing board.

“Fine, I promise I won’t start creating another prototype until after the wedding.”

Lucas’s smile lit up his face. It might actually be the first real smile I had ever seen on his face. Once he leaned down to kiss me, I forgot all about the smile and just wanted those lips.

“Thank you, Kyue.”

I chuckled. “You’re welcome, Mr. Kincaid.”

“Still want to go get some breakfast? Bobby found me a helmet.”

I glanced at what he was wearing, frowning. “Do you have anything a little bit more casual?”

Lucas glanced down at his outfit. “This is casual.”

“No, that’s weekend boardroom,” I replied. He was wearing khaki-colored slacks, a white dress shirt, and tie. And while that looked good on him—because, let’s face it, everything did—it wasn’t the look I was going for. “You need casual, comfortable clothes, like what I am wearing.”

Lucas’s brow was furrowed when he glanced at me. “Kyue, I don’t think I own anything like that.”

I pulled my cell phone out and dialed. “Foyt, I need a pair of soft denim jeans for Mr. Kincaid, and boots in his size brought to my garage. You have one hour.”

“I’ll see to it immediately, sir.”

An hour later, almost to the second, I found myself tucking my lips in to keep from laughing.

“What?” Lucas asked. “You’re the one that picked this stuff out for me.”

Yes and no.

“Lose the tie, Mr. Kincaid.”

“The tie?”

“You wanted to see my world.” I waved my hand down my own body. “This is my world.”

I walked over and reached up to help Lucas off with his tie. I even untucked his shirt, straightened his collar, and unbuttoned a few buttons. I then went for the sleeves. They needed to be uncuffed and rolled up to just below the elbow.

I stepped back to get a good look and nearly swallowed my tongue. I may have been a bit too hasty in dressing Lucas in casual clothes.

The corded muscles of his muscular arms were on full display just below the edges of his folded-up shirt sleeves. The jeans hugged his powerful body but was also loose enough to maneuver around in without cutting off circulation to the important stuff.

And there was no doubting that Lucas had very impressive *stuff*.

I stepped forward again and buttoned up one of the buttons of his shirt. There was just a little too much skin on display for my liking. No one except me needed to see all that glorious skin.

When I stepped back and looked him up and down again, I wondered if this was such a good idea. I had planned to spend the day taking Lucas to some of my usual haunts.

We might not make it out of my office.

“This is what gets you all hot and bothered?”

My head snapped up at the astonishment in Lucas’s voice. I hadn’t realized I was licking my lips until he said something.

I shrugged. “You look good.”

He looked sexy as hell.

“I wear a twenty-thousand dollar suit and you don’t even bat an eyelash. I wear this casual crap and you’re ready to jump me.”

I smirked. “I know what I like, Mr. Kincaid.”

Lucas pulled out his cell phone and dialed. “Foyt, I need some more of these jeans.”

The second he hung up the phone, Lucas’s hands slid down my back to my ass, grabbing one butt cheek with each hand.

I arched into Lucas while trying to push my ass into his hands at the very same time.

“Lock the door, baby.”

I hated leaving Lucas’s arms, but I wanted what the lust in his eyes promised. I hurried across the room to lock the door. As I turned and walked back to Lucas, I started pulling my clothes off.

Well, I unbuttoned my pants and pushed them down my thighs. This was what was called a quickie. I didn’t need to pull off all of my clothes. I just needed to bare the important parts, like my ass.

I shuffled forward until I was behind my desk, and then I bent over the flat wooden surface and stuck my ass up in the air. If Lucas didn’t understand what I wanted, he was blind.

Luckily for me, he had very good eyesight.

“Is this what you want, baby?” Lucas asked as he stroked his hand down one ass cheek.

“Yes.” I couldn’t even begin to describe how much I wanted it. “Please, Lucas.”

Lucas’s beautiful steel blue eyes were intense as he gazed down at me. I swallowed tightly.

God, I wanted this man.

“Pants all the way off, Kyue.” Lucas’s voice was deep and slightly rough. “Shirt, too.”

I shivered as Lucas released me. My hands shook as I stood and started stripping the rest of my clothes off. It wasn’t like it had been that long since the last time we had sex, but it felt as if an eternity had passed us by.

I groaned when I bent over to remove my socks and felt a hand glide over my ass, giving me a little pat.

“I love your ass, Kyue.”

Not exactly romantic, but I’d take it.

I turned to watch Lucas unzip his pants and push them down to his thighs. When he was done, he stepped up to me and then cupped my face, rubbing our cocks together as he melded our lips together in a kiss that made my toes curl.

The man was a really good kisser.

I moaned with wanton abandon when Lucas cupped my ass in his large hands, pulling me closer, taking the kiss deeper. Goose bumps broke out over my skin when Lucas’s hands left my ass and slid over my back. I wanted to climb the large man like a monkey and hang on until we melded together.

A low guttural growl left Lucas’s lips.

“On your back,” he instructed.

I twisted around and jumped up on the desk, scrambling to do as Lucas commanded. My skin buzzed with excitement at the knowledge that Lucas was going to claim me again. I lay

down on my back and spread my legs wide, barring myself to his lust-filled gaze.

“Beautiful,” Lucas whispered as his eyes roamed over my naked body.

I was dying to move, to wiggle around and beg Lucas to fuck me already, but I sealed my plea behind my lips. Lucas seemed to be on some sort of mission and I wasn't about to mess that up.

My eyes damn near rolled to the back of my head as Lucas's fingertips played over my skin, slowly making their way up my thighs toward my aching cock.

I almost whined at the slow pace.

When Lucas wrapped his large hand around my hard shaft, I couldn't stop my moan. I spread my legs wider as Lucas stroked my cock from root to tip and then back down again. Lucas's other hand cupped my balls, massaging them between his fingers.

He was really good at that.

I writhed and squirmed on the desktop, moaning loudly as I succumbed to the waves of ecstasy trying to pull me under. I lay there, drowning in a flood tide of exquisite rapture as Lucas took me to another place, a place where I was no longer my own person. It was a place where Lucas owned me, mind, body, and soul.

“Come for me, baby.”

My back left the desk as I arched up and cried out, hot jets of cum shooting from my cock. The pleasure was pure and

explosive. I shouted Lucas's name, thrashing my head from side to side.

Lucas stroked my shaft through my entire orgasm. I panted heavily as Lucas milked my cock, pulling every last drop from my balls.

"You're beautiful when you come, Kyue," Lucas whispered. His eyes flickered up to mine. "So sexy."

"There's lube and some condoms in the bottom drawer, right hand side."

Lucas's eyebrow arched, but he reached into that drawer and grabbed what we needed. He quickly tore the condom package open and rolled the condom over his engorged flesh.

I swallowed tightly when he opened the lube and poured some out on his fingers. My breath hissed out of my mouth when Lucas circled my hole with his large finger. At that moment, all I wanted was to feel Lucas deep inside of me.

"Fuck me, Lucas."

I started to shudder when a slick finger entered me and moved around. It always felt a little weird at first but quickly exploded into unimaginable pleasure. I bit my bottom lip when two more fingers entered my tight ring of muscles, pushing back as Lucas stretched me.

It felt fantastic.

"Pull your legs up, baby."

I hitched my hands under my knees and pulled them to my chest. Lucas leaned forward, taking one of my nipples into his

mouth as he breached my hole again. I grabbed at Lucas's head, clutching at his hair.

Lucas slid another finger inside of me as he sucked at my nipple, bringing it to a taut peak. I knew he was trying to distract me, and it was working. I begged with my body for some sort of release even though I had just come moments ago.

My dick didn't care about that fact.

It wanted more.

Lucas nipped my skin, telling me without words to behave. I released Lucas's hair, trying to focus as Lucas inserted a third finger. It was hard. I tried but couldn't focus to save my life.

"I'm going to fuck you now, and I'm not going to stop until you scream my name."

Yeah, that wasn't going to be a problem. Lucas's name already hovered on my lips.

Wouldn't he be thrilled.

Lucas rose up between my legs, pushing my knees farther back as he lined his cock up with my ass. I held my breath and pressed my shoulders back into the surface of the desk as Lucas pushed into me.

I panted as the sting and bite of being filled coursed through my backside. I curled my fingers into fists as Lucas began to move, slowly pushing in and out of me. It was raw and hot and made my head swoon. The feelings coursing through my body threatened to drown me.

I lifted my legs up and wrapped them around Lucas's waist, pressing the heels of my feet into the top of his ass cheeks. I wanted Lucas to fuck me until I was unconscious.

Lucas tucked his body neatly into mine as he grabbed my ankles and lifted my lower body high into the air, assaulting my ass with his huge cock. Lucas pulled back and then slammed into my ass, his large cock grazing my sweet spot as he repeated the move a few more times.

I squirmed and cried out. I was being pulled into the depths of pleasure as Lucas fucked me like there was no tomorrow.

Lucas growled as he fucked me harder, deeper, and with more aggression than I had ever felt. Sweat trickled down his darkly tanned skin as he hammered into my ass. Lucas growled and dropped my legs, taking my lips in a mind-altering kiss.

Fingers dug into my hips as Lucas switched his position, tagging my prostate on every damn stroke. My body tingled and buzzed, my heart beating faster as I felt the all-too-familiar tingling shoot up my spine.

"Lucas," I cried as Lucas thundered into my ass. I was lost, so damn lost in the feeling of Lucas taking me over, dominating me with his body.

My orgasm grabbed me and roared up my spine and down to my groin. My cock erupted, splattering all over my stomach and Lucas's. Lucas snapped his hips, his cock stretching my ass to the limits.

I shuddered when Lucas threw his head back, roaring out my name as hot spurts of seed flooded my ass. He continued to thrust into me several more times before collapsing down over me. Lucas kissed me until; oxygen became a real problem before pulling free.

I laid there for a moment, covered in cum and sprawled all over the top of my desk. I was trying to find the motivation to move, but it just wasn't there.

“Can I take you to lunch, Kyue?”

I smirked before sitting up. “Since you're dressed for it”—I waved my hands to the casual clothes he now wore—“how about I take you to lunch?”

I knew just the place.

“Have you ever been to a food pod?”

Lucas squinted at me. “I'm not even sure what that is.”

I grinned and wagged my eyebrows. “Then you are in for a treat, Mr. Kincaid.”

“Can you wait to call me Mr. Kincaid until you have your clothes back on?”

“Okay, Lucas,” I said as I reached for said clothes.

See? I could compromise.

Chapter Fifteen

~ Lucas ~

I braced myself for the coming conversation, knowing it wasn't likely to be a good one, and then dialed Kyue's phone number.

While we had parted on good terms the day before, he had said he wouldn't be available for a couple of days. He promised he wasn't disappearing into his bat cave, but he still had something he had to do.

I hadn't heard from him since.

I thought he still might be upset about the ring, so I was actually a little surprised that he answered the phone.

"Yes, Mr. Kincaid."

I was really starting to hate it when he called me that, especially now that I had heard my first name whispered on his lips.

"I'm having drinks at the Illumination Club tomorrow night with some business associates. I'd like you to be there." My jaw clenched for a moment. "Please, Kyue."

Why did I feel as if I had to beg for every little scrap of this man's attention? And why was I even trying? I could think of a hundred men and women off the top of my head that I could call to accompany me.

Why was it so important to me that he be the one at my side?

“Kyue?” I asked when he didn’t immediately answer.

Plus side, he didn’t tell me to go fuck myself.

“I’m in the middle of something right now.”

My heart sank, and for a brief moment I thought I might have felt something in my eyes, but that couldn’t be right.

“Okay, Kyue.”

This time, I hung up before he did.

What was the point?

* * * *

“Sorry I’m late.”

My head snapped up. “Kyue.”

I really hadn’t expected him.

I swallowed tightly as I stared at his feet and slowly raised my eyes up his body, taking in every inch of his beautiful figure. My body went from relaxed to raging hot lust in a blink of an eye.

What was he wearing?

I wasn’t sure I had ever seen a man wear a white double-breasted suit quite that well. It molded to his lithe frame as if its sole purpose in life was to make this man look as good as he did.

I didn’t even want to think about the fact that he wasn’t wearing a shirt under his buttoned-up blazer. Just a simple silver herringbone necklace.

And...I was thinking about it.

Damn it.

“You’re staring, Mr. Kincaid.”

“Am I not supposed to?” Kyue was a walking advertisement for sex. Pretty sure half the people in the club had creamed themselves when he walked in the door.

The other half were too stupid to live.

The seating in the second floor VIP lounge was shaped like a giant square with one side open. Red satin couches had been placed all along the side of the solid railing that looked down onto the first floor.

I was sitting on one side, my associates on the other two. When Kyue started for us, they all stood up. I simply held my hand out. Kyue cocked an eyebrow before taking my hand.

I reeled him in as quickly as I could. I’d seen the lust burning in the eyes of the others. I wanted to stake a claim before they thought they had a chance with my Kyue.

When he sat down next to me, I tucked him in close to my side, wrapping an arm around his shoulders before leaning in to brush his cheek with my lips. “Thank you for coming, Kyue.”

Kyue flashed me a smile. “Thank you for asking, Mr. Kincaid.”

“You look amazing.”

His chuckle made *me* smile. “I did tell you I had a couple of suits.”

“Yes, but...” I let my eyes roam over him again. I still wasn’t too thrilled with how much skin was on display since he had not worn a shirt under his blazer, but I sure liked looking at it. “I wasn’t expecting this.”

Kyue actually winked at me.

“Are you going to introduce us, Lucas?”

I really didn’t want to.

Before I could open my mouth, Kyue leaned forward and held his hand out. “Kyue Pinach, soon to be Kyue Kincaid.”

Fuck that sounded good, especially with Kyue saying it.

“Kincaid.” Darwin glanced between us. “Any relation?”

Kyue held up his left hand and wiggled his ring finger. “Engaged.”

Darwin’s jaw dropped. “You are engaged to marry Lucas?”

“I am.”

“Since when?”

“We’ve known each other most of our lives.” Kyue glanced at me, flashing me another smile. “We’ve been engaged for a very long time now.”

“Why didn’t you tell any of us about this?” Darwin asked.

“Because you are a lecherous old bastard,” I replied. “You would have tried to steal Kyue from me.”

Kyue’s hand landed on my thigh, giving me a quick squeeze. “I’m quite satisfied with where I am, Mr. Kincaid.”

Well, if that wasn’t a boost to my ego, I didn’t know what was.

“What is it that you do, Kyue?” Stewart asked.

Darvin snickered. “Pretty sure we can all figure that one out.”

I glared at the man, wanting to take him apart for even thinking those words in regard to Kyue, let alone saying them. Darvin was being an ass. I’m sure Stewart had simply been trying to get the conversation back to a civil level.

