



DELTA FORCE SECURITY

Blade

Bestselling Author
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Delta Force Security

Blade

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Epilogue

Synopsis

Yes, my name says it all. My blades make sure you can sleep in peace and not pieces. Delta Force hunts and destroys the enemy both domestic and foreign. My brothers and I are built for this. Hell, I live for it.

As for Kayla Farrow, let's just say that saying "*I wish a mf would*" says it all. My blades will tap dance on your heart, remove your liver, and slice you so thin, the funeral director wouldn't know whether to bury your body or burn it. That's how far I will go to protect the woman I love.

Chapter 1

Johann 'Blade' Meier

"Excuse me," I say to another passenger as I step into the aisle to remove my carry-on suitcase. The almost two-hour flight from Dallas to Destin, Florida was finally over. I've taken this trip many times and by now you would think I had gotten used to it. Although I fly first class and make sure I get a seat in one of the two front rows to have the space for my large frame, it also ensures that I am one of the first to deplane.

It's my weekend off and what better way to spend it than with my lovely lady Kayla Farrow. Kayla and I have been seeing each other for a while now. Only my brothers of Delta Force and her sisters Janae and Michelle and my parents know of our relationship. We've kept it from her brother, Trappa but I know he has his suspicions. Me personally, I would have told him about us a long time ago, but Kayla wanted to wait. She saw the hell he put Janae and Mad Dog through and wanted to give us some time to enjoy each other until all hell broke loose. I respected that, but all of the sneaking around would eventually have to stop. Especially, since I planned on proposing to her in the near future.

Mad Dog did the honorable thing when he went to Trappa and asked for Janae's hand in marriage, but that's not me. How can I ask another man to marry the woman that I love, and what if he says no? It still wouldn't stop me.

Once off the plane, I walk the route towards baggage claims. I laugh to myself as I watch other passengers look up at the signs for directions. I had it memorized by now. Kayla usually meets me there, jumping in my arms and showering me with kisses, but when I get there, she's nowhere to be found.

Looking through the crowd who are waiting on their luggage to come through on the conveyor belt, I'm wondering where the hell she's at. I spoke to her before we took off and confirmed that the flight was on schedule, so I don't

understand why she's not here. Maybe she's waiting for me outside. As I start to walk to the exit, a buxom blonde stops me.

"Hey, we were on the same flight together. My name is Julie."

"Hi, Julie," I returned, not giving her my name.

"I saw you looking around, if your ride isn't here, you're more than welcome to ride with me. I live here and my car is in the parking lot," she offers, batting her eyes at me.

Trying to let her down easily, I tell her, "No, that won't be..." my words are cut off.

"Necessary," Kayla says, coming to my side. "Sorry I'm late, baby. There was an accident." Using my free arm, I wrap it around her waist as she locks hers around my neck, then stands on her tiptoes to kiss me. The peck turned into a long awaited display of PDA that had Julie spinning on her heels, then walking off.

Coming up for air, I smirk, staring down at Kayla. "You know you were wrong for that. She was only being friendly." Her beautiful dark brown eyes stare up at me. She has on some of that shimmery Bath and Body works lotion that I love that makes her brown skin look satiny.

Kayla rolls her eyes, giggling. "I know her type of friendliness and that ride would have ended at her place."

Shrugging my shoulders, I say, "Maybe, but I was going to decline her offer."

"And she would have seen that as a challenge. Baby, I know the women around here. They see someone like you and you're a meal ticket for them. Especially. With the base being so close."

Chuckling, I ask, "You live here, so how do you see me?"

Kayla swats my chest. "I see you as the man I love and will snatch the edges from any hyena that tries to come at you." She removes her arms, then intertwines her fingers with mine. "Now, come on. I'm illegally parked outside."

I continue to laugh as she drags me to the exit. Once outside, I throw my luggage on the backseat of her Range Rover Evoque. Knowing our routine, Kayla hands me the keys after I close the door. I open the front passenger door for her, then close it once she is in the seat. Going over to the driver's side, I get in. Per usual, I have to let the seat back as far as it can go to give me leg room. I offered to buy her the larger Range Rover, but Kayla said this one suited her just fine.

Even though we talked almost every day if I wasn't out on a mission, we caught up on things as if we hadn't seen each other in months, although it had only been last month. It's nice to have someone you can fully be yourself around.

With my brothers, they know me, but I couldn't say if they really, really knew me. They know Blade, the master of knives who will slice and dice the enemy without getting a drop of blood on him, but did they really know Johann? After everything we've been through, I guess it really didn't matter because we trusted each other with our lives. Plus, we all have things that we're keeping from the rest. Like Lethal trying to rekindle his relationship with Agent Vaughn and the whole time Tech kept his connection with Madison a secret from the rest of us and let's not talk about Thing One and Thing Two silently stalking the sisters on Agent Vaughn's crew. So, if they start pointing fingers at me, I have some to point back at them, except for Venom. I don't know what he has going on, but whatever it is he's not willing to disclose any information about his love life.

I guess we get so used to living the lives of our nicknames, we become that person until someone comes along to make you see you're not only just that persona. And for me it only took one look at Kayla in the Dominican Republic and after she described me to a tee, I knew she was the one for me. My father once told me, "*When the woman who is meant for you crosses your path you'll know because nothing or no one will keep you away from her.*" His words never rang true until that day. It was something about Kayla's confidence and no nonsense demeanor. Yes, she's a beautiful woman but her sass, dedication to her family, and determination kept drawing me to her.

We made it to her condo and for me, I wanted nothing more than to bury my dick balls deep in her, but I agreed to have a picnic on the beach with her and for us to frolic in the water. One thing about Kayla I can say, being a Black woman, she didn't mind getting her hair wet. After she shampooed her hair, she would brush out her 4c hair (I'm still learning) into small sections. The next morning, when she took them down she would look like an Egyptian Goddess unless they were still damp, then she would sit under her home dryer. Either way, she is captivating.

After dropping my only piece of luggage in the master bedroom, I changed into swimming trunks, then remembered to grab the most important thing from the luggage and concealed it in the secure inner pocket of my trunks. Kayla already had the picnic basket filled, so I grabbed the towel she laid out for me and the basket. Kayla's condo is on the bottom floor, so we exited through the balcony, then strolled out onto the beach. It's a good thing management of the condo building have private beach chairs with umbrellas out for the tenants and there were plenty still available. After finding a suitable spot, we set everything up.

Over the next two hours, Kayla and I were in and out of the water while enjoying the goodies she packed in the basket.

As Kayla lays on her stomach on the beach chair, I rub sunscreen on her skin, then pull the bottoms of her bikini to get access to her toned ass.

She laughs. "My cheeks were covered; therefore they didn't need any sun screen."

Kneading her soft skin, I return, "I know, but how can I not touch them when they're sitting perfectly like that?"

She laughs harder. "You're such a horn dog."

"Only for you," I chuckle, swatting her derriere.

Kayla turned her head to the other side, saying, "Better only be for me."

With her head in the opposite direction, I move from her butt to her legs before removing my right hand to dig into my

trunks and pull out the one item that would forever lock in our relationship.

“Baby, I swear you have the hands of an ancient masseuse. This week has been stressful at work and you being here, giving me a sunscreen massage makes it all better.”

I take my hand away, then ask, “Will this make it even better?”

Kayla moves her head in my direction. When she sees the three carat diamond ring in front of her, Kayla slowly sits up, not knowing how to react to the scene in front of her.

I stand, pushing the beach chair away before dropping down to one knee. “Kayla Farrow, I don’t think you know how much I love you and honestly I don’t think I have enough words to describe it. But what I do know is, I have loved you for a long time and I’m ready to spend the rest of my life with you, so if you will have me, I would love to make you my Mrs. Meier.”

Using my thumb, I wipe away the lone tear that falls from her eyes.

Her head vigorously moves up and down as she squeals, “Yes, yes, and a thousand times yes.”

I probably should have put the ring on her finger at that point but the notion of seizing her soft lips overtook.

When I eventually pulled back, Kayla and I smile at each other as I take her left hand in mine, then slide the ring on her finger.

“So, this is for real, for real?” Kayla questions, staring at the ring.

“As real as the fucking Statue of Liberty,” I replied.

Chapter 2

Kayla Farrow

Did I expect Johann to propose, hell no? It was a genuine surprise to me. I hoped one day it would happen, but I never thought it would be this day. Who would have known from the first day I met the blonde hair, blue eyed, six-two, two hundred and twenty pound brick wall with natural tanned skin, we would end up here. I am so overjoyed.

I don't know what it was. I used to hear about people talking about love at first sight and thought they were delusional, but when it happened to me, I understood what they were saying. Johann aka Blade was all Alpha male and I wanted to know more about him. Our time in the Dominican Republic was only the start of our relationship. I questioned myself many times, '*Girl, what are you doing?*' Not even my inner conscience could stop me from seeing what would happen with the both of us. Now, we're engaged and at this point, I don't care who knows. Either you're happy for us or you can kick rocks because Johann aka Blade or whatever you want to call him will be my husband.

We've kept our relationship quiet, mostly from Trappa but after this, he and everyone else who don't know, will know. My only concern is with my brother, KeShawn aka Trappa. I love my brother with all my heart, he has done so much for me and our sisters. If it weren't for KeShawn, Michelle, Janae, and I could have ended up in the foster care system. He stepped up, took care of all three of us without hesitation and for that we will forever appreciate and be grateful to him.

I was young when we lost our mother, but even to this day, I can still remember the abuse our father inflicted on us. I don't know if he was dealing with some crazy shit in his after losing my mother or if his true colors had surfaced after she died; either way I lost love for him. His sorrow didn't excuse the way he treated us. KeShawn would always come to me and Michelle's rescue like he was our own private superman. Most

times he'd end up severely beaten, but as we got older, he got taller and stronger.