Of the three men I was meeting with tonight, Darvin was the worst. If we didn’t have business together, I wouldn’t have gone within two feet of the guy.

Stewart and Thomas were nice enough, but we weren’t friends, just acquaintances. We did do a lot of business together, however, which was why I had agreed to meet for drinks when it was suggested.

I was regretting that now.

“So, what is it that you do?” Stewart asked again.

“Why does he have to do anything?” Darvin asked as he waved his drink toward Kyue. “Lucas is as rich as a god. I’m sure he can support a husband, even one as hot as Kyue.”

Oh, if he wasn’t a business associate...

“Kyue actually supports himself,” I said firmly. “He designs motorcycles for super-sport road racing, and he’s very talented. His last prototype netted him a ten-million dollar deal with Kawasaki Motorcycles.”

“Beautiful, rich, and talented.” Darvin gave Kyue the once over. “Do you have any single friends?”

“I do, Mr. Darvin, but my friends have standards.”

Oh my god, to sit back and watch someone else be on the receiving end of Kyue's smart mouth...it was like nirvana.

"I know Lucas is gay so you have to be a guy." Darwin snickered. "But you're sure pretty enough to be a woman."

Looked like he hadn't gotten enough already.

Poor bastard.

"If he didn't have all that money," Darwin continued as if the man wasn't already digging his own grave, "I'd wonder how he rated a babe like you. Lucky bastard."

I clenched my jaw as my anger at the insult to Kyue ignited and began to burn in my gut. Darwin was a good business associate, but a lousy human being. I was almost sorry I had asked Kyue to join us. I didn't want him to have to suffer this fool.

"Darvin—"

Kyue's hand on my wrist stopped me.

"What makes you think I'm not the lucky one here, Mr. Darwin? I mean, have you seen my fiancé? I can guarantee you that there is not a man or woman in this place that doesn't want him." Kyue smirked. "Including you."

Darvin's eyes flickered to me and I almost cringed. I had never once, in all the time that I had worked with Darwin, thought of him in a sexual manner.

Assholes weren't my type.

Kyue crossed one leg over the other and then leaned into my side, his hand going back to my thigh. "I just wonder why you feel the need to make an ass of yourself."

“Fuck off!”

Kyue’s chuckle was light and cheery, and made me wonder just what he had up his sleeve. “While telling my fiancé to go fuck himself is one of my favorite pastimes, I’m sexy enough to get away with it. You, not so much.”

When Darwin jumped to his feet, Kyue didn’t move from his spot, but I did feel him tense beside me.

“How dare you talk to me like that!” Darwin snapped. “Do you know who I am?”

Kyue was up on his feet and in Darwin’s face in one fluid motion. “I don’t care who you are. If you ever speak to me or my fiancé in such a disrespectful manner again, I will bury you.” Kyue’s eyes flashed with fury. “Don’t believe I can do it? Just try me.”

When Darwin raised his hand in the air as if he planned to strike Kyue across the face, Kyue caught his wrist. I started to get up, but Kyue just pointed his finger at me. He didn’t even look in my direction.

My jaw started to drop as Kyue pressed his thumb hard into the underside of Darwin’s wrist and then slowly began turning his arm. Kyue was at least half a foot shorter than Darwin, but he was slowly driving the man to his knees.

Once Darwin hit the carpet, Kyue leveled a narrow-eyed gaze on him. “Apologize.”

“What—”

Kyue twisted until Darwin cried out and bent forward. “Apologize.”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, okay?”

“Sorry for what?”

“Dis-Disrespecting you.”

Kyue twisted a little more. “And?”

“And what?” Darwin cried out. “I already apologized to you. I don’t know what else you want me to say.”

“You insulted my fiancé. You insulted his looks. You insulted his intelligence. You even insulted our engagement with your disrespectful speech. Don’t you think you owe him an apology, too?”

“Fuck,” Darwin grunted.

Kyue twisted.

“Fine, fine! Lucas—”

Kyue twisted again. “His name is Mr. Kincaid.”

“Mr. Kincaid, I wish to apologize for my behavior tonight concerning you and your fiancé. You have my deepest apologies.”

Kyue smiled as he released Darwin and walked over to sit down next to me again. “Now, that wasn’t so hard, was it?”

Fuck, this man was sexy.

I watched Darwin scramble to his feet and run out of the VIP booth. If he chose to go to the police, I knew the CCTV recordings would clear Kyue of any wrongdoing as he was only defending himself and he had never actually hit Darwin. Just made him squirm.

I grabbed Kyue's hand before he could place it on my thigh again and brought it to my lips, pressing a kiss to the top. "Can I get you a drink, Kyue?"

"Something non-alcoholic, please, Mr. Kincaid, maybe a soda. I still have to work on my project tonight."

I wavered for a second when I realized Kyue had left work to come be at my side tonight simply because I had asked him. Something deep within my soul cracked open, letting in a little of Kyue's warmth.

I called a server over and ordered Kyue a soda just so I'd have a moment to recover myself.

"Does he ever call you Lucas?" Stewart asked.

"Yes." I smiled fondly at the memory of that night in the loft and the day after in his office. I grabbed Kyue's hand again and brought it to my lips. Pretty sure this was going to be a common occurrence in my future. "But no one is allowed to be there when he does."

Kyue's smirk was adorable, but it was weird that I thought that. I was usually cringing in fear of his lethal mouth when he smirked at me.

"I don't know what that smile means," Stewart said, "but I don't ever think I've seen one like it on your face before."

I chuckled lightly. "I don't think I've ever had one like this on my face before."

I hadn't had Kyue in my life before.

Chapter Sixteen

~ Kyue ~

I stared up at the large white mansion before me with a sense of dread. I hadn't paid that much attention to the place the last time I was here, but damn was it big.

I was really going to need a map to this place.

Somehow, I wasn't surprised when the door opened as soon as I reached it. "Good afternoon, Oliver. How are you today? Any closer to sainthood?"

"Sadly, sir, it seems I have to put my sainthood on hold for the wedding this weekend. I hear Satan himself is getting married."

"You don't say?" I looked toward the hallway that led to Lucas's office. "And just where is Satan right now?"

"His study, sir."

"Thank you, Oliver."

"Think nothing of it, Master Kyue."

That guy really was okay.

I started down the hallway, but a statue on a table between two doors caught my attention. "That's an interesting statue."

The base of the statue was smooth and curved like flowing water until you got to the top, and then it was chaotic as if the water had gone over a cliff. The entire thing was made in different shades of blue right down to white at the tips.

“It’s an Anurak original, sir. Master Kincaid found it in an art gallery in France. He actually has several Anurak originals here and at the office. He seems to like the work the artist creates.”

“Aren’t Anurak originals expensive?”

Oliver gave me one of his rare smirks. “I do not think Master Kincaid cares, sir.”

Huh.

Must be nice to have that sort of disposable income.

“Thank you, Oliver.”

“Of course, sir.”

I continued walking down the hallway to Lucas’s office and then knocked on the door. I grimaced a little when Foyt answered. It wasn’t that I disliked the man or anything, but I had been hoping to spend a little time alone with Lucas.

The dynamics of our relationship seemed to have changed after going to the club together. I wanted to spend some time with him to see if that was true or if it was all in my head.

“Master Kyue, so good to see you.”

“Can you not call me master?”

I really hated it.

“Of course, sir.” Foyt stood back so I could come into the room. “Mr. Kincaid is currently on an overseas conference call. He should be done in about twenty minutes. Is there anything I can get you in the meantime?”

“A comfortable chair?” I asked as I set my jacket and helmet down on the table next to the door.

Looked like I had a bit of a wait ahead of me.

“The couch is quite comfortable, sir. Mr. Kincaid often naps on it.”

“Oh, a warm blanket and a pillow would be great then.”

Maybe I could get in a nap.

“I’ll see to it right away, sir.”

“Thank you, Foyt.” I walked over to sit on the couch because there really wasn’t anything else I could do at the moment except wait.

God, I hated waiting.

Lucas sat at his desk, his laptop in front of him, talking to whoever was on the screen. He hadn’t even acknowledged me when I walked in. Not even a wave of his hand or making eye contact.

I tried not to be offended by that, but it wasn’t easy.

I sighed as I stared down at the ring he’d put on my finger, twisting it around and around. I was starting to think I was the only one that had seen something between us at the club and the night we spent together at my loft.

We had yet to sit down and have a civil conversation about our married life. Honestly, I wasn’t sure we could. We were both stubborn as hell, wanting to get our own way. Lucas, because that was what he was used to in his life, and me, because I refused to have anyone tell me what to do.

Like I had told him before, we didn't mesh well. Except in bed, but that couldn't be the basis for a marriage. At least not a good one, and I was starting to want a good one.

Was that crazy?

I glanced up at Lucas, watching as he wheeled and dealed and probably made million dollar deals with just one word. He looked comfortable surrounded by his multimillion dollar mansion and all its trappings. The fancy cars, the elaborate furniture, the silk pajamas.

I didn't ever see him running around in just a pair of jeans with pottery clay caked all over his hands. I doubted he even knew what pottery clay was.

He certainly didn't know I did. That was one of two remaining secrets from Lucas, and I didn't think I was ready to share either of them with him right now.

Maybe never.

I had to hold onto something that was mine or I would be swallowed up in Lucas's world.

This was insane.

I was insane.

I needed to get out of here. It was stupid to come. Whatever we needed to discuss could be discussed over the phone.

"Where are you off to?" Lucas called out. "You just got here."

I stifled a groan under my breath and then turned to look at Lucas. Well, at least he had come around the desk and

acknowledged my existence.

“I’m just going to run to the store and pick up a soda.”

“You most certainly will not!” Lucas snapped in a loud, deep tone, which kind of surprised me. “Oliver will go for whatever it is you need.”

I blinked a few times at Lucas and then frowned, not quite sure I had heard that right. “I’m not allowed to go to the grocery store anymore?”

“You will be a Kincaid in two days time, Kyue. Kincaids do not go to the grocery store.” Grocery store sounded like bad words coming out of his mouth. “You have people who do that for you.”

“Yeah, fuck that,” I snorted as I headed for the door.

I could do my own damn grocery shopping.

My arm was grabbed, and I was jerked back into a very hard body before I could take two steps. Hot breath blew down on the side of my neck and the words that were growled in my ear made my legs tremble.

“You will not disobey me, Kyue.”

Yeah, I snorted at that, too.

“You don’t own me, Mr. Kincaid.”

Lucas’s arm wrapped around my torso before he pulled me back tight against his chest. “I have a betrothal agreement that says otherwise.”

I don’t think so, buddy.

I grabbed Lucas's arm with one hand, his wrist with the other. I twisted them until he released his grip on me and then used my shorter stature to my advantage, bending at the waist to toss him over my shoulder and onto the hardwood floor.

He stared up at me with his mouth hanging open and eyes as wide as the moon, a totally stunned expression on his face. Considering the size of the man compared to me, I could understand his shock.

But he shouldn't have underestimated me.

"You should probably speak with my grandfather, Mr. Kincaid. He will tell you that I don't take orders very well."

I stepped over Lucas and walked to the side table to grab my jacket and helmet, and then I was out the door. My anger at his high-handed words fueled my steps and I made it all the way out the front door to my motorcycle before I heard his shout of outrage.

Pretty sure no one had ever spoken to him like that.

Well, except me.

I quickly pulled on my riding gear, started my bike, and then peeled out before going down the driveway and out onto the street. I only slowed when I hit traffic.

And no, I wasn't headed for the grocery store.

I needed a drink.

* * * *

~ Lucas ~

That had gone a lot differently in my head.

“Sir, sir, are you all right?”

“I’m fine, Foyt.”

“Uh, sir, you’re lying in the middle of the floor.”

“Yep.”

“Uh...are you going to get up?”

“I haven’t decided yet.”

“Oh, well, I brought Master...I mean I brought Mr. Kyue a blanket and pillow. Would you like them?”

“Not at the moment,” I replied. “Thank you, Foyt.”

“You’re welcome, sir.”

I dug my cell phone out of my pocket and dialed Kyue’s grandfather. As I waited for him to answer, I stared up at the ceiling. I did have to admit that housekeeping did an excellent job. There was not a cobweb in sight.

Maybe they needed a raise.

“Lucas, my dear boy, how are you?”

“Currently laying on the floor of my study.”

“I see,” Aat replied. “Is my grandson there?”

“No, he stormed out after putting me in my place.”

Aat chuckled. “He does like to do that.”

“My question is, how did he do that? I am half a foot taller than Kyue and a good fifty pounds heavier. How did he put me on the floor?”

“Black belt in Karate, Jujutsu, and Krav Maga.”

Yeah, that’d do it.

“We knew from an early age that Kyue was going to have issues in the world because he was small and gay, and we wanted him to be prepared so his grandmother and I had him trained. He’s been doing it since he was about eight years old.”

That explained so much.

“How do I get Kyue to stop treating me like I’m an asshole?”

“Stop being one.”

“Aat!” I groaned. “You’re not helping.”

“I am actually. Yes, Kyue is stubborn. Yes, Kyue is opinionated. And yes, Kyue is a pain in the ass, but do you remember what I told you back in my study?”

I tried to remember back. It wasn’t like it had been all that long ago, but so much had happened since then. Things were a bit fuzzy.

I pinched the bridge of my nose as I admitted defeat.

“Remind me, please.”

“If Kyue considers you someone he cares about, there is nothing he won’t do for you, but if you get on his bad side, there is nothing in this world that will sway him. He will cut you out of his life, marriage or no marriage.”

I grunted as I forced myself up into a sitting position. “So, you’re saying all I have to do is get him to care about me and he’ll stop flipping me off?”

Aat chuckled. “Probably not, but he’ll probably stop running from you.”

Yeah, I hated that.

“To give you some hope, I’ll tell you that I think he already cares about you.”

My breath caught at the very idea. “What makes you say that?”

“You’re still conscious.”

That was a plus.

Chapter Seventeen

~ Kyue ~

“Can I buy you a beer?”

I glanced up to see Lucas standing next to my table. I almost didn't recognize him dressed in faded blue jeans and a white button-down shirt.

No tie in sight.

He looked as sexy now as he had the first time he wore casual clothes.

Still... I lifted the beer bottle in my hand. “Got one.”

“Then do you mind if I sit with you while you drink it?”

I sighed. “It's a free country.”

Lucas slid into the booth seat across from me. He looked a little uncomfortable, and I'll admit I took some pleasure in that. I was still pissed as hell that he had physically tried to stop me from going grocery shopping.

When the waitress came by, I put in an order for two beers. See? I could be nice when I wanted to be.

“Is this one of your usual haunts?”

I shrugged nonchalantly. “I'm not much of a drinker, but I've been here a few times.” I gestured to the empty red fry basket on the table. “They have great hot wings here.”

“I'm not real sure I've ever had those before.”