The last day I saw my father, he put hands on me and Michelle. KeShawn came in as he was hitting us with a leather belt. KeShawn tackled him like a linebacker to get him off us. KeShawn hit him with a forceful right hook to the chin, knocking him out.

KeShawn scrambled over to us, asking if we were okay. Through the pain from the welts covering our backs, Michelle and I told him we were all right. KeShawn helped us up, saying he was going to take us somewhere safe. I knew the type of people my brother hung out with and prayed that it was none of them. I let out a sigh of relief when he brought us to Janae's house.

After he got us settled in there, KeShawn left. I was so exhausted; I immediately fell asleep. When I woke up, it was in my bed at our house. I never saw our father after that, and I didn't miss him one bit. KeShawn did what he needed to do to keep our family together. I just hoped he will do the same for me and Johann.

After the proposal, Johann and I packed up our stuff, and went back to the condo. Once there, I dropped the basket on the counter in the kitchen and began to remove my bikini. Johann went straight to the shower after removing his trunks. Shit, after what some would seem as a lackluster proposal, for me it was like rockets shooting over the moon.

Once I was down to my birthday suit, I went into the steamy bathroom. Pulling the curtain back, Johann stood there in all his glory.

I bite my bottom as I look down at his member standing in full salute.

"Is he happy to see me or is that from the water teasing him?" I playfully question, stepping into the shower.

Johann wraps his arms around me, replying, "I think it might be a little bit of both, but for now we'll go with he's happy to see you."

He spins me towards the tiled wall before lifting my leg. Laying my hands flat against the wall, I push my ass into his pelvis as Johann dips to align his dick with my already drenched opening. The sparkle of the ring catches my eye as I brace myself.

“Even if your brother doesn’t approve of our relationship, I will never walk away from you,” Johann whispers in my ear before surging inside of me. It feels like words leave me, as my mouth falls silently open, welcoming the pleasant intrusion.

“Fuck,” he moans, slowly moving in and out of me.

With my right hand, I grip his hip, then turn my head up towards him. Johann captures my lips with a mind blowing kiss. I hum as he deepens the kiss, increasing his tempo. His pubic hair tickles my ass every time he makes contact, swirling his hips. By far, Johann is the best lover I’ve ever had. This was him connecting us for life and I’m loving every bit of it.

“Yes, baby,” I squeal as he gives me the fucking of my life.

“Who’s your man, Kayla?” he asks, slapping my ass.

Gasping, I reply, “You are.”

“Damn right I am,” he growls, removing his dick from my sacred walls.

Before I can protest, Johann turns me around, then hooks his arms under my knees to lift me up. I cup his face with my hands, leaning down to taste his full lips. Luckily, the wall is wet from the shower sprays as Johann lifts me up. His dick is so hard, he positions it at my quivering opening. He gives me one last kiss before lowering me onto his steel rod pole.

“Babe,” I cry out as he begins to bounce me up and down.

Johann grunts. “You can take it baby. Feel every inch of me inside of you. I will do everything in my power to make sure you feel like this until the end of our days,” he declares.

I wanted to acknowledge his words but the physical assault (in a good way) he’s putting on me, has me speechless. I can

only mumble the words, “I love you, Johann.”

“I love you too,” he returns before becoming a human battering ram. I yelped, mewed, gasped with every thrust.

It’s been almost a month since the last time we saw each other, and Johann was not only making up for lost time but getting his point across.

“*Message received,*” I thought to myself as my body began to tingle with the most explosive orgasm I will ever experience in my life.

“Baby, please,” I beg as I start bouncing up and down on his glorious cock.

“I got you, babe,” Johann says as he tightens his grip on my hips.

I never thought there was a such thing a warp speed, but as I look down and watch the quickness of the way Johann’s fucking me, I’m having second thoughts.

As he hits that magical spot one last time and words actually do leave my lips this time. “Yes, baby, yes!”

I feel Johann’ warm seed fill me.

“I love you, Kayla,” he says, holding me close to him.

“I love you too,” I return, resting the back of my head on his shoulder as Johann continues to hold me up.

“Now let’s get properly cleaned up, so I can take you to bed and get you dirty all over again,” he said as he lowered my leg.

Once we cleaned up, Johann and I went back into that master bedroom and went a couple more rounds before we finally fell into a deep slumber with Johann tenderly holding me in his arms.

This morning I woke up before Johann. I wanted to surprise him with breakfast in bed, so after handling my morning routine, then throwing on an oversized t-shirt, I rushed into the kitchen to get things started.

Forty-five minutes later, I'm reentering the bedroom carrying a tray with freshly squeezed orange juice, crisp bacon, scrambled eggs, fresh cut fruit, and croissants. Johann's coming out of the bathroom wearing a pair of jogging pants.

"Good morning, beautiful," he greets, strolling over to kiss my cheek.

"Good morning, handsome," I return, grinning from ear to ear.

"That looks delicious," he says, staring at the tray. "You should have woke me, I would have helped." He licks his lips and I know he's referring to helping me in a different way.

I snicker. "The last time you helped me cook, I ended up covered with whip cream and the fire alarm went off because the food was burning on the stove."

Johann chuckles as he takes the tray from me. "True, but as I recall, you didn't stop me when I licked the whipped cream from every inch of that sexy body of yours."

"Hell no, I didn't. I'm not stupid. Plus, you were sleeping so peacefully, I didn't want to wake you. I thought I would surprise you."

He leaned down and pecked my lips. "You did. Thank you. Well, since I'm up, how about we go and enjoy this on the balcony?"

"Okay but let me put on some shorts. I don't want to show the neighbors my goodies," I say, going over to my dresser.

"Please do it because I would hate to cut somebody," Johann laughs, leaving the room. He might've been laughing, but I knew he meant that shit.

Over breakfast, I brought up that we needed to start discussing our wedding plans. Johann said he didn't care if we went to the Justice of Peace, the Little Wedding Chapel in Vegas, or had a small or extravagant wedding with family and close friends, he just wanted us to be married. I fell in love with him even more.

I told him, I would love to have a ceremony surrounded by our loved ones in Dallas. Johann agreed, then asked, “Speaking of loved ones, when are we going to tell them?”

That was the million-dollar question. When do we tell them? I’m sure everyone will be excited to hear the news, but Trappa is the one I’m worried about. Then an idea hit me.

“Michelle and Terrence are going to be in Dallas at the end of the month with the kids. We can ask Mad Dog to invite them and Keshawn to his Sunday cookout. With everyone around when we tell them, it may keep him from flying off the deep end.”

Johann took a sip of his orange juice, then said, “It really doesn’t matter one way or the other how he receives the news. It won’t stop us and if he tries to disrupt our day, brother or not, I won’t tolerate the disrespect.” His stern tone and the hidden intention in his eyes sent a shiver through me.

I reached across the table and grabbed his hand. “Johann, I don’t want things to get ugly between the two of you. At the end of the day, he is my brother and I’m hoping Keshawn will accept our engagement, but if he doesn’t, I’m still going to walk down that aisle on our wedding day. Will it hurt me if he doesn’t come? Yes, but I’m not going to let it ruin our day. I love you, Johann and with you is where I want to be.”

Johann lifted my hand, then kissed the back of it. “I love you too and I promise to try and be the bigger person in the situation.”

“Thank you. That’s all I ask,” I responded.

As we continued eating breakfast, I got more excited about the wedding. I couldn’t wait to tell my sisters, so they could start helping me with planning. By the time we were finished, we had a date set for July thirtieth which is in five months, so I hoped everyone would be available.

By the time we finished eating, I was sitting on Johann’s lap as we observed families descend onto the beach to get the best spots. Watching the parents play with their children in the water, I couldn’t wait for the day Johann, and I had our own.

Since Johann and I have seen almost every tourist attraction in Destin, we decided to spend time around the condo. After washing the dishes and cleaning the kitchen, we got dressed, packed a beach bag in case we decided to stop and hang at one of the beaches, then jumped in my SUV to hit the streets.

Our first stop was at the local car wash. Every time Johann came, he felt the need to wash and detail the SUV himself. It didn't matter that I had it professionally done a week ago. He always felt that they didn't do a thorough job. After the first few times of going back and forth with him, I learned to remain quiet about it because nothing I said kept him from doing it.

One the next stop, I turned towards Johann, giving him a questioning look as parked at one of the docks.

“We have reservations,” he said before getting out, then coming to my side to open the passenger door.

“Reservations for what?” I asked, stepping out.

Closing the door, Johann replied, “I made reservations for us to have a private pontoon boat with a private chef for the next six hours. We can snorkel, paddle board, or lily pad. Or we can just lay back and enjoy the day.”

I can honestly say, no man I have dated in the past has ever done anything like this before other than taking me out for dinner or maybe the occasional trip to the beach which is free. If Johann reserved this pontoon for just the two of us, he paid a hefty price for it because they only did tours with a minimum of six guests.

Wrapping my arms around his neck, I passionately kiss him, showing my gratitude. “Thank you.”

“Anything for you, love,” he said before going to the back and taking our bag out. He threw the strap over his shoulder, then took my hand in his.

I felt like we were Meghan Markle and Prince Harry as Johann led me to the pontoon. The captain, the chef, and a deckhand were waiting for us as we approached.

“Welcome to the Sea Lord. I’m Captain Baylis, Chef Zane, and deckhand Gia. We will be at your service for the next six hours.”

“Thank you, Captain,” Johann said, shaking his hand before we shook the others’ hands, then boarded the boat.

Can I say how amazing those six hours were? Chef Zane kept our bellies full with local seafood dishes and other delicacies. Although Johann and I had been snorkeling before, it was nice to have Gia refresh us on the simple precautions and directions.