I wiggled my eyebrows. “It’ll change your religion.”

Lucas chuckled but grew silent when the waitress brought us our beers.

I watched him as his brows drew together and his gaze seemed intent on his beer bottle even though he hadn’t taken a single sip of it. He seemed nervous for some reason, which was at odds with the confident man I knew.

“Mr. Kincaid?”

“Used to hate it when you called me that,” Lucas said before lifting his eyes to look at me. “I felt so insulted that we were engaged and you wouldn’t call me by my first name. I was positive it was your way of being a brat to me.”

He wasn’t wrong.

“And then we had that night at your loft and you called me Lucas.” Lucas drew in a shuddering breath. “For some reason, it meant all that much more when you did it that time. I didn’t even care the next time you called me Mr. Kincaid because I knew the only time you called me Lucas was when we were alone together.”

Okay, so he was going straight for the hard stuff.

I folded one arm on the table and leaned forward so our conversation would only be between the two of us and not the whole bar. “It didn’t start out that way, I promise. In the beginning, I was just trying to mind my manners as my grandmother would say, and then you—”

“Pissed you off?”

I snorted. “Pretty much.”

“I’m not sure that is ever going to change, Kyue. We seem pretty volatile together. Kind of like water and Greek fire.”

I swallowed tightly before asking, “Do you think we’re too volatile together? Should we call off the engagement?”

Lucas took a long sip of his beer before replying to my question. “No, but we need to learn to deal with each other, even if that means you put me on the floor again.”

I grinned. “Bet that surprised the shit out of you.”

Luckily, Lucas grinned back, amusement dancing in his steely blue eyes. “Yes and no. Yes, I was surprised that I ended up on the floor, but no because it was you doing it. You seem pretty good at putting me in my place.”

As much as I enjoyed joking around with Lucas, we did have serious stuff to discuss. I just wasn’t sure this was the place to do it. “Do we need to take this conversation somewhere else?”

“No, not yet. If we took it back to my place, I’d probably fuck it up again and end up back on the floor and if we took it to your place, you’d end up on the floor. If we stay here, we both remain conscious and fully clothed.”

I had the sudden urge to go to my loft.

“We need to find a middle ground, Kyue. We’re going to be married in two days time. Now, I’ll be the first to admit that when we met up two weeks ago, that didn’t mean a whole lot to me. I felt like this was just another business merger.”

My throat felt like it swelled closed from the wave of pain that caused me and I had to clear it more than once before I could ask, “What changed?”

“You did.” The smirk that covered Lucas’s face surprised me because it seemed amused and self-reflecting at the same time. “You made me see you as a person and not a business deal. I couldn’t ignore you. You wouldn’t let me.”

You’re damn right, I wouldn’t.

“So, how do we find that middle ground?” I asked.

“I’d really like you to consider moving into the mansion.”

“Mr. Kincaid—”

Lucas held up his hand to stop me. “Please, let me finish.”

I grimaced, but nodded. “Go ahead.”

“As my friends have pointed out to me, in the business world, I am a shark. I go in for the kill with razor sharp teeth and I always get what I want. However, when it comes to the real world where people like you live, I’m a guppy. I have no experience with it. I’ve never even been to a grocery store. Everything is done for me. Pretty much the only thing I do on my own is wipe my own ass.”

Okay, that was kind of sad...and gross.

“You know the world I live in, you came from there, but you also know how to live in the real world.”

“What’s all of this have to do with me moving into the mansion?”

“Three things.” Lucas held up one finger. “One, I think it’s important that we live together and I’m not sure we’d both fit you your loft.” He held up a second finger. “Two, I employ a lot of people. I can’t just shut down the mansion and fire them

all. Some of them, like Oliver, have been with my family for years. I won't do that to them."

Ugh... "And the third thing?"

"Do you really want to drop me cold into the real world without any advance training?"

I tried to picture that and couldn't. Well, I could, but every scenario ended up with Lucas dead or dying.

I took a long sip of my beer as I regarded Lucas across the table. "So, what you're basically saying is that I will be keeping people employed and saving your life if I move into the mansion?"

"Pretty much."

I wasn't sure I could outright refuse even if I wanted to, and I wasn't so sure I wanted to. I loved my loft, but spending more quality time with Lucas seemed important, too.

"I refuse to be called master."

Lucas lifted an eyebrow. "Done."

"I still get to joke around with Oliver."

That one made him frown. "Oliver really makes jokes?"

"Oh yeah." I snickered. "He calls you Satan."

Lucas's eyebrows lowered evenly over his eyes.

"My bedroom is—"

"Our bedroom."

I swallowed tightly. "Our bedroom is off limits to all staff except for cleaning or if we call them in. I do not want a revolving bedroom door with servants coming in day and

night, and there has to be a clear time when they come in to clean. I do not want someone walking in on me while I'm naked."

Lucas's jaw clenched. "Done."

"You don't like that stipulation?"

"Let's just say I don't like the idea of anyone seeing you naked besides me."

I tried to keep my smile to myself, but knew I had failed when Lucas rolled his eyes. "Same goes for you. There are two people in this marriage. You and me. If you bring someone else into it, we will no longer be married."

"It's in the prenup, remember?"

"That's a piece paper, Mr. Kincaid. I want your verbal promise. I trust that more." I knew Lucas wouldn't lie to me, not about something this important. He might threaten me, he might try and bribe me, but he wouldn't lie to me.

Lucas sat up straighter and then looked me right in the eyes. "You have my promise, Kyue. There will only be me and you in this marriage."

"There is one last thing, Mr. Kincaid."

"And that would be?"

"I need a large room that will be only mine, preferably somewhere with good light. It needs to have access to a bathroom with a shower. No one is to enter it under any circumstances, not even you, and it will be locked at all times."

“Is this for working on your prototype? Because we have plenty of garage space for that.”

“No.”

Lucas sat there and stared at me as if he expected me to tell him why I needed this space, but I wasn't ready for that quite yet. But maybe it was time to work in that direction.

“What time is the wedding?”

“Uh...” Lucas pulled out his phone and looked down at it. “One o'clock.”

“Do you have plans afterwards?”

“I thought we'd have dinner together.”

“At home or somewhere else?”

Lucas seemed surprised by the question. “I was going to take you out.”

“How about I take you out?” I had the perfect place in mind, and we'd already be dressed for it. “It's just your kind of place. Tuxedo required.”

Lucas cocked his head, a deep frown on his face. “You hate those kinds of places.”

Oh, he was starting to get to know me already.

“It is true that this place is not my usual haunt,” I said, “but this is a special occasion, so I can suffer through it.”

“You don't have to, Kyue. That's what I'm trying to tell you. If you want to wear casual clothes, then do it. I'm not going to force you to conform to my lifestyle. Although, if you

wanted to wear that white suit again, I wouldn't argue with you."

Lucas winked at me. He actually winked at me.

Hmm. Looks like I needed to go tuxedo shopping after all. I needed a white tuxedo.

"I won't give up my work."

"Neither will I," Lucas replied.

"I would like us to have dinner as often as possible, without your phone in the room." God, I hated that damn phone. Pretty sure it was my archrival. "I also don't want the phone in the bedroom. You can have it anywhere else in the house, but the moment you step into that bedroom, you are officially off work."

Lucas winced. "This is about me leaving the loft, isn't it?"

It was.

I reached across the table and grabbed one of Lucas's hands, holding it with both of mine. I gently stroked my thumbs over the top of his hand. "Picture this in your head, Mr. Kincaid. You've just spent a wonderful night with the man you're supposed to marry, the man you are supposed to spend the rest of your life with."

Lucas swallowed hard and squirmed in his seat.

"You wake up with fantasies of trying it all over again, and you reach for your lover, but you are alone. No phone call, no note, no hundred-dollar bill on the dresser."

Lucas's eyebrows snapped together. "Hundred-dollar bill?"

I dropped Lucas's hand and sat back in my bench seat, crossing my arms over my chest. "Well, that's the going rate for a whore, Mr. Kincaid, and that's how you made me feel."

"Fuck." Lucas buried his face in his hands. "I didn't mean to make you feel that way, Kyue. I swear it."

"And I believe you, but that doesn't negate that that is the way you made me feel by leaving me there all alone after our first night together. You didn't even leave a note."

"Because I was coming right back."

I chuckled before taking a sip of my beer and then asking, "How'd that work out for you?"

Lucas lifted his head and stared across at me. "Actually, not too bad." He gestured to the casual clothes he wore. "I got a new wardrobe out of it that apparently my fiancé finds sexy."

Oh, I did.

Chapter Eighteen

~ Kyue ~

“It’s very sexy.”

I slowly panned to the woman that suddenly appeared beside our table, speaking in a sultry voice

“Can I help you?” I asked.

She winked at me. “You can buy me and my friend a drink.”

Oh look, she had a buddy.

“No.” The answer was that simple. “Now, if you don’t mind, I am having a private conversation with my fiancé.”

“You’re gay?”

My eyes narrowed and I quickly scanned our immediate surroundings. She had said that just a little too loud. This bar was pretty easy going, but there were always jerks out there looking to smash someone’s face in. A gay man would be the perfect target.

“Where is Foyt, Mr. Kincaid?”

“With the car,” Lucas replied. “Why?”

“Call him.” I pinned Lucas with my eyes. “Now.”

Lucas pulled out his cell phone and dialed without asking any further questions. I liked that.

I smiled as politely as I could considering I was pretty sure we were about to have our asses handed to us. “If you’ll excuse us, ladies?”

I used that term very loosely.

I stood up and slid between the two women and the table, keeping the table to my back and the room in front of me. I wanted to make sure I saw any threat coming toward us.

When I saw three men in the corner of the room, staring in our direction as they talked amongst themselves, I knew I had found the boneheads that were going to cause problems. The rest of the patrons didn’t seem to be paying attention.

This was not going to end well.

I turned and held out the bottle in my hand. “Hold my beer.”

Lucas blinked at me, but took my beer bottle. I hoped Foyt got here soon. I was going to be too busy to keep an eye on Lucas. Didn’t mean I wasn’t going to stand between him and danger.

I watched carefully as the three burly men approached our table, assessing their fighting capabilities. I had no idea where the two women had run off to.

I didn’t care.

Meathead number one had brown hair and a mustache that had seen better days. Meathead number two was bald and covered in tattoos, and meathead number three had a really bad goatee and a dirty blond mullet.

Where did they find these guys?

“Can I help you, gentlemen?” I asked.

“We don’t want your kind around here,” meathead number two snarled.

Must be the dumbass squad ringleader.

“My apologies, sir. What kind would you like?”

The mustache idiot started laughing and pointing. “He called you sir.”

“He probably wants to suck your dick, Bob. That’s what girly boys like him do.”

And now we have a hate crime.

“Gentlemen,” I said in a rather loud tone, “neither I nor my companion has said a word to you until walked over to us. We have not looked at you, spoken to you, or gestured to you in any manner. Is there a reason you are harassing us?”

It was as if someone had unplugged the entire room.

There was dead silence.

“You think you’re pretty fancy, don’t you?” Baldy asked in a scathing tone. He sneered as he glanced at Lucas. “You and your little pretty boy here.”

I smirked as I glanced over my shoulder. “Hear that, Mr. Kincaid? You’re a pretty boy.”

Lucas’s frown was deep. “Personally, I’ve always considered myself more of a boy toy.”

My smirk grew into a wide grin at his clever remark. “Very good, Mr. Kincaid.”

Lucas winked.

I reached out and patted his hand. “Not to worry, Mr. Kincaid, you can be my boy toy.”

Lucas shrugged as if it didn’t matter to him. “Kind of already am.”

I would have to agree.

“Hey! We’re still talking here. Don’t ignore us.”

I huffed as I turned back to the three men. I plastered a gigantic plastic smile on my face. “My apologies again. That was rather rude of me, wasn’t it?”

“What’s he talking about, Bob?” Mullet guy asked.

“Shut up, Stan.”

So, we had Stan and Bob so far. Wonder who the other idiot was?

There was one rule my martial arts instructor had drilled into my head. Never start a fight, but always finish it. If I could get these guys to go away, even with a few words tossed back and forth, there would be no fight. But if a fight started, I would finish it.

“I’m politely asking that you go away and leave us alone.” Had to try first even if I was pretty sure which way this evening was going to go. “My fiancé and I would like to finish our conversation. We have no argument with you.”

“Well, I’ve got one with you,” Bob snarled. “I don’t want to see that shit.”

I squinted at the man. “You don’t want to see us sitting here drinking beer?” I glanced around the room of avid

watchers. “What about all these other people drinking beer? Are you going to harass them, too?”

“We don’t want to see all that kissing and touching and shit.”

Wasn’t like I wanted to show it to them.

“We haven’t kissed once,” I replied, “but we could if you don’t understand the difference.”

“I’m in,” Lucas called out from behind me.

“I just told you we don’t want to see that fucking shit!”

I was about out of patience with these fuck heads. “Then don’t look.”

I turned to Lucas to suggest we get out of there and go somewhere more peaceful, but my arm was grabbed. When I swung back around, my face met with a fist.

Lucas’s arms caught me when I crashed back into the table. “Jesus, Kyue, are you okay?”

I wiped at the corner of my mouth where it ached the most and then stared down at the red splotch of blood on my hand. Okay, so the fight had started, but I hadn’t been the one to start it.

I would be the one to end it.

“Stay here,” I warned Lucas before kicking Stan in the side of the knee as hard as I could. I heard the crack before the man screamed and fell to the floor, clutching at his leg.

Bob and the other bone head rushed me, fists flying. I blocked one fist aimed at my face because I intended to only

be hit once, and I used the opening Bob had given me when he raised his arm to drive my fist into his gut.

The other idiot was easy enough to take out thanks to Bob. Using him as a stationary springboard, I swung my leg around and nailed the guy in the side of the head. He dropped and didn't move.

That left Bob.

I grabbed his arm and twisted up behind his back and then kicked out with my leg again, sweeping his feet out from under him. As soon as he hit the floor, I twisted his arm up just enough to hear him cry out and then leaned in close.

“The thing you failed to understand here, Bob, is that gay does not mean weak or stupid. You brought the fight to me. I simply finished it. Come at me or my fiancé again, and you won't walk away from it.”

Just for good measure, I grabbed a handful of his hair and then slammed his head into the floor. When I turned around, Lucas was right there in my face.

“What the hell were you thinking?” he shouted. “You can't put yourself in danger like that.”

My eyes narrowed from one breath to the next. “I was trying to protect you, jackass.”

“I don't need your protection, Kyue. I am perfectly capable of protecting myself.”

“Oh, get over yourself, Mr. Kincaid. Despite the red underwear, you are not superman. Now, if you had tights and a cape that might be different.”

Lucas growled as he grabbed me and hauled me into his arms. “You drive me insane!”