When our time ended, I didn’t want it to. I now understood why some people lived on boats instead of houses. Of course they didn’t have a captain or private chef, but I could see me and Johann doing it.

After everything we did while on the pontoon boat, you’d think we would have been tired, but Johann and I actually felt rejuvenated. We returned to the condo and showered before deciding how to spend the night on the town.

After tomorrow Johann would be flying back to Dallas and we had so much to celebrate before he left, so why not hit the streets of Destin.

I couldn’t help the laugh that left me when Johann grumbled yet again about not having enough space. It’s just me here in Destin so it suited my needs perfectly. He only had to endure driving the SUV when he came in once a month. Why would I give it up for a larger SUV that I didn’t need?

Pulling up to the popular night club Emerald, named after the beautiful color from the Gulf of Mexico’s water, Johann parked at the valet. He gets out as one of the valets opens my door. Johann comes to my side as the valet hands him a stub. He puts it in his jean pocket, before ushering me to the entrance door. Once inside, we were greeted by the loud music filtering through the establishment’s speakers.

A cute Latina woman approaches us, then says, “I’m Leticia. I’ll be your server for tonight. Would you like a seat at the bar or a table on the main floor?” Johann informs the main

floor. She tells us to follow her. We do so, making our way through the crowd, following her.

The establishment wasn't overly packed, and the table Leticia gave us sat in the middle of the main floor and was close enough for us to reach the dance floor.

"Here are your menus and a list of our specialty drinks. You'll find on that one our list of foreign and domestic beers and wines. What can I start you off with while you look over the menu?" she asks with her pad and pen ready.

"I'll have a bottle of Stella," Johann replies.

Jotting his order down, Leticia turns to me. "And for you, miss?"

"I'll have a glass of Zinfandel."

Leticia writes it down, then says, "I'll get that in for you. Then bring them out to you. If you're not ready to order any food, I'll give you more time. Here at Emerald, we don't press patrons into buying our food items. As long as you're buying drinks, that's all that matters to us."

"Thank you, Leticia," Johann told her before she walked away.

"If they're only fixated on pushing drinks, that means their food is shit." I declared, laying the menu on the table.

"And I'm sure it is but look at the ambience around here. Clearly people aren't here for the food. They're here to have a good time and that's what we're going to do."

I nodded, silently agreeing with him as I witnessed the other patrons having a good time with drinks in their hands.

When Leticia returned with our drinks, Johann and I only ordered hot wings with a side of celery, and ranch dressing and mozzarella sticks. After the feast we had on the pontoon, we were still stuffed.

Biting into a flat of the hot wings, the deejay must've dug deep into his crates as Tupac's *Just Me And My Girlfriend* blares through the speakers. In any relationship there's that one song that describes the two of you perfectly. This one's for

me and Johann. Scooting my chair back, I stand, holding my hand out to him.

“Come on, Clyde,” I joke.

He pushes his chair back, then stands, taking my hand. “You know I forever got you, Bonnie.”

One thing I can say about my baby is that he had the rhythm of a reincarnated Temptation. He fell into every step without missing a beat. I don't know if it was from his mother's Colombian side or his father's German. I was just thankful that he wasn't off beat.

After three songs we went back to our table. Our food had gotten cold, and our drinks were watered down by the ice. I was ready to end the evening and head back to the condo. Johann flagged Leticia down and told her we were ready for the bill. As we waited we made small talk about our day and what we would get into tomorrow since he would be flying out early Monday morning.

Before Leticia returned, we agreed to spend the day lounging around the condo. I offered to cook us dinner, but Johann shut that down. He said the less time I spent in the kitchen would be more time I spent with him before he left. I didn't argue about that. I would rather be cocooned in my man's arms than hovering over the stove.

Leticia bought our bill and Johann placed two one-hundred-dollar bills inside of it. After laying it on the table, he and I stood, then went towards the exit. Johann gave the valet the stub and we waited for him to bring the SUV around.

As we waited, a group of four drunk men came outside. The leader gave valet his ticket as the others heckled at the women standing outside.

Johann and I ignored them until the leader and his minions put their focus on us. No doubt, from their haircuts they were trainees who have recently been given their coins that signifies that they are now Airmen at the base.

“What do we have here?” the leader asked, glaring at me with a predatory expression.

Johann wanted to confront the guy, but I held him back. “He’s drunk and not worth it baby.”

The guy smirked, saying, “That’s right *baby*, I’m not worth it. So, why don’t you take your science experiment and your race denying ass home. Unless she wants to stay and find out what being with a real man is like. Pussy is pussy, right?” Friends joined in with his laughter.

First of all, I didn’t appreciate him calling me a science experiment or him not knowing Johann’s ethnic background to say such harsh words. I locked eyes with Johann, then whispered, “Promise you won’t pull out your knives.”

Johann never blinked as he responded, “I don’t need my knives for these assholes.”

The words barely left him as the leader reached for my arm. I throat chopped his ass, catching him off guard. He dropped to his knees, clutching his neck for air. Johann kicks the man on his left in the chest, thrusting him back as if he were hit with a wrecking ball. Johann ducks, missing a punch thrown by the third guy, which gives him the opportunity to land an uppercut to the guy’s stomach. I went for the last guy, but he held up his hands not wanting any of what his friends just got.

“On your knees,” I ordered. He complied with his hand still up.

Turning from him, I go to the leader whose face is beet red as he rubbed his throat. When I’m close enough, I leaned down and asked, “What’s your name?”

“What?” he hoarsely asked back.

Folding my arms under my breast, with authority, I asked again, “Name, Airman?”

He could tell from the tone in my voice, I wasn’t someone to play with because he stood up straighter on his knees.

“Airman Nicholas Calhoun”

Shaking my head, I informed him, “Well, Airman Calhoun, I’m Captain Farrow.”

Calhoun's jaw drops as the detrimental effects of his actions could cost him his future within the Air Force. He began spewing excuses and apologizing for the actions of him, and his friends, but it fell on deaf ears.

"Captain, we are deeply sorry. We didn't know." He looked at his friends who looked like they wanted to kick his ass for getting them involved before saying, "Please forgive us."

With no sympathy, I told him, "I can't do that. You and your friends were blatantly disrespectful and using conduct that is prejudicial to the good order and discipline of an Airmen."

I dug into my purse and pulled out my cellphone. After looking up the number I needed, I placed the call, then put it on speaker.

"Eglin Air Force Base Security Police, how may I help you?" a man on the other end answered.

"Yes, this is Captain Kayla Farrow. I need SP's sent to club Emerald. There has been an incident with my fiancé and I, and four unruly Airmen."

"Are the men still there, Captain?"

"They are," I replied.

There was a pause before he said, "We're sending two units there now, Captain. Please stay so they can take your statements."

"Affirmative," I responded before ending the call.

"Captain, is that really necessary?" Calhoun asked. "We've learned our lesson."

I frowned. Talk about the size of balls on this guy. "Are you really questioning me? Someone who is your Superior?" I looked over at Johann. He looked like he wanted to smack the shit out of Calhoun. He was in the Marines and knew you never question anyone with a higher ranking than you.

Putting my cellphone away, I told him, "Airman Calhoun, if I were you, I wouldn't say anything else at this point."

“Yeah, Nick shut the fuck up,” Mr. Kicked In The Chest advised.

Johann kept a watchful eye on the crowd spectators around us that had amassed since the chop to Calhoun’s throat.

It took a little more than fifteen minutes for the base’s Security Police to arrive. Once they had me and Johann’s statements and some from witnesses that saw everything, they loaded Calhoun and his cohorts into their vehicles.

Seriously, I’m not one for hurting others careers but after being in the Air Force for so long, I expect a higher standard from our new Airmen. And with that being said, I’ve seen some of the best Airmen go on to do tremendous things and then there were the ones like Calhoun who thought they were above the rules and guidelines. Unfortunately, he and his friends would have to deal with their actions.

When Johann and I started to walk away, Calhoun gave us the death stare as the SP read them their rights. Personally, it didn’t bother me. I’ve dealt with more highly rude Airmen than Calhoun.

By the time we made it to the condo, it was close to one in the morning. I was tired and the only thing I wanted was for my man to hold me in his arms as we drifted off to la-la land.

Chapter 3

Blade

It's been two weeks since my weekend with Kayla and I'm missing her like crazy. Luckily, she's flying in Friday to visit, and I couldn't fucking wait to see her. After returning to Dallas, I called Mad Dog and informed him of our engagement. I made him swear not to tell Janae because Kayla and I wanted it to be a surprise for everyone. I knew the dynamics of a married couple; pillow talk is a motherfucker. I just hope that if he did tell Janae about it, she would keep it under wraps and play the part as the overly excited sister. After telling him our plans, Mad Dog happily agreed to having everyone over for a cookout this coming Sunday. He did warn me to brace myself for whatever reaction Trappa would have, but I laughed it off. At first I was like Trappa had two options, either embrace our union or not, but knowing how much he has been an integral part of Kayla's life, I'm hoping he'll take the announcement like a proud brother.

Kayla had expressed many times about how she was ready to retire from the Air Force and move back to Dallas, and with the proposal, it was enough for her to finally make that decision. She only had eight months left before she could, which meant after we were married, we would be apart another three months before she relocated back to Dallas. Until then, we could continue doing what we've been doing.

My four bedroom, three and a half bathroom house with a two-car garage was ready for her to come make it her own. I used to think this was too much space for me. I was a bachelor when I bought the house and had yet to fill any of the rooms with furniture except the master bedroom and the den. It's only been me, so why did I have to fill the others, but after meeting Kayla, I knew why. This is our home, and she will have free domain to do whatever she wants with it.

"Blade, are you clear to move?" Mad Dog asks through my earpiece, putting me back on the task at hand.

He, Tech, Venom, and I are on a recovery mission two hours outside of Las Vegas. This one is different because the sick fucks only took young boys. No, girls or women. The leader is an asshole by the name of Tassir Alhoud, and he has been keeping the boys here for the last two weeks. Tech with his own way of digging up information like a hound dog, sniffed this one out. I don't give a shit if it's girls, boys, women, or men; no one should be subjected to this type of lifestyle without their consent, even then, I would have to question if they were brainwashed.

Glancing around me, I see a man step outside the back of the old ranch style house. Using the scope of my AK with a silencer, I take him down. "Clear," I return.

Mad Dog's voice is the next that I hear, "We're coming in from all four sides. If it's not one of the boys, take down everyone else."

"Roger that," we all responded.

I make haste to the backdoor before another one of Alhoud's men can come out. After looking through the windows and seeing no one in the kitchen, I enter. After taking three steps in, a big motherfucker rounds the corner. He flashes his yellow stained teeth at me before holding up a large, serrated knife. I smile because this must have been a knife he took from his mother's kitchen. My smile must've annoyed him because he grunts, then makes a slicing motion in the air before getting in a fighting stance.

To make him think we were on the same playing field, I grunt while pulling out my Fairbairn-Sykes Fighting knives. Rotating the knives in my hand, I taunt, "I don't know, but I think mine are better than yours."

I begin to toss the knives in my hand, putting on a knife show. Just as I predicted, the goon is so enamored by my knife display, he's oblivious to the end of the world surrounding him. Flinging the knife in my left hand at him, it lands in the middle of his forehead. I drop low, throwing the other knife at an asshole that comes from the right, it lands in his chest.

More of Alhoud's men come from the back and I'm always willing to give someone a fair fight. So, when a majority of them were amassed, I took out my go to knives, Cold Steel SRK-C survival blades, then pressed the secret button on my vest to release the blades on the tips of my boots. As Alhoud's men lunge at me, I take them down, slashing deeply into their skin enough to hit major organs or arteries. The ones that try to come after them aren't prepared for the deadly blades attached to my boots as I do roundhouse kicks from my left leg then the right.

When no other threat presents itself, I look at the dead bodies around me before retrieving my knives, then going further into the house as gunfire and screams come from outside. I can only assume that they were from my brothers inflicting pain on those who deserved it.

Making my way down the hall Tech had outlined for us before the mission, I stopped to listen. The sound of numerous boys pleading for their lives and begging to see their families pulls at my heartstrings. I vowed before this night was over, each and every one of them will be back with their families.

Inching closer to the door, I see a woman with an assault rifle aimed at the boys as she directs them to go out the opened window.

Knowing my brothers were one step behind me, I entered the room.

The woman sees me, and grabs a little biracial boy, throwing him in front of her.

She laughs. "You must be the underground team I've heard about that does rescue missions. Is that why you wear the masks to hide your faces, so your enemies can't find and kill you fuckers? I sure as shit didn't think you would find us."

"We always find scum like you. Where's your boss?" Mad Dog says, entering the room. Tech and Venom are probably outside making sure no one else enters. I hope they run into the boys that got out.

She tightens her grip on the boy's collar. "I don't know who you're talking about and if I did I wouldn't tell you shit. This is my operation. I work for no one."

I smirk. "Listen, we know Tassir Alhoud is behind this, and we also know you're Fatima Alhoud, his little sister. If we've found you, then we know everything about you. Now, let the boy go."

"Yeah, I'm not going to do that. I have a better chance of getting out of here if I keep him close," she returns, moving them closer to the window.

"And where do you think you're going to run too?" I ask.

"I don't know, but at least it will give us a head start on the Feds," she says as she tosses the boy to the side, then goes for the window.

As Mad Dog aims his pistol at her, I throw my Bowie knife, severing the tendon in her ankle.

Fatima drops the rifle as she screams out while falling to the floor. I race over and kick the rifle away from her as she clutches her ankle, wailing. She'd eventually heal but will probably have limp for the rest of her life. Oh, well. I'm sure she'll get the best medical treatment whichever prison she will be sent to.

Tech rushes into the room with his guns ready to shoot. He lowers them once he sees Mad Dog securing Fatima's wrist with zip ties. As I remove my knife, he digs into the side pocket of his cargo pants and pulls out a handkerchief.

"Use this to tie it off until Venom can take a look at it," he says, handing it to me.

Once I've applied it, Mad Dog stands Fatima up. I looked over at the scared little boy and offered him my hand.

"Hey, I'm Blade. It's okay. You're safe now." I assured him.

He's skeptical at first, but eventually places his little hand in mine.

As the kid and I step out first, Venom, who is standing in front of the boys that got out, fires off, “Has he been hurt? Does he need medical attention?”

“He’s fine, but she’s going to need some assistance,” I reply, jerking my head towards Mad Dog and Fatima.

He looks at her ankle, then says, “I’ll check her out once we’re back at the rendezvous point. She is not going to bleed out. We need to get these kids out of here. There’s no telling if she tipped off her brother and he could be sending reinforcements.”

“I second that,” Mad Dog co-signs before putting a hood over Fatima’s head, then covering her ears with sound canceling headphones. We don’t want her to see where we were going or listen in as we speak to the children.

The entire ride back to the rendezvous point, the kid stuck by my side. Even when Tech tried to get his name and age, he looked at me to see if it was alright.

“That’s my good friend, Tech. It’s okay if you talk to him.”

The kid briefly stared at Tech before saying, “My name is Jordan Rhimes. I’m seven-years old.”

“Thank you, Jordan,” Tech calmly reciprocated while writing down his information. Tech looked up, then asked, “What’s your parents’ names?”

Jordan turned his head towards the window. “It’s just me and my momma. Her name is Angela.”

“Does she have the same last name as you?” Tech pushed. He typed in the information when Jordan nodded his head.

“Jordan, do you remember how you and your momma got separated? How did you end up with those people?” I queried.

His sad eyes slowly fixated on me. “I was on a field trip with my class at SeaQuest. We were where they keep the sea turtles and I really love turtles. I have a pet one at home named Turbo even though he moves slowly. I didn’t see the rest of my class when they moved on because I was still petting the turtle. My momma always told me if I ever get lost somewhere to

always look for someone with a name tag, so that's what I did. There was a man with a SeaQuest nametag. I went and told him I was lost from my class. He said he would help me find my teacher, Mrs. York. He called someone, then told me to follow him." Jordan went silent.

"What happened after that, Jordan?" I urged.

"He didn't take me to my teacher, instead he took me to an area that had a lot of stuff for the animals, then out a backdoor. There were two men out there. I got scared and asked where Mrs. York was. He didn't answer me. He only started speaking a language I didn't understand. I began to cry when one of the men grabbed and threw me in a van with no windows."

My heart broke as his little voice trembled. "That's enough, Jordan." I said, hugging him close to me. "We're going to get you back to your momma, I promise." Cutting my eyes to Tech, I told him, "I don't care what you have to do or how you get it done, but make sure his momma is at the rendezvous point when we get there."

"Already on it," he returned before going to the back.

Needing to know one last piece of information, I asked Jordan, "Jordan, do you remember what the name on the guy's name tag was?"

"Benny," he answered.

"Okay," I said, already formulating what I was going to do to Benny's kidnapping ass. There's no telling how many children he's done this too, but I'm going to make sure he doesn't do it to another one.

By the time we made it to the rendezvous point, the underground agents we were working with were there waiting for us. Unlike Agent Vaughn and her all women team, this one is mixed with women and men.

This team is led by Commander Javier Flores. He too is a retired Marine who went on to work with the underground Bureau that helped locate missing and exploited victims of sex trafficking and bring down the culprits. Although the Bureau gave us complete files on them, Tech made sure to do a more

extensive background check on each one of Commander Flores' team, including him. When everything checked out, we started working with them.

As Mad Dog got a struggling Fatima to her feet, well her one good foot, she began to talk shit. "My brother is going to find out who you all are and when he does, you're going to regret it. He's going to take pleasure in killing your asses!"

Mad Dog lifted one side of the headphones and told her, "And we'll be waiting on the both of you. You're lucky we didn't kill you this time, but if the opportunity presents itself again, your dead body will be lying next to your brothers." He let go of the headphones, letting them slap hard against her ear.

"Fuck you," she yelled as Tech came to her other side and gripped her arm. Together he and Mad Dog practically carried her off the van as she continued to spew threats and empty promises of our demise.

Looking out the window, I watch as they take her to where Commander Flores and his team were waiting. They shook hands as they greeted each other. Mad Dog and Tech then turned Fatima over to two of Commander Flores' agents. She was still putting up a fight as they took her away.

Tech handed Commander Flores a USB stick that gave a detailed report of our rescue, from start to finish and all of the information about every child we rescued. He already had information on Alhoud and with what Tech had just given him, I'm positive there will be more charges added.

With Fatima gone, Venom started unloading the boys out of the van. Jordan and I were last to go. When we stepped out, a dark colored sedan pulled up. The back passenger door opened, and a young African American woman jumped out and ran toward us.

"Jordan," She cried.

"Momma," he shouted, letting my hand go, running as fast as his little legs would go. Ms. Rhimes dropped to her knees to embrace her son.

To those who say real men don't cry, you're fucking lying because if that scene didn't bring a tear to your eyes, then you're a heartless fuck. Even a six foot two, two hundred-thirty pound man like me let a tear drop from their reconnect and I'm not one fucking bit ashamed of it. This is why I do what I do.

Jordan moved back from his momma, then said, "Momma, I want you to meet my friend." Ms. Rhimes stood before Jordan practically drugged her over to me. "Momma, this is Blade. He was nice to me and saved me. He's a superhero. You should have seen the things he could do."