“Good.” If I was driving him insane, at least he felt something for me instead of indifference.

“You’re bleeding,” Lucas said in a much calmer, softer tone. He pulled a white cloth handkerchief out of his pocket and dabbed at the corner of my mouth. “I would appreciate it in the future if you refrained from bleeding, Kyue.”

“I make no promises, Mr. Kincaid.”

There were just too many boneheads out there in the world and I planned to protect Lucas from all of them.

He really was a guppy.

“Oh hey, Foyt is here with the police.”

Yay.

“Let me handle it.”

I blinked up at Lucas.

“Kyue, you are good at what you do. I am good at what I do, and what I do is handle other people, authority figures included.” Lucas leaned in close. “And I do it very, very well.”

I stood up on my tiptoes so that my lips were close to Lucas’s ear and whispered, “That’s because you are all controlling freaks of nature.”

Lucas’s deep rumble of laughter was such a shock to me, I settled back on my feet and stared up at him. Lucas grabbed the end of my chin with his fingers and then leaned in to kiss me.

“That’s true, but I’m your freak of nature.”

That was also true.

Man, if someone had told me a month ago I would be standing there letting someone else take care of my business, I would have smacked them silly.

Now look at me.

Lucas slid his arm around my back and stepped close to me as Foyt and a couple of police officers approached us. I should have felt as if he was towering over me, but I felt strangely protected by him.

It was weird.

“Sir,” Foyt called out. “I called the authorities when you said there was a fight. Do I need to call an ambulance?”

“Kyue is fine, Foyt, but you might want to call one for these idiots. Kyue didn’t take it too well when they punched him.”

The officer that stopped in front of us looked at me, then the three guys groaning and moaning on the floor, and then back at me. “You did this...uh...sir?”

I shrugged.

“If you check the CCTV footage,” Lucas said. “You will see that they came up to us and started harassing us. Kyue asked very politely several times for them to leave us alone. We even tried to leave. When one of them punched Kyue, he merely defended himself.” Lucas gestured to the onlookers. “We have a lot of witnesses.”

“Except them.” I pointed to the two women trying to sneak out of the door. “They were in on whatever this was.”

The officer quickly gestured to another one to grab the two girls before they got away and to stick them in the back of a squad car.

“I want whatever charges you make against them accompanied by a hate crime charge, officer. They seemed to be offended by the fact that Kyue and I are both men.”

“Two men getting harassed for drinking in a bar isn’t a hate crime, sir.”

“Kyue is my fiancé and these three men knew that before they walked up to our table. With as loud as those two girls shouted it, the entire bar knew.”

“That’s different.”

I barely suppressed a snicker.

“I’ll need to take a statement from both of you after we get these guys treated and taken care of.”

“Thank you, officer,” Lucas replied.

I kept my mouth shut.

By the time we made it outside, I was ready for this whole scene to be over with. I was tired, grumpy, and I wanted to go home and take a shower.

I might even take Lucas with me.

“I don’t suppose I can talk you into taking me home with you tonight.” A burst of laughter shot past my lips when Lucas batted his eyelashes at me. “I promise not to leave without letting you know beforehand.”

I smiled as I glanced at Lucas. “I was just thinking about that.”

Lucas’s eyes widened, but there was no mistaking the grin on his face. “You mean we found something we both agree on?”

My eyelids half lowered as a wave of lust swept through me. I licked my lips as I peered up at him. “Looks like it, Mr. Kincaid.”

I could bat my eyelashes, too.

Lucas growled and his eyes flashed with arousal as he stepped right into my personal bubble space and pressed me into the car behind me.

I jerked back when I heard an almost silent dull thud sound and something wet splattered all over my face.

Lucas’s brow flickered with unease and he raised his hand to the side of my face, trailing a finger along my jaw line. “Kyue—”

“Mr. Kincaid!” I shouted when he went down. I tried to catch him, which sent both of us sprawling on the concrete street. A shaft of moonlight splashed over Lucas. I gasped as horror ripped away any semblance of calmness I had been feeling.

There was so much blood.

Chapter Nineteen

~ Kyue ~

I couldn't get the blood off.

I'd scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed, and I still couldn't get all of the blood off my hands. I wasn't sure I ever would.

I'd certainly never forget how it got there.

I glanced up to look at the double doors they had rushed Lucas through hours ago. Emergency surgery. That was all I had been told. They were taking him in for emergency surgery. At this point, I didn't even know anything.

No one would talk to me.

We were engaged, but that didn't give me any rights. I was not yet considered his next of kin. That was his parents, and they were flying in right now from the other side of the country.

I was still trying to figure out what happened. One moment Lucas and I were discussing him coming home with me, and the next his blood was splattered all over the front of me.

Bullet to the upper chest, they said, but what did that even mean? Had the bullet hit his heart? His lungs?

Was he going to die?

“Master Kyue?”

I blinked a couple of times and then glanced up. “Oh, Oliver.”

“I brought you a change of clothes, sir.”

“Oh, um...” I grimaced as I glanced down at my blood splattered T-shirt.

Lucas’s blood.

“There’s a bathroom right over here if you want to freshen up a bit.”

“No, I can’t leave.” I wouldn’t leave. Not until someone told me if my fiancé was alive or dead. “I have to wait for Lucas.”

“I’ll wait for him, Kyue. I promise.”

“Jake?”

When had he gotten here?

“I’ll stay right here until you get back, and if the doctor comes, I’ll come let you know.” Jake gestured to my shirt. “You’re not going to want to have all that dried blood on you when Lucas wakes up. He’ll be very upset.”

He would.

“You promise you’ll wait?”

Jake nodded. “I promise.”

I wasn’t sure if I could believe him, but he was one of Lucas’s closest friends.

“Come with me, Master Kyue,” Oliver said. “Let me help you.”

I was reluctant to leave the waiting room, but Jake was right. Lucas would freak the fuck out if he saw me covered in blood. Besides, I wasn't real thrilled with the idea of having his blood all over me.

I was still trying to process that Lucas had been shot, and I just couldn't. Who would want to do that to him? Lucas could be fierce in the boardroom, but he wasn't a monster.

He didn't deserve this.

Oliver led me to a bathroom with its own shower. He set a small suitcase on the counter and unzipped it before pulling out a change of clothes, two thick fuzzy towels, my favorite brand of shampoo and body wash, a small shaving kit, and a toothbrush and toothpaste.

I suddenly understood how someone could get used to having servants around. I wanted to kiss the man's feet and give him a raise. "Thank you, Oliver."

"Just going for that next miracle, sir."

"I think you may have gotten it this time around."

I started taking my boots off and then my bloody T-shirt while Oliver set everything up in the shower stall. He laid the shaving kit and other toiletries on the counter.

He even had a bag for my dirty clothes.

"I'm afraid, sir, that the police are going to need these."

I was kind of surprised they hadn't come to collect them already. "Just hold onto the boots. They can have the rest."

"I'll see what I can do, sir."

I stepped into the shower and pulled the curtain closed. For such a small bathroom, it had a surprisingly large shower stall.

As much as I wanted to stand there under the hot water, I washed up in record time. Getting back to the waiting room was much more important. I just wanted to get the blood and grunge off, get dressed, and go.

Oliver was waiting for me when I stepped out of the shower stall. He handed me my boots and took the towels from me to put them back in the suitcase before collecting my shampoo and body wash.

The man was very efficient.

I wasn't going to worry about shaving simply because I only had to do it every few days, and today was not going to be that day.

I did brush my teeth.

Once I was all ready to go, I reached out and placed my hand on Oliver's arm. "I want you to know that I really appreciate this, Oliver. I wouldn't have thought to bring all of this stuff or to even have someone bring it to me."

There was a small smile on Oliver's usually somber face when he looked at me. "I've been with Master Kincaid for many years, sir, since before he was a teenager. I would do anything for him, and right now that means taking care of you when he can't. Master Lucas would expect it of me, and I will not let him down."

I cocked my head slightly and regarded the usually reserved man. "You really respect him, don't you?"

Oliver's smile widened. "He's a good man."

He was, and I was just starting to figure that out. Still...
“He’s a pain in the ass.”

Oliver chuckled. “That, too, sir.”

Glad we were on the same page.

“I need to get back.”

“Of course, sir. I’ll just gather these things up for you.”

“Thank you, Oliver.”

When I opened the door to the bathroom, I nearly jumped out of my skin. “Can I help you, officer?”

Where the hell had he come from and why did he need to stand directly in front of the door?

“I’m here for the evidence, sir.”

I frowned. “Evidence?”

“Your clothes, sir,” Oliver said from behind me.

Oh, right.

I stepped out into the hallway so Oliver could hand the bag with the bloody clothes to the officer. “Do I need to sign something or anything?”

“I’ll take care of it, Master Kyue,” Oliver stated. “You can go back to the waiting room.”

“Miracle number two, Oliver,” I said as I turned and started to hurry down the corridor. If he said he’d handle it, I’d let him handle it.

Jake was sitting with another man when I walked back into the waiting room. He looked vaguely familiar, but I couldn’t quite place him. He wasn’t important.

“Anything?”

Jake shook his head before gesturing to the man sitting next to him. “This is Miles Cranston. Do you remember him?”

Honestly?

I shook my head. “Not really.”

“Miles is an attorney at my company,” Jake explained. “Until Lucas regains consciousness, Miles will be working as your attorney.”

My eyebrows climbed right up my face. “Do I need an attorney?”

“For now, we think it is important that you have someone in your corner,” Miles started. “While you are not a suspect in Lucas’s shooting, the police can get a bit aggressive when they are trying to solve a high-profile shooting like this. I’m here to make sure that doesn’t happen.”

I didn’t want to think about all of that right now.

“Is there a way to get an update on Lucas’s condition before his parents arrive? They’re flying in from Texas and that’ll take hours. I’d kind of like to know if he’s alive or dead before then.”

Miles blinked at me before slowly glancing at his friend.

“No one has spoken to you, Kyue?” Jake asked as he got to his feet.

“Not since they took Lucas away for surgery.”

That had been like four hours ago.

I was going out of my mind.

“You’re his fiancé.”

“That doesn’t seem to matter,” I replied. “Until we are legally married, I am not considered his next of kin.”

“Bullshit,” Miles snapped out as he too stood. “I filed all of the paperwork myself.”

I narrowed my eyes. “I don’t think a prenuptial agreement will help me in this case.”

“Lucas made you his next of kin. He signed all the legal paperwork to give you his complete power-of-attorney in all matters, business and personal.”

“He did what?” I slapped a hand over my mouth when I realized I had shouted. I drew in a breath to try and calm myself and then tried again. “Why would he do that?”

“You are to be married.”

“Yes, in two days.”

“One,” Jake corrected. “It’s after midnight. Your wedding is tomorrow.”

I groaned as I rubbed both hands over my face and then dropped them to my hips. “We’ll have to cancel it.”

“You want to cancel your wedding?” Jake asked.

“No, I want my fiancé to be conscious when we get married. One without a bullet hole would be even nicer, but that’s not going to happen.”

“Let’s wait to hear what the doctor says before making any decisions.”

Fine, whatever. The wedding was not my top concern right now.

“So, if I’m considered Lucas’s next of kin and I have power-of-attorney, that means they have to speak with me, right?”

“That is correct,” Miles said.

“Foyt.” If I was the next of kin for Lucas and I had a power-of-attorney, I was going to use it.

“Sir?”

“Find someone to give me an update on Lucas. Drag the hospital administrator out of bed if you have to. I need to know how Lucas is.”

“Right away, sir.”

I turned and looked at Miles. “Can you get an update from the police? I want to know what’s going on with the investigation. Have they figured out who shot him? Do they even have any suspects?” My heart skipped a beat as an image flashed through my mind. “I want to know who shot my fiancé.”

Once I knew that I could start figuring out how to end them.

Chapter Twenty

~ Lucas ~

“Kyue!”

“Sshhh,” someone whispered. “You’ll wake him.”

Huh?

I cracked my eyes open to find myself in a dimly lit room. There was a constant beeping sound, faint, but there, and I could hear rain pelting the window.

“How are you feeling, sir?”

“Oliver?” The older man’s face came into my view. “What are you doing here?”

And where exactly was here?

“You know that answer to that, sir.” He nodded his head to the other side of the bed. “I could not leave you two unattended, especially Master Kyue.”

“What?” I asked when his brow furrowed.

“Master Kyue has had to be very brave, sir. Maybe more so than he ever has before. He has held well to the Kincaid name, but I worry...” Oliver’s lips pressed thin for a moment, almost as if he was afraid to say what was on his mind.

“Worry about what?”

“I worry that it will all be too much for him, sir. Despite the strong man he shows the world, I suspect that he has a gentle soul, and I fear it may suffer through all of this.”

I glanced over at the man sleeping next to me. Kyue was sitting in a chair that he had pulled over to the side of the bed. His head rested on the mattress next to my leg, his hand resting on my thigh as if he needed the physical contact.

I knew how he felt.

I lifted my hand and threaded it through his long silky hair. “His grandfather said he had a hard outer shell and a soft gooey center.”

“I suspect he was right, sir.”

“He’ll be all right, Oliver,” I said as I stroked the top of Kyue’s head. “He is stronger than anyone I know, even me.”

“With all due respect, sir. I think you are wrong.”

I glanced at Oliver in surprise. He never argued with me, not even when he thought I was wrong. “What do you mean?”

“Master Kyue cares about you, sir. I suspect he cares very deeply. Watching you get shot right in front of his eyes...” Oliver shook his head, his lips turning down at the corners. “You didn’t see him, sir. He was like a zombie. He simply sat there in one of those waiting room chairs for hours, not moving, his clothes covered in blood. He didn’t scream and shout. He didn’t cry. He didn’t do anything except stare at the doors they had taken you through.”

Alarm flared through me, making my words sharper. “He wasn’t hurt, was he?”

“It was your blood, sir, not his. Master Kyue was not physically harmed.”

My relief almost made me pass out. The room even spun for a moment. “As long as he wasn’t hurt—”

“I did not say he wasn’t hurt, sir. I said he was not physically harmed.”

I kept my hand in Kyue’s hair, but huffed when I turned to glare at Oliver. “Say what you mean, Oliver.”

“I have been, sir. You are just not listening.”

There were times when I hated the cryptic way this man talked. Oliver had been with me longer than I remembered. He always talked in circles and usually I didn’t mind it.

This time, not so much.

“Just remember to treat him gently, sir. He has been required to be very strong over the last twelve hours. And while that may not seem like a lot of time in the grand scheme of things, it’s been a lifetime for him.”

I turned back to look at Kyue. His face was turned away from me, so I couldn’t see it, but the tension in his body even when he was asleep told me he was exhausted.

That would not do.