Chuckling, I said, "I don't know about being a superhero, but Ms. Rhimes I'm, we're happy to be able to get him back with you."

Holding on to Jordan as if her life depended on it, Ms. Rhimes says, "Please call me Angela and thank you. I thought I had exhausted every avenue for getting my son back. I put up missing flyers regarding him, did television and radio interviews over the last two weeks and nothing has come from any of it. I don't know how you were able to find Jordan. Thank you for bringing my baby back to me." Tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Angela, you don't have to thank us. We were just doing our job. Our main concern was to make sure Jordan and the rest of those boys were returned to their families. Now that they will be," I point to Commander Flores. "He, Commander Flores, will assure you have all the information you will need."

I turn to walk away as Jordan releases his mother, then runs over to me. He wraps his arms around my thighs. "Blade, will I see you again?" What if those bad men come back? If you're not here, who's going to protect me and my momma?"

Normally, I wouldn't do this, but it's something about Jordan I really like. I pat his back and reply, "Jordan, I'm going to give your momma my business card. If you ever need me, just have her call me, okay?"

"Okay," he answered as I gave him a tight hug.

“Now go with your momma and everything will be alright. I will check on you in a couple of days.”

“Promise?” he asks, staring up at me.

“Promise,” I vow. I hold up the palm of my hand for Jordan to give me a high-five to seal our deal. He gives a toothy smile as he slaps his palm against mine. I act as if he hurt me. “Dang, Jordan I think you might’ve broken some bones in my hand,”

He grins, saying, “I didn’t mean to, but I’m going to be a superhero just like you when I get older.”

The fact that he saw me or us as superheroes tickles my spirit and if someday he wanted to pursue a career with the Marines, I would be there to tell him everything I knew.

After watching Jordan and his momma walk away with one of Commander Flores’ men, I couldn’t help but wonder how they would adjust after what they had been through. Slowly making my way to Tech, I tell him, “Can you do your magic and give them new identities, but keep their first names? After Alhoud finds out what happened, he’s going to be looking for anyone who can point the finger at him.”

“I’m already ahead of you brother,” Tech replies. “By the time Jordan and his mother get back to Vegas they will have new identities, socials, birth certificates, and Angela will have enough money in her new bank account to take care of her and Jordan for the rest of their lives. Commander Flores takes them to his headquarters and explains everything to Angela. I told him that it would probably be best for them to relocate, maybe somewhere close to family.”

“And the other boys and their families? Will they have the same advantage?” I questioned.

“They will, but it will be up to their families if they will take the offer or not. If they don’t, there will be a lump sum given to them. They can either use it to relocate or use it to stand their ground and fight Alhoud and his men,” Tech replies. “If I could give them my advice, I would tell them to move.” He let out a deep breath.

“Good,” I say as Mad Dog has a few more words with Commander Flores, then shakes his hand. He walks over to us.

“Another successful mission completed,” he declares. “Well done, brothers.”

“Thank you, Commander,” we return.

“Now let’s get the hell out of here. We’ve been gone for the last forty-eight hours and I’m ready to get home to my beautiful wife,” he laughs. “We’ll do a quick debriefing when we get back to the office. Until then I suggest you all get some rest on the flight back to Dallas.”

With that being said, we got in the van and drove to the private hangar where our jet was waiting on us. Once situated in my seat, I closed my eyes as the pilot began steering the jet onto the runway. I was going to take the next three hours dreaming of the ebony queen who had captured my heart.

Chapter 4

Blade

Standing with a dozen red roses in my hand, impatiently waiting for Kayla to come down the escalator. She surprised me when she called earlier and said she would be flying into DFW this morning. Still half asleep, I asked, “It’s Friday already?”

She giggled, replying, “No, baby. Today is Thursday and I thought I would come early so we could spend some time alone before I go see KeShawn and the others. My flight makes it in at ten-forty-five. So, get up unless you want me to wait and come tomorrow like originally planned.”

“You better not!” I shouted, sitting straight up in bed. “Get your ass on that plane and I will be there when you land.”

“Okay, okay,” she laughed. “You act like you really missed me or something.”

“And I’m going to show you how much when I see you,” I promised.

“And I can’t wait,” she said. “I have a little bit more packing to do before the Uber driver shows up, so I’m going to let you go.”

“Alright. Send me your flight information,” I requested.

“Okay. Love you, Johann.”

“Love you too and thank you for coming in early. I’ll see you soon,” I said before ending the call.

Grabbing my universal remote, I turned on my surround sound system. I went through my playlists until I found one that suited my mood at the time. Tossing the remote on the bed, I threw the covers off of me as the old school beat for Mint Condition’s Pretty Brown Eyes flowed through the speakers.

It's a good thing Kayla called when she did because it gave me enough time to call Mad Dog and let him know I wouldn't be in to work. I think he kind of knew the reason because he just laughed and said he'd see me tomorrow. After that I took a shower, got dressed, had breakfast, and then ran to the florist to pick up the flowers.

So, now I'm here like one of those guys I used to laugh at when I was single. I would think that would never be me. You would never catch me standing there like a love crazed sap, but here I am and to the ones I used to make fun of...my apologies.

As if my eyes are summoned, they move to the top of the escalators and there she is. We smile at the same time as our eyes meet. I move through the crowd as if there's no one around me to get closer. Before the last step reaches the bottom, Kayla's standing on, I take her into my arms.

Inhaling the sweet smell of her perfume, I confess, "I missed you so much."

"I missed you too, baby," she says before kissing my neck, then tilting her head back, snickering. "We're putting on quite a show for these people."

"Let them watch. If they've never seen two people who have longed for each other and who are clearly in love, then they've never experienced it in their lifetime."

"Well, in that case, carry me over to baggage claim."

Kayla laughs harder as she locks her legs around my waist. She takes the roses from my hand, then smells them as I grip her ample butt and proceed to baggage claim.

Once there, I placed Kayla on her feet as the horn blares and luggage begins to come out on the conveyor belt.

"You have the turquoise and black suitcase as always, right?" I ask, watching pieces of luggage come out.

"Yes, but I have a smaller solid turquoise one that has gifts for the family. That's why I had to get off the phone with you earlier. I thought they would fit in one but when I realized they

couldn't without me crushing some of them, I had to use another piece.”

After retrieving the luggage, we walked out of the airport hand in hand. It's a little before noon and I knew she should be hungry by now. Leaving Kayla at the outside arrival gate, I sprinted into the parking lot to my Black Tahoe. I have no objections to this vehicle because it suited my every need unlike Kayla's tinker toy. She didn't know it but once she returned home, there would be a full-sized Beluga Gray Range Rover sitting in her guest parking spot. It will give me the comfort I need when I go to visit. Plus, when Kayla moves back to Dalla, we will have all three SUV's to make Kayla and I both feel comfortable.

On the drive back to the house, we stopped at the grocery store to pick up items for me to make Ropa Vieja for dinner. It's a dish my mamá taught me how to prepare. The dish is a stewed shredded beef dish that is slowly cooked in fresh tomatoes, onions, peppers, garlic and wine. It's served with white rice and black beans. I made it for Kayla the first time she came to visit and now every time she comes, I have to make it at least once.

Luckily, by the time we made it to the house, I had enough time to put the ingredients in the slow cooker to have it finished at a decent time. With Kayla being my sous chef, we had everything cut up and in the slow cooker in no time. To tide us over until then, I made us double decker turkey and bacon sandwiches with potato chips. We took our lunch along with glasses of orange soda in the den to watch some television.

We settled on watching some crazy sci-fi movie she picked on Netflix. It wasn't really my cup of tea, but Kayla seemed to enjoy it and that was all that mattered.

After we finished eating, Kayla and I cuddled on the large couch. With our stomachs full, it didn't take long for us to fall asleep.

I woke up sometime later and found us still in the same position. The delicious aroma of the Ropa Vieja had filled the

house. Not wanting to wake Kayla, I cautiously removed myself from under her. I silently laughed when I stood as she murmured something in her sleep before turning over. My love was tired. Her Commanding Officer was sending her on more flights than usual, and I know it's starting to take an effect on her which is the reason why I couldn't wait for her time with the Air Force to be up. Once it is, I hope she takes some time off before moving on. I suggested she become a private pilot for hire. She can pick and choose whenever she wanted to work. She said she would think about it. However Kayla decides, I would back her one hundred percent. Shit, if she wanted to be a housewife or stay at home mom, that worked for me too, but I knew my Kayla. Just like me, she had to always be busy doing something that she loved.

I went into the kitchen and got the rice and beans started. While they were cooking I chopped up some tomatoes, red onion, cilantro, and jalapenos leaving some of the seeds to give it a bit of spice to make a fresh pico de gallo to go on the side. After adding fresh lime juice, minced garlic, salt, and black pepper, I mixed the contents in a bowl. As I was tasting it, Kayla came into the kitchen.

"I want to taste it," she says.

Sitting the spoon on the counter, I grab a bag of tortilla chips and open it. I take one out and get a heaping scoop of the pico on it before offering it to Kayla.

She smiles as she leans in and takes a bite. "Mmm," she moans, closing her eyes, moving her head up and down. After she swallows, with delight Kayla praises, "That is so good. I want a fresh batch made so I can take it back to Destin."

"I got you," I responded. "Just think when you move back you can have this almost every day, but then again you might get tired of it, so I might have to make it once a week or month."

Kayla swats my arm. "Don't play with me." She gets another chip and dips it into the bowl. "I would never get tired of this," she says before devouring the chip and pico.

"I hope not," I counter.

Looking around the kitchen, Kayla asks, “Is there anything I can help you with?”