“Oliver, help me.” I scooted over to the far side of the bed I was in, gritting my teeth the entire time. I wasn’t in a massive amount of pain, but I wasn’t painless either. There was a very heavy ache in my upper chest.

I’d gladly accept the pain if it meant easing Kyue’s.

“What would you like me to do, sir?”

“I want Kyue up here with me.” I patted the mattress beside me. “He can’t be comfortable in that chair.”

Oliver walked around the far side of the bed. For a man of his age, he was in pretty good shape. I saw that when he effortlessly lifted Kyue up in his arms and laid him down on the bed next to me. A moment later, he was spreading a blanket over Kyue.

“Thank you, Oliver.” It took a little effort, but I lifted my arm and slid it under Kyue’s head, pulling him closer until it naturally slid onto my chest. I moved my hand back into his hair and gently stroked my fingers through the long strands, massaging his head.

The hospital was probably going to frown on him being in bed with me, but I didn’t care. I needed Kyue next to me just as much as he needed to be there.

“What did the doctors say?”

“It was a through and through, as they call it, sir.” Oliver pointed to a spot on his own shoulder. “It went through the meaty part of your upper shoulder, narrowly missing your collar bone. No vital organs were hit.”

“What is my recovery time?”

“Barring infection, you should be out of the hospital in two or three days. It may take up to eight weeks before you can resume normal activity.”

“No, that won’t do. The wedding is in two days and—”

“One day, sir. It is already seven o’clock in the morning. The wedding is tomorrow.”

Damn.

“Not to worry, sir. Master Kyue took care of it.”

A sliver of alarm raced through me. “Took care of it how?”

“After speaking with the doctor, Master Kyue had the wedding postponed until next weekend. You should be out of the hospital by then.”

I wasn’t thrilled that the wedding had been postponed, but at least Kyue hadn’t canceled it altogether.

I considered that a win.

“I should also mention that Mr. Cranston and Mr. D’Amato were here for most of the night, sir. Mr. Cranston has been acting as Master Kyue’s attorney during the investigation. I believe Mr. D’Amato was here for moral support. They left to go get some sleep about an hour ago, but they said they would be back in a few hours.”

“Why would Kyue need an attorney?”

“Mr. Cranston was concerned that the police might try and bully him, sir.”

I snorted. “Kyue can’t be bullied.”

“No, but he can be put in handcuffs if he tries to do to an officer of the law what he did to you.”

I winced at that not-so-subtle reprimand. “Know about that, do you?”

Oliver smirked. “I do, sir.”

Yeah, he would. I doubted there was much that occurred at the mansion that he didn’t know about.

Speaking of which... “Kyue has agreed to move into the mansion with me after the wedding, but he has a few stipulations.”

“Of course, sir.”

I quickly went over the list Kyue had given me, but Oliver didn't seem concerned until I got to the very end.

“A room with lots of light, sir?”

“That's what he said. It needs to be a big room with lots of light and a bathroom with a shower close by, and no one is to enter it under any circumstances, including me.”

Oliver frowned. “How odd.”

“Do we have a room like that?”

Oliver's frown deepened, his graying eyebrows pulling deep over his eyes. “I think it is less a room and more of a building, sir.”

“Explain.”

Because I had no idea what he was talking about.

“When you had the swimming pool moved closer to the house last year, you also built a new pool house. The old one is still there on the edge of the backyard. With some modifications, I believe it would fit Master Kyue's needs. It would also give him the privacy he seems to want.”

Hard to say since we didn't know why he wanted the space.

“See to it, Oliver. Hire whoever you need to get it ready for Kyue. I want him to be able to have access to it by the wedding.”

“Of course, sir. Should I consult Master Kyue about any of this?”

I glanced down at Kyue and then slowly shook my head.
“No, let’s let it be a surprise.”

Hopefully, a good one.

I glanced toward the door opened, tensing and fisting a handful of Kyue’s hair. When I saw my parents walk in, I quickly held a finger to my lips and then gestured to Kyue.

“Oliver said he’s been up all night,” I explained. “He only fell asleep about an hour ago. I want him to rest as much as possible.”

“Oh, the poor dear,” my mother said in a quiet, soft voice. “He probably needs it. He was running around busier than a bee in a beehive when we arrived.”

Oliver moved back to stand next to the door when my parents came farther into the room. They both stopped on my side of the bed. My mother reached up and brushed a hand over the side of my head.

“And how are you, son? Kyue gave us the doctor’s report, but how do you really feel?”

“A little achy right now, Mom, but okay.” I glanced down at the man sleeping in my arms and a fierce possessiveness overcame me. “As long as Kyue wasn’t hurt, I don’t care what happens to me.”

A mere second later, I was wincing and grabbing at a sore spot on my arm where my mom pinched me. “Mom!”

“I care,” she snapped, but still in a quiet voice. “I do not like getting phone calls in the middle of the night saying my son has been taken into emergency surgery because he’s been shot.”

I kind of didn't like getting shot, so that worked out well for the both of us.

"I didn't mean to get shot, Mom."

"Then how did it happen?"

"I don't exactly know." I glanced toward the man standing by the door. "Oliver, has anyone been in to talk to Kyue about what happened?"

"Yes, sir, however..."

I lifted my eyebrows. "However?"

"After speaking to the detective in charge, a Detective Waterston, I believe Master Kyue tried to teach him sign language, sir."

A small snort of laughter shot out of my mouth. "Yes, he's been teaching me, too."

Man, I would have loved to have been there for that one. Maybe I should get Oliver to record it for me next time. It was kind of nice to know I wasn't the only one that pissed Kyue off.

"The detective said he would be back this morning sometime after you were awake, sir. I do not believe he wants to meet with Master Kyue again."

Not if he was a smart man.

"Kyue explained to us that he postponed the wedding until next week," my father stated. "Under the circumstances, I think that is a good idea. You're going to need a little time to recover."

“I don’t like the idea of postponing the wedding, but I also don’t want to get married in a hospital room.”

That wasn’t strictly true.

I’d get married on the moon if it meant Kyue would be mine, but I didn’t want that memory for him. We were only going to get married once. I want Kyue to have fond memories of that day, not this day.

“Mom.” I glanced over at the woman that had given birth to me. “Can you get together with Kyue’s grandmother and Oliver and maybe plan something a little more...well, just more.”

Her eyebrows lifted. “More for what, son?”

“The wedding and reception.” The guilt I felt when I thought over what I had planned—or actually what I hadn’t planned—was huge. “The wedding doesn’t have to be big or anything, but I want it to be special for Kyue.”

He deserved it.

“I’d be happy to, son, but are you sure? I thought you were just going to do a ceremony in your study and then do dinner afterward. Isn’t that what you told me when I tried to get you to hold a real wedding?”

“Yes, but even I can learn from my mistakes, Mom.”

My mother chuckled as she patted my arm. She didn’t pinch it, so I took that as a win. “Took your father awhile to figure it all out, too.”

My father chuckled as he hugged my mother. “Nearly forty years of marriage and I’m still trying to figure it out.”

Really hoped it didn't take me that long.

Chapter Twenty-One

~ Kyue ~

The voices woke me. They weren't raised in anger, but there was definitely tension in the harshly spoken words.

I was surprised when I opened my eyes to find myself cuddled into Lucas's side, his arm around me and my head cushioned on his chest.

His chest.

"Lucas!" I sat straight up, my heart pounding with the same fear I'd felt last night. All the talking stopped just like that and every set of eyes in the room narrowed in on me.

"Hey, I'm right here and I'm okay." Lucas pulled me back down to his chest, his hand sliding into my hair. "I'm fine, baby. This is nothing more than a little scratch."

Scratch, my ass.

"You were shot, Mr. Kincaid." I lifted my head so he could see all the anger and fear I felt. "Let it happen again and I won't put you on the floor next time. I'll put you through a wall."

Lucas chuckled as he grabbed my hand and brought it to his lips. "I promise, no more bullet holes."

I wasn't sure that was a promise he could make.

"Has that insufferable—Oh, hey, Detective Waterston, you are here." I blinked innocently at the man. "Give out any

parking tickets today?”

Lucas buried his face in my hair, but I could still feel his body shaking against mine as he laughed silently.

“I was just explaining to Mr. Kincaid that the crime scene investigators are done with the initial investigation and the evidence points to you being the target, Mr. Panich.” The detective’s lips twisted in a grimace. “I can’t understand why anyone would want to shoot you.”

It didn’t take a rocket scientist to see he was being sarcastic.

But he did get my interest.

“What do you mean I was the target?”

“We believe that the shooter was aiming at you, but Mr. Kincaid stepped in the way just as the shooter pulled the trigger, shooting him instead of you.”

I sucked in a painful breath as I turned to look at Lucas. “You were shot because of me?”

“Hey.” Lucas lifted his head and cupped the side of my face, pulling me closer to his. “I was shot because there is some asshole out there with a gun. This is not on you, Kyue.”

Tears filled my eyes. “But—”

“No, you listen to me.” Lucas gave me a little shake. “You would never hurt me, not in a million years. This was done because some jackass out there thinks it’s funny to fuck with people’s lives. This is not on you.”

“You both need to understand how serious this is,” the detective said. “If Mr. Kincaid hadn’t stepped in front of you,

it would have been a head shot. Mr. Kincaid got shot in the chest because he's taller than you."

"Don't tell him that!" Lucas shouted.

"It's the truth, Mr. Kincaid. He needs to know that someone is targeting him. He needs to tell us who is after him."

"I don't know!"

I couldn't think of a single person that would want to try to kill me. I might not have that many friends, and I certainly had pissed off enough people in my lifetime, but shooting me?

That was a whole different ballgame.

"Can you think of anyone that would want to harm you?" Detective Waterston asked, but he was asking the same damn question over and over again, just in different ways.

I still didn't know.

"No, not really." I slumped against Lucas, needing his warmth and the comfort of his arms. "Pretty sure those three guys I put down at the bar don't like me. And there's Darwin, but he's more of a sexual harassment mouthpiece than a shooter."

The detective pulled out a small tablet of paper. "That would be Bruce Darwin?"

"He's a business acquaintance of mine," Lucas said. "When we met at the Illumination Club a few nights ago, he insulted Kyue and me, so Kyue made him apologize. There should be CCTV footage of it at the club if you need it. He

swung on Kyue first and Kyue was merely defending himself.”

“What about that blonde bimbo you had to deal with?” I asked. “You said she seemed to know you were engaged to a man.”

“Yes,” Lucas replied, “but I don’t think that incident had anything to do with this.”

I wasn’t so sure.

“Three separate incidents—”

“Four,” Lucas said. “You forgot that someone shot out your back tire at the racetrack.”

Actually, I’d hardly thought about it at all, which was weird. There had just been too much going on in my life between Lucas and the prototype. Life had been crazy.

Kind of still was.

“Okay, so four separate random incidents that may or may not be related?” That didn’t sound good. “So, who are they really targeting? Me or you or us?”

Lucas frowned. “Why would someone target both of us?”

Didn’t make sense to me either.

“I’ve seen the report of Darwin and the three men at the bar,” Detective Waterston said. “But I haven’t heard anything about you being shot at down at the racetrack.”

I really didn’t want to deal with this guy because he really rubbed me wrong, but this was for Lucas. I could suffer through anything if it meant keeping Lucas safe.

I quickly explained what had happened at the racetrack. I'm sure he could dig up the police report for anything I might have missed.

Maybe.

His skills as a human being, let alone a detective, were in debate.

“And the blonde you mentioned?”

That one was on Lucas because I didn't really know. It had really seemed like nothing, but as I listened to Lucas explain it to the detective, I began to wonder. This seemed like part harassment, part attempted murder.

The question was, why?

“Business tycoons don't usually have people going after them like this,” the detective said to Lucas before turning his gaze to me, “so that leaves me with you, Mr. Panich. Who is after you?”

“I know being a detective is—” The rest of my words were smothered under Lucas's hand.

I rolled my eyes.

“I can assure you, Detective, my fiancé does not lie,” Lucas said in a cold stern tone that I knew had to make most men shiver.

Not me. I just shivered.

There might have been a little lust involved.

“If Kyue says he doesn't know of anyone that would want to harm him,” Lucas continued as if he hadn't just felt me tremble against him. “Then he is telling the truth.”

What was the point of lying? I'd much rather tell someone to their face.

It was more fun that way.

I didn't know what to think when Lucas frowned and then turned to look at me, removing the hand from my mouth.

"Kyue, could this have anything to do with the contract with Kawasaki?"

Good question.

"I don't know. I mean, I don't think so. I didn't really discuss it with anyone except you, and I'm pretty sure you didn't get yourself shot for the money. You make more than I do."

And then some.

"What contract?" Detective Waterston asked.

"Kyue was just offered a ten-million dollar contract by Kawasaki Heavy Industries for one of his prototypes."

The detective's eyebrows lifted just a little. "Prototypes?"

"I design motorcycles, Detective, specifically for the racing circuit. Kawasaki is interested in a modification of one of my prototypes for their next big racing bike."

"Ten-million dollars you said?"

I nodded.

The detective wrote something on his pad of paper. "I've seen people commit murder over ten bucks. Ten-million dollars is more than enough to try and kill someone."

“But that doesn’t make sense, though. If I’m dead, there is no contract. It doesn’t make sense to kill me.”

“What happens to your prototypes if you die, Kyue?”

“Everything goes back to my grandparents. The racetrack, the prototypes, everything.”

Everything was a very broad term.

“Is there some reason someone wouldn’t want the contract to go through?” Detective Waterston asked.

My head snapped back as I frowned. “Who would care?”

I wasn’t inventing fire here, people.

“Does your prototype have any rivals?”

“Not really. I mean sure, there are always people trying to reinvent the wheel, but the bikes I design are pretty specific for the racing circuit. They aren’t meant for the street.”

“You might want to speak with Robert Tanaka at Kawasaki Heavy Industries,” Lucas said. “He’d probably know if they were looking at anyone else before they came to Kyue.”

“Robert Tanaka, you said?”

I pulled out my cell phone and flipped through my contacts until I found Mr. Tanaka’s phone number, and then I gave it to the detective. It felt as if he was really off base going in this direction, but I could be wrong.

I just didn’t think I was.

“Well.” The detective put his pen and pad away. “I’ll talk to Mr. Tanaka and see if there’s any issue there, but I have to be honest, this feels more personal than that. The two of you

need to be very careful and keep a watchful eye on your surroundings. It also might not be a bad idea to employ some bodyguards until we've caught whoever did this."

That was a fantastic idea.

I glanced at Lucas, tugging on his arm to gain his attention. "You should get a bodyguard, Mr. Kincaid."

"Should I get us both one?"

I snorted because that was funny. "Only if they can ride a motorcycle."

Lucas chuckled and patted my shoulder. "I'll see what I can do."