“No, baby. The rice and beans are just about ready and the Ropa Vieja is done. I decided to make the pico at the last minute since I knew how much you like it.”

“See, that’s why I love your ass,” she expresses, wrapping her arms around my neck. “You think of the small things knowing I would love it. You are truly a diamond in the rough Mr. Johann Meier, and I can’t wait to be your wife.”

Cupping her voluptuous ass in my hands, I left her up. Kayla locks her legs around my waist as I carry her to the island in the middle of the kitchen. Before sitting on the island, I let her feel my pulsating dick under her ass as I slowly move her along it. Kayla stares at me with vixen eyes as I continue to tease her.

“I can’t wait to be your husband as well. We will be a united front that no one will ever break. You are mine and I am yours. Always and forever,” I declare as the alarm for the slow cooker goes off.

As if the timer snapped her out of our sexually infused hunger, Kayla gave a cheeky smile before saying, “I refuse to let this meal burn up. We’ll continue this after we’ve had dinner.”

Rolling my eyes, I take a step back. “Fine, but this isn’t over.”

Kayla goes over to the cabinets, then opens them. As she takes two plates out, she says, “Trust me when I say nothing will ever be over between the two of us. Even if we have a dispute after we’re married about whether we should have wintergreen or spearmint toothpaste, the final decision will be made after we’ve settled our differences in the bed. As you know I’m not one for arguing; I saw enough of that shit with my parents, so this is how we will settle our disputes.”

Shit, it’s a win-win for me. Not only would I be able to physically connect to my other half, but we would bring out the best in ourselves trying to make the other see our way of

thinking. I just had to keep in mind that I needed to work overtime for her to see things my way.

Kayla took over stirring the rice leaving me to deal with the beans. We killed the fire under them when they were done. Now it was time to plate our food. Since we were at my house, I told Kayla to have a seat at the table while I plated our food. I'm not a perfectionist but I wanted our plates to look like they came from a five-star Michelin restaurant.

"This looks amazing," Kayla gushes as she sat her plate down first, then mine.

"Thank you."

I then retrieve the bottle of red wine from the refrigerator and bring it back to the table to fill our glasses. Once done, I take my seat across from her.

"Well, don't just stare at it. Dig in," I tease, picking up my fork.

Kayla does the same, then attacks the Ropa Vieja first. A smile spreads across her face as the flavors explode on her tongue before she starts to do a happy dance in her seat.

"Delicious as always," she sings, mixing some of the pico in.

"Thank you, *Mi amor*."

Kayla's eyes twinkle as she casts them on me. In a sultry tone she purrs, "I want my Latin lover tonight. You know how much it turns me on when you speak to me like that."

"I do and I shall oblige," I respond with a wink.

Over the next hour, we talked and laughed enjoying the meal I had prepared. Kayla filled me in on what happened to the assholes from the club. For their lapse in judgment, each asshole received dishonorable discharges and forfeiture of all pay and allowances. They could have been given a year of confinement, but Kayla spoke up at the hearing, stating the two punishments were enough. With her seniority and all of the work she had done with the Air Force, the boys were able to walk away without having to do any jail time. As an ex-

Marine, I thought they should have been given the maximum penalties. Although I understood Kayla's way of thinking that the first two penalties were good enough and they didn't need the one year confinement, as a soldier, I felt that you should be given the max for your actions. Without knowing, they disrespected a Captain and who's to say they wouldn't do it towards a known Captain in civilian clothes? What fucked them up was whether in civilian clothes or fatigues, knowing or not knowing, you are never to disrespect someone higher than you. Whichever branch of the service you enlist for, we all have the same mindset, and it is to protect and serve, and those meatheads we're only thinking about themselves.

Not wanting to get into a debate with Kayla over what should have happened to the men, I changed the subject to the cookout at Mad Dog and Janae's on Sunday.

We have three days before the day of our announcement and I wanted to make sure Kayla was mentally prepared for any negative outcomes, mainly from Trappa.

"Kayla, how are you going to take it if Trappa has negative feelings towards our engagement?" I ask, washing our dishes as she puts the leftover food into containers.

"Honestly, I don't know."

Hearing that kind of made my heart skip a beat. Would Kayla let her brother's opinion make her walk away from what we built?

"What I do know is, however he receives the news, I'm still going to be by your side. Not only do we have the same military background, but we also love the bond of family. We'll just have to convince KeShawn... sorry, Trappa, how much we love each other." Kayla leans forward, giving me Eskimo kisses. "Let's put the food up later because I'm ready for dessert in the bedroom."

A low growl from my chest leaves me as I say, "You are so right."

Tossing my napkin on the table, I stood, then held out my hand for Kayla to take. I led her to our bedroom so I could

worship her body from head to toe.

Chapter 5

Kayla

The Sunday cookout has finally come. I would be lying if I said I wasn't a little nervous about today, but there's no going back now. Today is the day Johann and I profess our love to our loved ones.

I took an Uber from Johann's house to my family home early Friday afternoon. Of course, Johann wanted to take me himself, but I told him It would be better if I took the Uber, that way it would seem like I was coming from the airport. He didn't like it but understood.

It's a good thing that he didn't bring me because when the driver stopped in front of the house, Trappa and Terrence were sitting on the porch while the kids played in the yard. When he didn't recognize the car he stood, followed Terrence. I knew my brother and if I didn't get out of that car quickly, he was going to shoot first, then yell later.

"Is everything okay?" he driver nervously asked, watching a menacing looking Trappa tell the kids to go inside with their daddy as he slowly walked towards the car.

When his hand went to the back of his pants, I opened the passenger door and jumped out.

"Surprise," I yelled.

"Damn it, Kayla!" he yelled back as I ran over and hugged him. "You can't be doing shit like that. Why didn't you tell me you were coming in? Does Michelle know? And who the hell is that in the car?"

"Can I get a hey little Sis, it's good to see you before you start firing off questions?" I laughed.

"Hell, no!" He chuckled before hugging me back. "Hey little Sis, it's good to see you."

"And it's good to see you too big Bro."

“Now, who the hell is that in the car?” He asked again, staring at the driver.

Releasing him, I patted his chest. “Calm down killer. That’s just the Uber driver. Can you get my luggage out the trunk?”

Trappa sucked his teeth. “Isn’t he supposed to do that?”

“No, he only drives.”

“Then who put them in there for you?” He questioned.

There was no way I was going to tell him that Johann did, so I told him, “I did.”

“Well, then you can get them out,” he teased, pretending to walk away.

“KeShawn!” I shouted with my hands on my hips.

He spins on his heels. “Girl, don’t be yelling my government name out like that.”

“Then you better come get my luggage before I start running up and down the block shouting it to the world. Hell, you’ve lived here all your life, and everyone knows your real name, KeShawn,” I said it louder to get on his nerves.

“Kayla!” Michelle called as she, Terrence, and the kids came outside.

I playfully pushed Trappa to the side to greet them. I gave hugs to all of them. I had missed them so much and TJ and Leah have gotten so big. It’s one thing to see them on a facetime call, but so much better to see them in person,

I hissed when Michelle pinched my arm. “I talked to you earlier this week and asked if you were coming and you told me you had to work.”

Rubbing the now tender spot on my arm, I said, “I wanted to surprise you all but if I would’ve known I was going to be physically abused and treated harshly by my brother, I would have stayed my ass at home.”

“Quit all that damn whining,” Trappa laughed, joining us carrying my luggage. “We’re happy you’re here, Kayla.” He

leaned down and kissed my forehead. “Now bring your ass into the house. I know there’s some gifts for us in one of the bags.”

I giggled as TJ and Leah grabbed my hands.

Friday and Saturday were awesome hanging out with my family. Janae couldn’t make it to the house Friday night because she had to work. She explicitly told me and Michelle not to eat breakfast Saturday because she was coming to take us out for brunch. She said she wanted us to have some sister to sister time together, but I knew otherwise. This was her way and probably Michelle’s to snoop into my personal life with Johann. Although they knew about our relationship, I wasn’t going to spill the beans about our engagement. They would find out at the same time as the others...excluding Mad Dog who already knew.

Because I’m so used to my daily routine Saturday morning I was up early. The only time I can sleep in late is when I’m with Johann. I guess it was from our love sessions the night before.

Anyway, I showered and put on a pair of distressed jeans, a black t-shirt that had *Flygirls do it better*, and a pair of black and white Converse low tops. I knew we were going to brunch but with Janae, there was no telling what she’d have us doing afterwards and I wanted to be comfortable.

After moisturizing my hair, I styled it into a curly afro. I loved times like this when I could just let my hair be free. Most times because of work, I would have it brushed back into a bun.

I grabbed my cross satchel Coach bag, then went into the living room to find Trappa sitting in front of the television, eating from a large bowl of cereal.

“I see some things never change,” I said, sitting in the recliner.

He cracked a smile before responding, “Oh, but they do little Sis. You see, instead of Cap’n Crunch in my bowl, I now

have Cheerios. It's better for you and it doesn't have all that damn sugar in it."

I briefly gawked at him before I fell out in a fit of laughter.

"What?" he asked, holding up the tablespoon he was using.

Holding my stomach, I tried not to laugh through my words. "You and Cheerios?"

"Yes, me and Cheerios. Why is that so funny? I'm not getting any younger, so I don't see how you would find it funny that I want to change my eating habits."

Waving my hands in front of me, I tried to explain, "I'm all for you changing your eating habits, KeShawn...but I know you didn't come to this by yourself." Squinting my eyes at him, I asked, "Could it have been..." I rubbed my neck, staring up at the ceiling before directing them back on him. "Could it be someone by the name of Skylar who wants you to be healthier?"

Trappa averted his eyes away from me as he dug in to get a big heap of cereal. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said before putting the spoon in his mouth.

Snickering, I said, "Oh, I think you do, but unlike you big brother, I'm not going to get into your love life."

That must have triggered something in him because Trappa lowered the spoon into the bowl, then focused on me. "Speaking of love lives, what's going on in yours? At one time you used to call me for advice about whichever shmoo you were dealing with, but it's been a long time." His right brow raised like The Rock's.

Clearing the clog in my throat, I replied, "It's been a while because work has been so busy, but there is someone. I'm still trying to fill him out before coming to you." I didn't want to lie to my brother, but what else could I tell him? He would find out the truth the next day and I only hoped my lie wouldn't add more negativity.

"Just let me know when and I'll have my people do a background check on him." He ate another spoonful before saying, "You know what? I can have Janae's brother-in-law;

Tech do the background search. He for sure has way more of an extensive search than my guy.”

“Oh, okay,” is the only thing I could respond with, knowing that once we reveal the engagement to everyone there would be no need for any type of background check.

Thank God Michelle came into the living room at that time before Trappa had any more questions.

“Girl, I see you’re up and ready,” she said, plopping down next to me.

Fixing my satchel on my shoulder, I stated, “Shit, when someone says they’re treating, I’m gonna be ready and waiting.”

“I know that’s right,” Michelle co-signed, giving me a high five.

“You all are just sad,” Trappa voiced, standing with the tablespoon swimming around in the leftover milk in his bowl.

Being the brat I can only be with my siblings; I stuck my tongue out at him. “Sad or not, we’re getting a free meal with our sister. I think you’re jealous you weren’t invited.”

“That is so far from the truth. If Nae Nae wanted me to come, then she would have invited me. I have no problem with the three of you spending time together. Plus, if I wanted to go, I really don’t need an invitation because who’s going to tell me not to go?”

“Me!” I laughed.

Trappa turned around with a smirk. “Did it work in the past?”

“No,” I replied.

“Exactly,” he said as he continued to leave. “Oh, there will be a few of my men shadowing you all.”

“What?” I questioned him, but he kept going.

Michelle gripped my arm, saying, “Let it go, Kayla.”

Once Trappa was out of the room, Michelle tried to rationalize,” Kayla I know how you feel, but you know after everything we’ve been through, KeShawn is always going to make sure we’re protected. If it weren’t for him, I would never bring my children back here, but I do. Do you think I want to have them here in the house where we were abused? No, I don’t but each time I come with them and my husband, I’m moving one step forward in my healing process. I think that’s why Trappa has held onto this house. In some way or form, we need to conquer the demons in this household. It may be the reason why you have never settled down or the fact you and I left and have yet to move back. Either way, I’m tired of running, I’m ready to come home.”

Michelle’s tear-filled eyes almost made me break down and tell her everything, but I held it in as I embraced her.

“I’m ready to come home too, Sis.” I confided, unable to hold my own tears back.

“I just want us to be like we used to be,” Michelle sobbed on my shoulder.

“What the Hell are you two crying for? I’m here now.” Janae said, walking through the door. “If this is the way the entire day is going to go, then I might as well get back into my car and call you all later.”

Michelle and I opened our arms, inviting her into our sister’s hug. We all laughed as we embraced each other. These are my sisters who have always had my back and I had theirs. Over the years, our relationships has grown. I guess after losing my momma at an early age, then Trappa taking matters into his own hands with our daddy and to Janae losing both her parents; all we had were each other. We were each other’s confidants who helped each other through some really hard times. I love my sisters and brother and I am truly blessed to have them in my life.

“I hope you’re ready to get your stomach filled because we’re going to Fogo de chao,” Janae informed, taking a step back.

“Hell yeah,” I exclaimed. I love Fogo. Their gourmet salad bar is hands down my favorite and the cuts of meat they serve are to die for. And let’s not talk about the garlic mashed potatoes.

If Janae was trying to use Fogo to get answers out of me, it might’ve happened if I was weak minded. But on the ride to the restaurant. I took her and Michelle’s questions head on, not giving them the answers. they were looking for.

“So, how are things with Blade?” Janae asked, jumping right into it.

“Fine,” I replied, from the backseat.

“Have you seen him since you’ve been here?” Janae questioned, pulling away from the house.

When I didn’t answer right away, Michelle turned around in her seat to face me. “You have.”

I grinned as Janae looked at me through the rearview mirror. “That cheesy ass grin confirms it.”

Michelle squinted her eyes at me. “When? When did you see him? You just got here yesterday and have been with us.”

Snickering as I shook my head, I answered, “I got home yesterday, but I actually flew in on Thursday.” Michelle crazily peered at me, leaving me to shrug my shoulders. “Did you really think I was going to come into town without spending some time with my man?”

“Hell no,” Janae shouted. “I would have done the same thing. Especially with Trappa’s old hound dog ass sniffing around. I swear he needs to be a part of Delta Force.”

“For real,” I added as we all laughed.

“I’m happy you got to see him. Blade seems like a solid guy and if he makes you happy, then I’m happy for you two,” Michelle said.

“Same here, Kayla,” Janae stated. “You know I’ve been around all of them and if I thought Blade wasn’t good enough for you, you know I would tell you or at least tell Trappa. Luckily, all the men with Delta Force are stand up guys.” She

catches my eyes again in the mirror. “What I will say is; if you and Blade are serious about your relationship, then you need to tell Trappa.”

I loved hearing my sisters rooting for me and Johann’s relationship. At least I knew then they would support our engagement.

“I will,” I returned looking out the window. Little did they know we were going to tell everyone the next day.

Pulling up to the restaurant, as if she had read my mind, Janae says, “And what better day to do it than tomorrow. Mike told me he was inviting everyone, including you all and Trappa to our Sunday cookout.” She parked the car, then faced me. “It’s now or never little Sis. I hope you’re ready.”

Grabbing the handle to get out, I told her, “Please believe, I’m ready.”

With that we got out of the car. Janae gave her keys to the valet, and we went inside to get stuffed with Fogo’s brunch.

As we sat having the waiters refill our plates with the delicious cuts of various meats, the topic of Johann and I was long gone, and we three sisters sat there laughing as we caught up with our day to day lives.

Chapter 6

Blade

Two days. It's been two days since I last physically saw Kayla. Do you know what that does to a man who's woman is less than thirty minutes away from him? Yes, we've video chatted, but that doesn't mean shit when you've had your woman in your arms, waking up to her, or just having her very presence around you.

When I got up this morning again without Kayla in my bed, I knew today would be the day to end all of that shit. Enough was enough and I was willing to take on any backlash from Trappa. He may not know it, but I respected the man. Kayla told me what they went through with their parents and how he fought to keep them all together, but what he needed to understand now is Kayla is a grown woman who can make her own decisions whether he thought they were wrong or right. I understood his position of being the protective older brother but just like Mad Dog with Janae, I would lay my life on the line for Kayla. I didn't ask for this, but you can't help who the Almighty has destined for you. I will fight tooth and nail for me and Kayla. I just hoped it didn't come to that. I know how much Kayla loves her brother and I vowed to myself not to put hands or knives on him if he acts foolishly.

Tech called earlier asking if I wanted to ride with him and Madison to Mad Dog's house. At first, I started to accept the offer, but declined because once the cookout was over, Kayla would be coming home with me.

After I finished getting dressed, I locked up the house, then left. Since I was one of the ones in charge of picking up the beer and wine, I went to the liquor store last night and stocked up because they are closed on Sunday's.

In less than ten minutes, I was parking outside of Mad Dog's house. That was the good thing about Delta Force members, we all lived in the same gated community.

As I got out and went to the back of the truck to let the tailgate down, Venom pulled up and parked behind me.

“Want some help?” he asked as I dragged the coolers to the end of the tailgate.

“That would be nice,” I replied, lifting one cooler as he grabbed the other.

“I hope Mad Dog has already started grilling because I am starving.” Venom laughed.

Laughing with him, I said, “You and I both but I don’t smell anything cooking, so there’s a good chance that he hasn’t.”

Venom sniffed the air. “Damn, you’re right. I hope Janae has some hor’dourves or something to tide us over until he’s done.”

“I’m sure she does,” I told him as we started walking to the backyard.

It seemed Venom and I were the last ones to arrive as I noticed the rest of our brothers there along with Madison, Kayla, Trappa, and their family.

My first impulse was to rush over to Kayla and engulf her in my arms, but I restrained myself. Plus, I didn’t want to ruin the cookout before it really got started.

I cut my eyes towards Kayla. She gave me a reassuring smile before Janae says, “Now that everyone is here, it’s time to plate the meat. With some urging, my husband slaved over the grill since early this morning not wanting you all to wait hours later to eat.”

“Thank God,” Venom utters as we sit the coolers on the patio.

Mad Dog stood doing a low bow before holding up his Coors Light bottle. “Tomorrow is never promised, so I love spending our Sunday afternoon with my family eating good food, fellowshiping and with the grace of God letting this happen.”

As the ladies placed the food on the three connected picnic tables, I made sure to save a seat for Kayla next to me. Trappa sat two seats up and across from us.

Mad Dog continues to stand while we take our seats. Once seated, he voices, “First and foremost I want to say how gratifying it is to have my in-laws all together at one time. The last time we were all together, shit was crazy, but now we’re all together now and that speaks volumes.”

Everyone held up their wine glasses or beer bottles and clinked them together. Mad Dog sits down, and the food starts to get passed around. He and Janae outdid themselves with the smorgasbord of food on the table.

As everyone begins to dig in, Janae asks Tech, “Tech, how are Papa, Mathew, and Joii doing? I’ve been meaning to call and see how she’s doing with the pregnancy.”