The detective was apparently done with the conversation because he set his business card down on a rolling stand and started for the door. "If you think of anything else, give me a call. I'll be in touch."

"Cheery guy," I said, but at least I waited until he was out of the room to say it.

"Careful, Kyue, that cheery guy can put you in handcuffs."

"I'm not worried about that. I can get out of a set of handcuffs in under two minutes, Mr. Kincaid." I winked at Lucas. "Want to try me?"

Lucas's eyebrows went so far up his forehead they nearly reached his hairline and then he let out a low chuckle. "Why am I not surprised you've been in handcuffs before?"

"I got a pair of fur-lined ones in the bottom drawer of my nightstand."

“Is there a key?” Lucas asked. “That seems like the important question to ask.”

“Maybe.” I frowned as I tried to remember where I had last seen the key. “Somewhere.”

Hell if I knew.

“I’ll have Foyt get us a new set...with two keys.”

I snickered as I leaned in Lucas. “Probably not a bad idea.”

I dropped my head onto his good shoulder and then looked down at the bandage covering the other side of his chest. Surprisingly, and especially considering all the blood I had seen, it wasn’t a big bandage.

I reached out and gently trailed the tip of my finger around the edge of the bandage while my heart climbed into my throat. “I never want to see something like that again, Mr. Kincaid.”

Lucas’s arm tightened around me. “I know, Kyue. I’m sorry you had to see it this time.”

“There was so much blood,” I whispered as my world cracked and started to crumble. The scene played over and over again in my head like some horrible nightmare on a continuous reel. “I couldn’t get it off. I scrubbed and I scrubbed and I scrubbed and I couldn’t get it off.”

“I’m sorry, baby, I’m so sorry.” Lucas’s hand pressed to the back of my head, his fingers clenching in my hair. “I’m okay now, though. You can see that, right? I’m right here, Kyue, and I’m okay.”

I didn't realize I had tears streaming down my face until I shook my head and they flew everywhere. "But you weren't okay and it's all my fault."

"I'm going to kill that fucking detective," Lucas snapped under his breath as he wrapped both arms around me and pulled me tight to his chest. "Kyue, this is not your fault."

"But it is." I was freaking out—which was not a normal occurrence for me I can assure you—but I couldn't seem to stop. All I could see was all that blood covering Lucas, me, the ground, the side of the car.

It was everywhere.

"I can't—" I swallowed hard as I glanced up at Lucas's handsome face, a face that was becoming more and more dear to me with every passing moment. "I've got to go."

I pushed myself out of Lucas's arms and rolled off the bed before he could stop me, taking several steps back.

"Kyue!"

More tears spilled down my face as I shook my head. "I can't do this."

"Baby, stop." Lucas said as he held his hand out to me. "You're having a panic attack. You just need to breathe."

But I couldn't. My heart was beating so fast it hurt to breathe. I had to get out of here. I needed air, and Lucas needed to be safe. That obviously wasn't going to happen if I was around.

"I'm sorry."

Chapter Twenty-Two

~ Lucas ~

“Kyue!”

Fuck a duck on a giant-sized cracker.

I jerked the IV out of my arm, uncaring of the clear liquid that began to dribble out of the needle tip or the dots of blood where I’d ripped it out. I grit my teeth as I pushed myself into a full sitting position and then swung my legs over the side of the bed.

I did have one brain cell left. I grabbed my phone and dialed my executive assistant before trying to get out of bed.

“Foyt, Kyue freaked out and did a runner. I need you to find him.”

“Of course, sir.”

“And have someone bring me some damn clothes.”

I had no idea where mine were.

“Sir, should you be—?”

“I’m going to find Kyue. He’s either gone home, back to his loft, or to the track.” Those were the only three places I knew of. If there were more, I was screwed. “Find him.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And have the damn car waiting downstairs for me.”

“Yes, sir.”

I hung up the phone with Foyt before dialing Jake. If anyone knew how to find someone, it was him.

“Hey, man, how you feeling?”

“Kyue had a panic attack and took off. I need to find him.”

“Shit!”

“He could be in danger, Jake. That detective that was here seems to think that Kyue was the target and not me. I just got in the way.” My hand trembled as I shoved it through my hair. “We have to find him before something happens.”

It was my greatest fear.

“We’ll find him, Lucas. I’ve already got Stella working on the cameras outside the hospital see we can see which way he was headed and what he was driving.”

“He came in the ambulance with me.”

“So, a taxi maybe.”

I just didn’t know.

“The only three places that I can think of that he would go are back to the mansion, to his loft, or to the racetrack.” His grandparents’ house was too far away for a man in the middle of a panic attack.

“Okay, I’m going to send Joe to his loft, Miles to the mansion, and I’ll check out the racetrack.”

“I’ll meet you there.”

“Uh, should you be leaving the hospital?”

“No, but that isn’t going to stop me.”

Nothing was going to stop me from finding Kyue.

Jake sighed. “Yeah, I didn’t think it would.”

He knew me well.

I glanced up when Oliver walked into the room. “I need to go, Jake. I’ll see you soon,” I said before hanging up.

Oliver set a change of clothes on the bed beside me. I was kind of surprised that he had brought me clothes Kyue would have picked out for me instead of a suit.

I didn’t argue. I just started pulling them on. It took me a little longer than I would have liked because I was moving slow. Thank goodness for button-up shirts. There was no way I’d get a T-shirt over my head.

“Sir.”

I glanced at Oliver.

His lips pressed so thin they turned white.

“If you’re going to tell me to stay here, don’t bother.”

“No, sir. I just...”

I was surprised at Oliver’s reluctance to say whatever was on his mind. While he didn’t usually argue with me, he was not above reprimanding if he thought it was warranted.

“Just spit it out, Oliver.”

Oliver opened his jacket and pulled a syringe out of his inside pocket. “Sir, I wouldn’t do this under normal circumstances, but with Master Kyue’s life being in danger...” The man’s lips thinned again for just a moment, and then he said, “This is a serum created by an old colleague of mine. It will alleviate any pain you may have and give you an extra

boost of energy, but it only lasts for a few hours and the side effects are...not pleasant.”

I lifted one eyebrow. “Define not pleasant.”

“Once it runs out, it’ll kick your ass and put you in bed for two days.”

I already knew I was going to need bed rest after this anyway, so... “Just give it to me.”

It was handy that we were already in a hospital. Oliver grabbed an alcohol swap from one of the drawers, rolled up my sleeve, wiped a spot clean, and then gave me the shot.

I hissed as the liquid started burning through my system. Pretty sure I knew why people needed a couple of days afterwards to rest. The serum burned through them like rocket fuel.

“What is in that thing?”

“You do not want to know, sir.”

Yeah, probably not.

I squinted at my butler when he recapped the syringe and stuck it back in his pocket instead of disposing of it. “How well do you know Stella Dumont?”

Oliver winked at me, but he didn’t say a word.

He didn’t have to.

While Oliver had been my butler for more years than I could remember, there were times when he was gone for long periods of time, sometimes even weeks on end. He never spoke of those times, and I never asked.

Maybe I should have.

“We should go, sir. The nurse will be in soon to check on you.”

Right.

I took a single step, and then another. I had been a bit woozy when I sat up on the bed, but now my head was fine. In fact, I hadn't felt this good in a long time. I felt as if I could run a marathon.

Why did that make my gut clench?

“Let's go, Oliver.”

We walked out of the hospital room as if we were simply visitors there to see a patient. Not fast and not slow. It was excruciating, but I didn't need the hassle of trying to deal with security or to explain to the hospital staff why I was skipping out without medical permission.

Jefferson was waiting with the car when we got outside. I had planned to jump into the front passenger seat, but Foyt was there. Oliver and I climbed into the back.

“Head to the racetrack,” I told Jefferson. “Jake is going to meet us there. Miles and Joe are going to check the mansion and the loft.”

Hopefully, someone would find Kyue.

* * * *

~ Kyue ~

I didn't realize where I had gone or even how I got there until I walked into the garage at the racetrack. My mind had gone numb with agony and heartbreak.

Anxiety balled up in my stomach with every passing second. Only by sheer force of will did I even continue to move until I reached my office.

Warning spasms of alert erupted within me. "Bobby, what are you doing in my office?"

Bobby snapped up like his pants were on fire. "Sorry, Boss, I was looking for a pen and a piece of paper so I could leave you a note."

Seemed like he had been on my computer when I entered the office, not hunting for a pen or a piece of paper.

"A note about what?"

"Oh, uh, that Tanaka guy called. He wanted to speak to you."

"Did he say about what?" I asked as I moved around to sit behind my desk.

"No, man, just left a message and hung up."

Hmm. Maybe Mr. Tanaka was upset that I had given his number to Detective Waterston. I'd have to give him a call and apologize.

"Hey, have you seen the schematics for the prototype?" Bobby asked. "I thought I'd get started on the retrofit a little early." He shrugged when I glanced at him again. "The wife and kids went to her mother's for a few days. I don't want to go home to that big empty house, you know?"

“Don’t worry about it right now. Go hang with your friends or something.” I really just wanted to be alone. “You could probably use a day off, huh?”

“It’s no problem, really, Boss.”

“Go, have fun. Drink one for me.” I waved Bobby away as I glanced at my computer screen.

Why was my file system open?

“Bobby, did you—” The rest of my words died on my lips when I glanced up and saw the gun Bobby was pointing at me. I swallowed, but my mouth had gone bone-dry.

Bobby gestured with the gun. “Bring up the schematics.”

“It was you?” I spat the words contemptuously.

“Yeah, it was me, now bring up the damn schematics.”

“No!” I shouted vehemently.

Bobby pulled the trigger, putting a round into the floor next to my chair and making me jump. “I got a lot of bullets in this thing, Boss. Don’t test me. Just bring up those fucking schematics.”

“Did you shoot Lucas?” My heart was hammering, my breathing ragged as I pulled the keyboard toward me and started typing away.

Bobby snorted. “It was supposed to be you, but that idiot stepped in the way just as I took the shot.”

My anger became a scalding fury. My hands trembled as I brought up the schematics for the prototype. I hit the record button on my computer at the same time, then minimized the

pop-up window. It wouldn't get video, but it damn sure would pick up audio.

“There.” I waved my hand to the screen. “The schematics just like you wanted.”

Bobby reached into his pocket and pulled out a yellow piece of paper. He slapped it on the desk beside me. “Send them to this email address.”

Fuck that.

I brought up my email program, but instead of sending the schematics to the email address Bobby had given me, I sent them to Lucas.

And then I deleted them from my computer.

“Schematics sent.” I turned to glare at Bobby. “Now what? Are you going to kill me?”

The hatred in the man's eyes was tangible, and shocking. “That was the plan all along, Boss.”

Gee, and here I thought the guy liked me.

“Why couldn't you just die on the track?” Bobby raged as he advanced on me. “You just had to go and fuck everything up, didn't you?”

“Those schematics wouldn't have been yours even if I had died on the track. Everything, every piece of paper, every motorcycle part, all of it goes to Lucas if I die.”

Yeah, yeah, I had said it went to my grandparents, and until I was married, it did. But I planned to get married just as soon as possible, and then it would all be Lucas's if anything happened to me.

“You are an employee, Bobby. You get a paycheck. That’s it.”

I was surprised when Bobby laughed. I hadn’t been expecting him to find my words funny.

I certainly didn’t.

“Oh, you’re right about that,” Bobby said. “A big fucking paycheck.”

A shadow of alarm touched my face. “What?”

“Your stupid little prototype is worth a lot of money. I’ve got the asking price up to five million dollars if I deliver the schematics before you sign that contract.”

“You won’t live to collect that money, and then what are your wife and kids going to do? Who is going to take care of them?”

“That bitch?” Bobby snorted out a laugh. “She took the kids and ran back to her mommy weeks ago, and I hope she stays gone. I don’t need her or those little brats. I’m going to be able to get any babe I want just as soon as I collect my paycheck.”

Clenching my teeth, I was furious. This man had worked with me, side by side, for over two years. I had thought he was a friend. To find out that not only does he mock my work, but he tried to kill me and Lucas for money?

“You’ll never see that payday, Bobby. I deleted the schematics from my system.”

“What?” Bobby roared as he grabbed the monitor and flipped it around. “What did you do to it? I watched you send

the email myself.”

“I sent it to my fiancé.”

Bobby’s expression was thunderous as he stared at the screen. “Get it back!”

“I can’t.”

“You have to. If I don’t deliver those schematics, they’ll never pay me.”

I wrapped my fingers around the edge of the keyboard. “Sucks to be you,” I said as I swung it at his head with all of might.

The keyboard broke, but I was expecting that. I was not expecting him to get off another shot before he dropped the gun. I swear I felt the heat of the bullet as it flew right past my ear.

Bobby bent over and grabbed the side of his head, but he didn’t go down, so I picked up the monitor and brought it down on his head just as hard as I could. When he dropped to the floor, I frantically searched the floor for the gun. It had to be here somewhere.

“Looking for this?”

I stiffened and then slowly turned. Bobby was still on the floor, but he was slowly getting to his feet.

And he had the gun.

Damn.

He also had a nice steady stream of blood running down his temple.

Wonder if I could hit him with anything else?

My eyes darted left and then right. There wasn't much in easy reach, but there was a chair. I kicked out at it as hard as I could and then dropped down, trying to avoid any more bullets that might fly in my direction.

When the chair hit Bobby, it tripped him up and he stumbled several steps, almost losing his balance.

I took that as an opportunity.

I placed both hands on my desk and used it to launch myself at the man. We went down in a pile of arms and legs, and a fair amount of bruising.

Before Bobby could bring the gun up, I grabbed the front of his shirt, jerked him up, and smashed my fist into his face. I did it again and again, just for good measure and because the man had pissed me off.

When I went to raise my fist up for a fourth time, someone grabbed me from behind. Still feeling the adrenaline rush and filled with fear, I swung around ready to take down whoever it was.

“Kyue!” Lucas held up both hands. “It’s me, baby. It’s just me.”

“Fuck.” I dove for the arms the man held out to me. “It was Bobby this whole time. He was trying to steal the prototype schematics. He’s the one that shot you.”

Wait.

My head snapped back. “How are you out of the hospital?”

“Long story and I’ll explain it later.” He gestured behind me. “We have bigger things to deal with right now.”

I turned and was relieved to see Jake taping Bobby’s hands behind his back using a roll of duct tape. It wasn’t like I kept handcuffs in my office.

Maybe I should.

I winced when I looked at my office. It was a mess, and my computer was pretty shot to shit as well. “I need another monitor and keyboard.”

Lucas looked at me like I was high or something. “We can get those later, Kyue.”

“No, you don’t understand.” My grin was pure evil. “I turned on my audio recorder and this idiot confessed to pretty much everything. I need to access my computer so I can get it into the hands of the police. I want Bobby to go away for a very, very long time. I think prison stripes would look good on him. Don’t you?”

When Lucas didn’t answer right away, I glanced back at him. He was looking a little pale there. “Mr. Kincaid?”

“I think the crash is coming.”

Say what?

I grabbed him and tried to hold him up when his legs suddenly buckled. “Mr. Kincaid!”

“I’m okay, I’m okay.”

He obviously wasn’t okay.

“Jake, something is wrong with Mr. Kincaid.”

After making sure Bobby was secure, Jake hurried over and then carefully helped me lower Lucas to the floor. Lucas was still conscious, so that was something, but he really wasn't looking good.

"I'm fine, really," Lucas said. "I think I just need to get back to the hospital."

Was he insane?

"You shouldn't have left the hospital in the first place."

"I had to, baby." Lucas grabbed for my hand and then brought it to his lips. "I had to find you."

Yeah, no guilt trip there.

"Once you heal, I'm putting your ass on the floor again."

Lucas grinned so he must not have taken that as much of a threat. "I expect nothing less from you, Kyue."

As long as we understood each other.

Chapter Twenty-Three

~ Lucas ~

After my little stunt leaving the hospital without permission three days ago, the nurses had been extra vigilant about checking on me. As much as I appreciated their dedication to their jobs, I wished they'd leave me the hell alone.

Ten minutes. That's all I needed. Twenty if I had lube and a condom. It felt like forever since I'd been able to truly hold Kyue in my arms.

Granted, in the grand scheme of things, a week wasn't that long, and I had only experienced a couple of times with him, but it had been enough for me to wish for more.

I so wanted more.

Now, I was finally going to get to go home. The doctor said there was no infection or lasting effects from my little trip out of the hospital and I was healing fine. We just needed my discharge paperwork.

When the door opened, I expected the nurse coming in to discharge me. I did not expect for Kyue to walk in a suit with his hair carefully tamed in a single braid down the back of his head.

“Did someone die?”

Kyue glared. “Don't even joke about that.”

“Why are you wearing a suit, Kyue.”

He hated suits.

He looked good in them, but he hated them.

Kyue seemed a little nervous as he stopped at the end of my bed and gripped the foot railing hard enough to make his knuckles turn white. “I need for us to make a stop on the way home.”

“Okay.” I wasn’t going to ask if we were attending a funeral.

“This is important to me, Mr. Kincaid.”

Okay, so we were being serious.

“Whatever you need, Kyue. You know that.”

“What I need is your promise that you will tell no one about this, not even your friends or my grandparents.”

Dead person was out. Funeral was out. Was he planning on killing someone?

“I promise.” I had no idea what I was promising, but if it was that important to Kyue, I’d do it in a heartbeat, even if it meant helping him hide a body.

“You’ve learned a lot about me in the last two weeks,” Kyue said. “This is my last secret.”

Okay, now I was really curious. And kind of excited. If Kyue was sharing his last secret with me, that meant he was finally coming to fully trust me.

“This is the place I wanted to take you the day we were supposed to get married.”

Oh. Now the suit made sense. He'd wanted us to be dressed up then, too.

"The wedding is this weekend. Do you want to wait until then?" As curious as I was, I wanted Kyue to be okay with sharing his secret.

"No, but thank you for asking." Kyue smiled as he walked around to one side of the bed. "I think the longer I wait, the more nervous I will get."

Geez, what did he need to show me?

"Was Miles helpful to you?" I asked to get the conversation onto something that wouldn't make Kyue so damn nervous.

"He was, thank you for asking Jake to lend him to me. It made the whole process of signing the contract with Kawasaki much easier."

"Are you going to be able to hire someone to take Bobby's place?"

Kyue sat down beside me as he nodded. "I've made a lot of friends and acquaintances working the track and being in races. I don't think I'll have any problem finding someone qualified to work in the shop."

"Well, if there's anything I can help with, just let me know."

Kyue beamed at me, and that was exactly why I made the offer. There still might be a bit of an upheaval in our lives due to what Bobby had done, but Kyue was smiling and happy and that was all I cared about.

Well, that and getting out of this damn hospital.

And then Detective Waterston walked in, making me think that wasn't going to happen any time soon.

"Detective." I reached over and grabbed Kyue's hand, giving it a squeeze and hoping he interpreted as "shut the hell up".

The man grimaced when he saw Kyue.

I was so proud.

"I heard you were being released today so I just wanted to come by and give you an update on the case."

"I appreciate that," I replied.

"Bobby Mercer has been arrested on three counts of attempted murder, three counts of attempted murder for hire, as well as company espionage for attempting to steal your bike diagrams. He's probably going to be going away for a very long time."

"What about those people that attacked us before the shooting?"

"That's where the counts for attempted murder for hire come in," the detective replied. "Mr. Mercer hired them to harass you into leaving so he could shoot you. I guess he wanted it to look like a bar fight gone bad or something."

"Does that mean you're going to hold the others?"

"We had to let the two women from the night of the shooting go. Turns out they knew nothing about the plot to kill you. The other woman, the blonde, however, was in on it. Turns out she's Mr. Mercer's cousin."

“That’s where I know her from,” Kyue exclaimed. “I knew she looked familiar. I met her at a barbecue Bobby hosted at his house once.”

“Mercer offered her a bunch of money if she’d agree to help him. She knew the deal and did it anyway, so yeah, we’re holding her as well as those idiots you beat up, Mr. Panich.”

“Did Bobby say why he did it?” I asked.

Kyue frowned at me. “We already know why he did it. The money.”

“It turns out that Mr. Mercer had quite the gambling addiction,” Detective Waterston explained. “That’s why his wife left him. He wouldn’t give it up and he racked up a very large debt with the local loan sharks. We suspect that is why he went to such desperate measures. He needed to pay off the loan sharks as well as get more money to gamble.”

“What a bonehead,” Kyue snorted. “He was a good worker and someone I considered a friend. If he had just come to me and ask to borrow the money, I would have given it to him.”

I was pretty sure that was what upset Kyue the most about all of this. Bobby had been his friend and his friend had betrayed him.

“I’m sure the district attorney will be in touch as some point, but he assures me that this is a pretty slam dunk case.” The detective reluctantly gave Kyue a nod of respect. “That recording you were able to make pretty much tied it up with a neat, nice little bow. Mr. Mercer can’t argue against it.”

I smiled as I squeezed Kyue’s hand. “Kyue is quick on his feet.”

In more ways than one.

“As to that, Mr. Panich, my captain wished me to pass a long a message to you.”

“Oh?”

The detective breathed deep. “Please refrain from beating up any more people if you can help it. We barely have enough manpower to cover our current cases. We don’t need you creating more.”

“I never start a fight, Detective Waterston,” Kyue replied. “But I will finish one if someone attacks me or tries to harm Mr. Kincaid.”

“I know, which is the only reason you are not behind bars right now. The CCTV footage clearly shows them throwing the first punch as well as you and Mr. Kincaid trying to leave before the fight even started. Still, this is a personal request from the captain, so I am required to pass it along.”

“You can tell your captain I’ll be too busy getting married to fight with anyone in the near future.”

The detective nodded and then left the room as if he was running from a fight. I chuckled as I watched the door close behind him. “I think you scare him.”

“Do I scare you, Mr. Kincaid?”

There was no real good way to answer that.

I wisely kept my mouth shut.

“Are you feeling okay?” Kyue asked. “Are you sure you should be leaving the hospital?”

“I’m a little sore, Kyue, but other than that I am fine. Doctor signed off on me leaving this morning.” I didn’t miss the deep shudder that shook Kyue when I leaned my head down closer to his ear. “I won’t be fucking you into the wall anytime soon, but I can still fuck you in a bed.”

And I’d really like to get to that sooner rather than later.

Kyue’s face tilted up to mine, his eyes narrowed. “Who says there’s going to be any fucking going on at all?”

“Me.” I nipped at Kyue’s earlobe. “I’m claiming fiancé rights. I’ll put it in the prenup if I have to.”

“I’ve already signed the prenup.”

Kyue was not going to win this argument.

“I’ll have an addendum added.”

“What? Must provide ass on tap?”

Yeah, I could see that going through the courts okay.

Not.

“How about...no alienation of affection?”

Kyue’s narrow-eyed glare became a squint. “Is that really a thing?”

Hell if I knew.

“Will it get me into your bed?”

Kyue sighed. “You could try asking.”

“Then I’m asking, Kyue. Can I come home and climb into your bed with you?” I lifted his hand and held it to my chest while grabbing his chin and turning his face up to mine. “Can I

hold you? Can I kiss you? Can I touch you? Can I love on you the way I've dreamed about?"

Kyue swallowed hard before whispering, "Okay."

I brought Kyue's hand to my lips. "Once I'm fully healed, the walls are back in. Understand?"

God, I loved it when Kyue cocked a haughty eyebrow at me. How did this man look that arrogant and conceited, and still make it look as sexy as hell?

Kyue stood up and then stepped over in-between my legs. With me sitting on the bed, we were almost eye level. I gulped, and all the blood in my body pooled in my groin when Kyue leaned in and brushed his nose along the underside of my jaw.

"Why not the floor, Mr. Kincaid?" His whisper was low and sultry and ran through me like a brush fire. "And then there's the countertops, the dining room table, my desk. There are so many flat surfaces at my loft. Why limit ourselves to just the walls?"

Okay, he won.

"Kyue," I moaned as I grabbed his hips and pulled him closer.

The only thing that saved me from total embarrassment at how quickly he turned me on was the hard cock pressing against mine through our dress pants.

"And each time is different, especially if you add in my toys, so you have to try them all out and often because the experience changes each time."

God, he had toys.

“I’m dying here, Kyue.” Pretty sure I was going to expire right there on the spot. Blood loss to the brain will do that to you.

“Ouch!” I cried out a moment later. I rubbed the sore spot on my arm. “Why did you hit me?”

Kyue pointed a finger right into my face. “No dying. I’ll put that in the prenup if I have to.”

I chuckled as I grabbed Kyue and pulled him to me. “Okay, baby, no dying.”

Kyue folded his fingers in and then held out his pinkie. “Pinkie promise.”

I looked down at his pinkie and then slowly raised my eyes to his. “You want me to pinkie promise not to die?”

“You can’t break a pinkie promise.”

“I thought we were going to put it in the prenup?”

Kyue’s eyes rolled. “A prenup is just a piece of paper, Mr. Kincaid. A pinkie promise is for life.”

News to me, but okay.

I hooked my pinkie around Kyue’s. “I pinkie promise to do everything I can not to die.” I wasn’t going to promise him I wouldn’t die, because life happened, but I could take precautions.

Kyue’s happy grin was all I needed to know that I had made the right decision. I was a little suspicious of the wink, though.

His voice had that sultry sound to it again when he said, “I pinkie promise to let you fuck me into a wall once you are all healed up.”

I liked pinkie promises.

Chapter Twenty-Four

~ Kyue ~

To say I was nervous was an understatement. I was nervous as hell. I don't think I had been this nervous when I was waiting to meet Lucas for the very first time.

This was a whole other level.

It was scary letting someone this deep inside my world. Lucas would be the only one. I didn't even share this part of myself with my grandparents, and I adored them.

When the car came to a stop in front of the place I wanted to show Lucas, I turned and grabbed his hand. "You promise to keep this secret from everyone?"

"I won't share this with anyone." Lucas held up his pinkie finger. "Pinkie promise."

I hooked my pinkie finger around his. "This is really important to me, Lucas, but it's equally important to me that nobody knows about it. I'm only showing you this because you've shown me that I can trust you. Don't break that trust. You won't get it back."

Lucas grew solemn. "Thank you for trusting me. I won't let you down."

That remained to be seen especially after he learned my secret.

"Come on." I opened the door and climbed out and then waited for Lucas to join me on the sidewalk. "I know you are

going to have questions, but please wait until we are alone to ask them.”

Lucas frowned, but nodded. “Okay.”

I slid my hands into my pockets and started walking slowly toward our destination. I didn’t want to get there too fast. I had a few things to explain to Lucas first.

“When I was in high school, I got a part time job that enabled me to put a little money away for a rainy-day fund, so to speak. My grandparents tried to give me an allowance, but I wanted something that belong to just me, something that I had earned through my hard work.”

“I know the feeling. I feel the same way about what I do.”

“I found something I was good at, very good. The problem I ran into was my age. No one would take me seriously because I was underage and then I met a man named Jude Thomas. With his help, I was able to do a lot.”

“And by a lot, you mean?”

“My current net worth is over ten million dollars and that was before I signed the contract with Kawasaki. I earned it all on my own, starting with the money I earned at that part time job.”

Lucas’s eyebrows lifted. “How?”

“Two ways actually. The first is the stock market. I have an uncanny ability to pick winning stocks. With Jude’s help, I’ve been playing the stock market since I was in high school. I went into the real estate market a few years ago. That too has been lucrative for me.”

“Seriphap Enterprises.”

I cocked an eyebrow. “You’ve heard of me?”

The blush that filled Lucas’s cheeks was cute. “After I learned about the racetrack, I had you investigated.”

“And what did you find?”

Lucas’s brow furrowed. “Not that much, actually.”

I chuckled as I leaned into Lucas. “I told you, it’s a secret.”

And, we were here.

I drew in a deep breath and then pulled the double doors open, walking inside. Lucas was right on my heels. “Ever been here before?”

“Yes, I have as a matter of fact. I’ve purchased a few art pieces from here.”

“I own this art gallery as well as seven others around the country. I am currently in talks with France, Japan, and Austria to open galleries there.”

Before I could say more or Lucas could ask any questions, I heard a voice call out from farther in the gallery.

“Mr. Panich, it’s good to see you.”

I smiled as I turned. “Good morning, Mr. Thomas. I wanted to bring my fiancé by and introduce him. Lucas Kincaid, this is Jude Thomas, my business manager. Jude, this is my fiancé, Lucas Kincaid of Kincaid Enterprises.”

Jude held out his hand. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, sir.”

“You as well,” Lucas replied as he shook Jude’s hand.

“The special exhibit you wanted set up is ready, Mr. Panich. I’ll be in my office if you need me.”

“Thank you, Jude.”

Lucas waited until Jude had walked away before leaning closer and whispering, “Special exhibit?”

“Remember I told you that there were two ways I made my money? Well, this is the second way, Mr. Kincaid.”

My stomach was one big anxious knot as I led Lucas to the back of the art gallery where the private viewing rooms were located. Once I pulled back the curtain on this secret, there would be no going back.

Lucas didn’t seem to realize what was going on until we stepped inside the private viewing room and I shut the door. His eyes slowly started to narrow as he gazed around at the statues displayed throughout the entire room. Granted, there were only about ten of them, but still, it was an impressive sight.

“These are all Anurak originals.”

“They are.”

“How do you have so many?” Lucas asked. “I have three and it was all I could do to get my hands on them. And I paid a pretty penny for them, too.”

I chuckled. “Thank you for that.”

Lucas glanced at me. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

I drew in a shaky breath, raised my head, and asked, “What do you think it means?”

I knew Lucas was a smart man and would figure it out eventually, but I was surprised at how long it took him. The furrow on his forehead deepened as he glanced around the viewing room again, his gaze seeming to touch on each statue.

“Why do you think I need that private space for, Mr. Kincaid?”

Lucas’s eyes snapped to me. “You—”

“I am Anurak.” I’d never said that to anyone before, and it felt a little weird that I was doing it now. “I love dabbling in the stock market and creating prototypes for motorcycles, but this is my true passion.”

“Why wouldn’t you want anyone to know, Kyue? You’re a great artist. Your statues routinely sell for over six figures. You should be proud of that fact.”

“I am, but I don’t want the publicity that comes with telling other people. I just want to create my art in peace and quiet. I don’t want to do art shows or gallery openings or go on talk circuits. I don’t want anyone hounding me to create something they want. I don’t want my picture taken and plastered all over magazines. I just want to create. That’s it.”

“That’s why you want the locked door.”

I nodded.

“So, why tell me all of this? You could have kept it a secret and I never would have known.”

“Because there should be no secrets between us. We’re getting married in a few days.” I swallowed hard to clear the lump forming in my throat. “For me, this is no longer a

marriage arranged by our parents. I'm marrying you because I want to, and that means not keeping secrets from you."

I didn't know what to think when Lucas stepped over in front of me and cupped his hand around the side of my face.

"I pinkie promise to keep your secret, Kyue. I only ask one thing."

Here it comes.

"Can you let me in to your world when you create?"

I blinked up at the man in surprise. "You want to watch me play with clay?"

"You said it's your passion. I want to see what makes you the happiest."

Tears sprouted to my eyes at Lucas's words. I was almost a hundred percent sure he would support me and accept my choices, but to actually hear it... "I think you make me the happiest, Mr. Kincaid."

* * * *

~ Lucas ~

"I think the Mendelssohn merger will go through without a hitch, Mr. Kincaid."

I knew it would. It had taken a few months, but the deal was finally done, the contracts were ready to be signed, and the project would begin in the next few weeks.

“After lunch, have your assistant send me the detailed notes we took of our meeting, and we’ll get something written up.”

“Foyt.”

“Doing it now, sir,” Foyt replied.

One of my business associates leaned. “Man, he really jumps when you say jump, doesn’t he?”

“Foyt is excellent at his job, which is why I employ him. In all of the time he has worked for me, he has never let me down.”

“And you pay me very well for that, sir,” Foyt added in.

I smiled before taking a drink of my wine. My relationship with the man had changed after Kyue came into my life. My relationship with all of my close employees had changed. Kyue had shown me that treating them as humans created a better working relationship between us.

Still hadn’t gotten used to being called Satan.

That wasn’t the only change Kyue had made in my life. While he had agreed to give up the loft, he hadn’t budged on the art studio.

I was the only other person in the world that had a key to the place, and I was allowed to come and go as I pleased as long as I remembered to lock the door to the studio afterward.

I never forgot.

“Fuck me!” one of the men I was having a business luncheon with gasped. “Would you look at him.”

I glanced up just in time to see a man sitting on a motorcycle on the street right in front of the restaurant patio. I felt a stirring in my body when the guy took off his helmet and tossed his head around. His long black hair twirled around him like silk flowing down a waterfall.

“That’s like bad boy on crack.”

Oh, he didn’t know the half of it.

Kyue was dressed in his usual low-slung jeans, black tank top, and black leather boots. His jacket was his red and white racing jacket. I suspected he wore it because it matched his helmet and his motorcycle.

I liked that he wore it because it kept his safe.

He also looked really good in it, especially when he swung his leg over the bike to climb off and started striding toward the patio like a man on a mission. There was an air of confidence in him that said he knew he was hot as fuck and the rest of us mere mortals just got to sit there and drool.

“Who the hell is that and how do I get his number?”

I smirked and waited.

“Oh man, he’s coming over here.”

When Kyue reached our table, his eyes briefly darted to the others sitting there eagerly waiting to be noticed by the sexy man, and then dismissed them as if they were unimportant, putting all of his attention on me.

I felt like a king when I saw the desire flaring to life in his black eyes.

Kyue reached into his jacket and pulled out a white envelope, holding it out to me. “Foyt called and said you forgot this when you went to work today. He said you needed it, and since I wanted to see you anyway, I thought I’d drop it off to you.”

“I do need it, thank you, Kyue.”

Kyue’s lush lips split into a grin. “You’re welcome, Mr. Kincaid.”

“You...know this man, Mr. Kincaid?”

Kyue’s eyes briefly flickered to the man that had asked that stupid question before coming back to me.

One dark eyebrow rose, challenging me.

“I do know him.” I chuckled as I reached for Kyue’s hand and brought it to my lips, pressing a kiss to the silver wedding ring on his finger. “Kyue is my husband.”

Kyue smirked at the numerous gasps of surprise and disappointment that went around the table and then leaned in to whisper in my ear, “Good answer...*Lucas*.”

~ The End ~

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The Marriage Contract

~ *Jai* ~

When I learned that my parents had sold me into marriage to pay off my sister's debts, I was in no way surprised. They'd taken everything else from me my entire life. Why not my freedom, too? But Jake D'Amato is unlike anyone I have ever met. He's sweet and kind, and seems to really care about me. When my family decides my sister would make him a better husband, I put my foot down. For once in my life, I was going to fight for what I wanted, and I wanted Jake.

~ *Jake* ~

I hadn't gotten to where I was in life without learning to fight for what I wanted, and the moment I discover the abuse Jai Thomas is suffering due to his family, I decided I wanted him. Getting him to agree was going to be the hard part. He wanted no part of my money, which was a switch for me, but it also intrigued me enough to consider making our marriage of convenience permanent. I just had to keep his family away from him long enough to convince him to take a chance on a total stranger. Easier said than done when his sister decides she wants to replace Jai, not for my affections, but for my bank account.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0BG8RDC1K>

STORY EXCERPT

I groaned when my phone rang and I saw the caller ID. I knew there was no point in ignoring it, no matter how much I might want to. I doubted I could stand another visit from my father so soon after the last one.

My bruises were still healing from the “reminder to respect my mother” beating he had given me two days ago.

Resigned, I picked up my cell phone and answered.
“Hello, Mom.”

“Jai.”

“I was just getting ready to jump in the shower. Was there something you wanted?”

If she asked for more money this month, she was out of luck. I’d spent the last of it buying a loaf of bread and I wouldn’t get paid for another week. I was really starting to loathe peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

“I wanted to talk to you about your sister.”

“Of course you do.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You never call to ask how I am doing, what I’ve been up to, or anything. It’s only about my sister. It’s always about my sister.”

I was really starting to get fed up with being a second-class citizen in my own family. I was also starting not to care that my father would come over and beat the shit out of me for it.

He seemed to come visit even when he was bored, so what did it matter?

“Really, Jai, is that any sort of attitude to have with me after everything your father and I have done for you?”

A burst of shocked laughter shot out of my mouth. “What have you ever done for me?”

Good god, where was all of this anger coming from? Granted, this was how I really felt, but I had never had the guts to say anything about it before. Now, I couldn’t seem to keep my mouth shut.

Yay me!

“I raised you!”

“No! I raised me. You and Dad were always off spending time with your precious little angel. You never had time for me. I had to make my own meals since I was six years old. I’ve had to pay for them since I was fifteen. How is that raising me?”

“Don’t you feel a shred of gratitude towards us? Without us, you wouldn’t even have a life. Showing a little gratitude and helping your sister is the least you could do.”

“Jasmine has always been your golden child. Not me. If you need money, why don’t you go ask her?” I had no doubt whatsoever that that was why she was calling me. “I don’t have the money to pay off Jasmine’s debts.”

“Oh, don’t worry about that. We’ve been made a great offer that makes it unnecessary for you to pay off your sister’s debts.”

A cold chill ran down my back. I gripped the phone even tighter. “What?”

“There’s a very wealthy man that has approached your father and I about marrying one of our children.”

“Great.” What did that have to do with me? “Sounds like you have it all figured out then.”

“Oh, yes, we are quite excited. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for Jasmine. So, you need to get ready to be married. All of the plans have already been made. You’ll need to meet with the lawyers at the end of the week to sign some papers.”

“Excuse me?”

I couldn’t have heard that right.

“This man says he wants to marry you, Jai.”

“Me?” I swallowed tightly. “This has got to be a joke. You’re joking, right?”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Jai. I wouldn’t joke about something as serious as this.” My mother let out a little laugh. “I was a bit surprised at first myself. I mean, why would he want to marry you when he can marry my beautiful Jasmine? But then I heard his name and it all made sense.”

“What’s his name?”

“Harry Turner.”

I racked my brain trying to figure out where I had heard that name before. It sounded vaguely familiar.

“Where have I heard that name before?”

“Harry and his mother used to live in that trailer park on the edge of town. He was a few years older than you, so you didn’t go to school at the same time, but his mother worked as a clerk in the grocery store just down the street from our house.”

My brow furrowed as I finally placed the name. “Didn’t they move out of town about the time I turned fifteen?”

“Yes, Harry’s mother passed away, and god knows where he went. Probably to prison. Harry always was a troublemaker. I heard that’s why they had to move. I guess Harry got caught stealing or something. It was quite the scandal at the time. His mother must have gone to her grave in shame.”

“And this is the man you want me to marry?”

“Of course, Jai. He’s rich. Apparently, he invented some stupid gadget that they use on computers and made a lot of money. He owns a little manufacturing company now. He’s not a millionaire or anything, but he does seem to make a decent salary.”

“What does that have to do with me?”

“He sent his lawyer over with an offer of marriage. He even offered a pre-nup that includes a dowry of one hundred thousand dollars, which is just enough to pay off your sister’s debts and give us a little more to help Jasmine realize her dream of being a super model.”

“You want to force me to marry a man I don’t know in order to pay off my sister’s debts and pay for Jasmine to go to Paris again?”

“Well, it is your duty, Jai. Just think of how much this would mean to Jasmine. You should be thankful to be given an opportunity like this to help your sister.”

This woman was unbelievable.

“No.” It was that simple. My life might suck, but it was still my life. I wasn’t going to give it up for my sister. “I’m not doing it.”

“What?” my mother screeched. “This is an offer we can’t refuse, Jai. It’s the only way to save your sister. The dowry will completely pay off her debts.”

“Until she does something stupid like that again, and then what? You’re going to have me marry someone else? That’s called bigamy, Mom, and that’s against the law.”

“Oh, Jai, you are such an idiot.”

What was that suppose to mean?

“This man might not be a millionaire, but he is still rich. Once you marry him, we’ll be family and he can’t refuse to help family when they are in need.”

Oh god, I could see where this was going.

“No.” I started shaking my head even though my mother couldn’t see it. “I don’t know this guy, but I can’t do that to him.”

My family planned to bleed him dry.

“Oh, really, Jai. Must you be so naive? It’s not like you’re going to get a better offer than this. You’re not even dating anyone. Just marry this man and pay off your sister’s debts so

she can become a model and then find a rich handsome man to marry. She'll be so happy."

"What about my happiness, Mom?" I whispered, knowing she really didn't care. "Don't I get to be happy?"

"Don't you want to see your sister happy?" Mom asked instead of answering my question.

I could have cared less if Jasmine was happy.

"You really have no reason to refuse, Jai. If he turns out to be a bad husband, you can just divorce him, after taking a large alimony payment, of course. We'll still get the dowry because of the pre-nup so it doesn't really matter one way or another."

"God, you people are sick. Is that all you see? Dollar signs?"

"This man wants to marry you, Jai, and he's offering to help your family out in the process. Sounds like a win-win to me."

Except where I was forced to marry a man I didn't know.

"Anyway, it's too late to refuse now. Your father already accepted on your behalf and signed the papers the lawyer gave us. You can't renege now."

"What?" I snapped. "How could you do that to me?"

"The offer was too good to pass up, Jai. The quicker your sister pays off her debts, the quicker she can become a model and find a rich husband. That's what you want, isn't it?"

Kind of, yeah. If she married some rich guy, maybe she would stop trying to bleed me dry? On the other hand, I

wouldn't wish my sister on anyone.

“We did consider letting your sister marry Harry, but she cried and cried, refusing to even consider the idea. I can't say that I blame her. It just wouldn't look good for her image or modeling career if she married a criminal, so you have to marry him.”

“You don't know that he's a criminal, Mom.”

“I don't know that he's not either. He was from the trailer park after all, and nothing came out of there but druggies and whores. God knows what he turned into.”

“I doubt a druggie became the owner of his own business, Mom.”

I wasn't even going to address the whore comment.

“It doesn't matter, Jai. Once you marry him and he pays off your sister's debts, she will be free and clear. And I'm sure your new husband can introduce her to one of his rich friends, preferably one not raised in a trailer park.”

“Wow.” I sat back in my chair, shocked to the very core.
“You are amazing.”

My mother laughed. “I know, right?”

Doubted we meant it in the same manner.

“You and Dad have treated me like crap my entire life. You have treated me like a burden and a slave, and if I dared to step one foot out of line, Dad started in on me. At the same time, you treated my sister like she could do no wrong, like she was an angel sent down from heaven.”

“She is an angel from heaven,” my mother insisted.

“No, she’s not. She’s a spoiled, lazy bitch that wouldn’t know what a hard day’s work was if it hit her in the ass. She spends my hard-earned money like it was falling from trees, gets indebted for thousands and thousands of dollars trying to chase a dream she is never going to achieve, and you want me to fix it all by marrying some guy I have never even met?”

“Yes,” my mother said simply. “Do I need to send your father over to help you decide? This is for your family, Jai. Do the right thing.”

I knew I should have been shocked that my mother was threatening me with a beating by my father, but I just wasn’t.

“Fine, I’ll marry him, but then I want you, Dad, and Jasmine out of my life for good. I don’t want you calling me, coming by to see me, or even texting me. I want nothing to do with any of you. If you can promise me that, then I’ll marry him.”

It would be worth marrying a stranger to have them out of my life for good.

About Aja Foxx



MM ROMANCE WITH FIERY PASSION

The vicious bite of an enemy, a shout, a cry in the dark. A lover's touch, the whisper of a kiss. A sigh, a groan, heart beating faster, desire surging through a body. Love words spoken in the shadows. The yearning for a soft caress. I'm a writer of fiery passion in all its glorious forms. Paranormal, Contemporary, Sci-Fi, Fantasy, MM Romance books. There is no limit to my imagination.

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