“Papa is still Papa, hell on wheels. He keeps up with the med regimen and has turned the business over to Mathew. Nowadays you’ll find him either fishing or hanging out with his old friends, giving the older ladies hell. Mathew and Joii are doing fine. The baby is due in two months, so Madison and I are going to drive down there to see the newest Broussard.”

“Do they know what they’re having?” Janae asks.

Madison sighs, rolling her eyes. “They do, but they’re not telling us. Even Papa can’t get it out of them. I hope you don’t mind but I gave her your address so she can send you an invitation to the baby shower next month.”

“Not at all.” Janae says. “We can drive down together and make it a weekend trip.”

“That would be great. Momma and Pilar are going too.” Madison informs with a smile before glancing over to Kayla and Michelle. “Kayla you’ve met Joii and Michelle I know you haven’t, but I’m sure Joii would love for the two of you to come since we’re all family now.”

Kayla speaks first. “Let me know when it’s going to be, and I’ll check my schedule. If I don’t have to work, I would love to come.”

“I just have to see what we have scheduled with the kids,” Michelle says. “If Terrence is off from training and will watch the kids, count me in.”

‘Now, baby you know I’m always down to watch the kids.’ Terrence states, kissing her cheek.

Madison, Janae, and Kayla ahh at his affection towards Michelle.

Janae elbows Mad Dog in the side, causing him to drop his ear of corn. “You better be like that towards our kids.”

“You too,” Madison declares, peering at Tech.

Mad Dog and Tech direct their glares at Terrence who holds up his hands, chuckling. His little display of affection has put them in the hot seat. Not wanting to land there myself, I lean over to Kayla and whisper, “You know I will always be there for our future children.”

“I know, baby,” she whispers back. “That’s why I didn’t say anything.”

“What are you two over there whispering about?” Trappa inquires with his focus on us.

Looking over at Kayla, I felt this was our segway into revealing to them our engagement. “I was just telling Kayla how I would always be there for my future children.”

Trappa tilts his head with a slight frown. “And why would you tell her that?”

I take a deep breath before turning to the woman I love, then back at Trappa. “Because any future children I have will be with Kayla, because she and I are engaged.”

Gasps, utensils dropping hitting plates, and a couple of, ‘Oh, shits’ are heard around the table.

“What the fuck did you just say?” Trappa questions, rising from his seat.

Not one to run from a fight, I stand too. “You heard what I said. Kayla and I are engaged. We’re getting married.”

Terrance, knowing what was about to happen, ushered TJ and Leah from their seats and into the house before coming back out. I hope he finds them something to watch on the television and turns the volume all the way up, because this shit was about to get loud.

Trappa cuts his eyes to Kayla. She rises from her seat and intertwines her hand with mine. Trappa looks like a pitbull ready to attack, but he must have known that the guys will stop him if he tries. Especially since Mad Dog, Tech, Venom, Lethal, and the Things are standing now too.

“KeShawn,” Kayla spoke. “You always said you wanted Michelle, Janae, and I to find men who will make us happy and treat us well and we have. I love you Big Bro and I’m sorry for keeping this from you, but I did because I knew how you would react. I love Johann and he treats me like a queen. I just want you to be happy for us.”

Trappa closes his eyes before opening them, then saying, “I knew something was going on when we were in the Dominican Republic and then when you just showed up when we were going to Madison’s parent’s cabin. You could’ve told me this shit a long time ago.” His expression is mixed with anger and disappointment. “The one rule we have in this family is we don’t keep secrets and you did.” He looks at Michelle, then at Janae. “Did you two know?” When they lowered their heads, he got his answer. “Wow,” he murmurs, nodding his head up and down. “I guess the rules have changed. I’m out.” He announces, kicking his chair to the side.

“Keshawn! Trappa! Wait, don’t go,” the girls cry out, trying to run after him, but we stop them.

“He needs some time to calm down,” I say, holding Kayla. “This is a shock to him. Let him process what has happened.”

“No, Johann you don’t understand,” Kayla sobs. “We’ve had our disagreements in the past, but this one is a heavy blow to him. Trappa feels like we have turned against him. We have to make this right.”

Irritated, I boast, “And how are you going to make this right in his eyes? Call off our engagement?”

She settles in my arms. “No, but I just want him to understand it was never to hurt him.”

Mad Dog being the voice of reason says, “And you will have the chance to tell him, but right now he’s too angry to hear you.”

As if putting one and one together, Janae faces her husband. “You knew, that’s why you wanted to invite everyone over for the cookout.”

“I did,” he honestly responds. “They wanted to keep it to be a surprise for everyone.”

“But that’s my sister and I’m your wife, you could have told me.” she argues.

“Really? So, if one of your siblings told you something in confidence and asked that you not tell anyone else, even me, would you do so?” Mad Dog challenges. Janae clamps her lips together. “That’s what I thought.”

Her focus turns towards Kayla. “Me, you, and Michelle were together yesterday, and you could have told us then. Why?”

“Like Mad Dog said, we wanted it to be a surprise.” Kayla replies.

Michelle walks over to us. “But we’re your sisters. You could have told us.”

My feisty woman stands her ground as she clears her chest. “Really, Michelle? I seem to remember when you decided to marry Terrence. We got a phone call and the next thing we knew; we were driving to your wedding. Trappa didn’t object to shit then. And Janae, Trappa always showed his disdain for you and Mad Dog’s relationship. Oh, and don’t let me forget to bring up the fact that you had us thinking we were going on a family vacation, but the whole time it was because you and your man had someone trying to kill the two of you, so Michelle and I got thrown into your bullshit.”

“What the hell is she talking about?” Terrence inquires, looking at Michelle.

Michelle lays her hand on his chest. "I'll explain later."

"Oh, is that one of those secrets?" Kayla points out. She exhales, then glances at her sisters. "I, we didn't want things to turn out this way. I honestly hoped that Keshawn would take the news openly but deep down I knew it would end like this. I'm sorry for you two being included in his anger towards me." As Kayla begins to cry in my arms, her sister's rush over. I release my arms, letting them give her the sisterly love that she needed.

"It's okay, Kayla," Michelle whispers. "We understand why you did what you did."

Trying to make light of the situation, through her tears, Janae jokes, "And now we're going to be double related."

Kayla couldn't hold in her laughter as she hugged her sisters tightly. "Shut up."

Janae lets her go. "Seriously, I'm happy for the two of you. Despite what happened tonight, it's all good. I told you that I thought Blade was a good guy." She then turns to Michelle and Terrence. "Just to give Trappa some cool down time, you and the kids can stay here. We have more than enough room. Michelle, you and I will go tomorrow to retrieve your luggage. Trappa is all about family, so let's see how he does when none of us are around."

That makes me feel honored that Janae thought that I'm a good guy.

"Same here," Michelle adds. "But now that you've disclosed my one secret to my husband, we're going to get the kids ready for bed and try to put a spin on what happened before I have to explain the true reason why we went to the Dominican Republic."

"I'm sorry, Sis," Kayla sadly expresses.

"No need to apologize now." Michelle says.

Michelle gave Kayla one last glare before saying, "Like daddy used to say, *'What's done in the dark will eventually shine; only this time it was you shining the flashlight.'*"

Kayla says nothing as Michelle and Terrence go inside. I could see the eagerness in Kayla to want to join them, but she remained outside.

“I’m going to go and grab some to-go containers for the guys to take some of this food home with them,” Janae tells Mad Dog. “Kayla, come help me.”

I give Kayla a reassuring peck on the cheek before she follows Janae through the patio doors.

“Well, that was a cluster fuck,” Lethal says, going over to the cooler to get another beer.

“Times one hundred,” Venom remarks, smirking. “But at least now the metaphorical cat is out of the bag.” The Twins chuckle.

Going over to the table, I pick up my beer bottle, then toss back the rest of its contents. “That it is.”

Mad Dog approaches me, stating, “I told you a long time ago to handle this shit.”

“You did,” I say, sitting the empty bottle back on the table.

He steadies his eyes on me. “And if you would have done like I told you, you and Kayla might not be in this position with her brother. Hell, any of us. Now, they have the patriarch of their family mad at them. My wife is mad that I didn’t tell her about your engagement and let me tell you this; if she makes me sleep on the couch behind this shit, I’m taking it out on your ass.”

“I’ve slept on your couch before, and it’s very comfortable,” Venom pokes.

A laugh leaves me but is quieted from the heated expression Mad Dog is giving me.

“I don’t see anything funny about this shit,” he fumes.

“You’re right, Commander,” I say. “I’m sorry for what transpired. Although we knew Trappa would take it hard, we were hoping for a different result.”

Mad Dog clutches my shoulder. “And I get that, but you; more importantly Kayla should have kept in mind her relationship with Trappa. From what Janae has told me, Trappa has always been overly protective of them but even more so with Kayla because she is the youngest. Shit, he practically raised her after their mother and father died. I saw for myself how tight of a bond they share when we were on the jet coming to the Dominican Republic. He claimed the private bedroom, adamantly stating no one but him would occupy it and guess what? Kayla was the only one who bombarded her way into that room and the two of them slept like peaceful angels. Trappa is the one who convinced her to join the Air Force. He knew Kayla was too bright to waste four years in college. He knew if she joined, Kayla would excel and look how successful her career is.”

Kayla never told me about any of this. She told me about her mother’s passing and what an asshole her father was and if Trappa hadn’t killed him, I would have happily ended his life with my knives. I know she has an abundant amount of respect for her brother but if I would have known all of this, I would have pushed harder to tell him about us sooner.

Mad Dog tightens his grip on my shoulder. “I can see from your expression you didn’t know any of this and that’s fine, but you need to take your fiancée home and have a talk. This shit might be family related, but I don’t want it to spill over into our business. Other than Trappa, Janae, Madison, Michelle, or Kayla no one on the outside knows who Delta Force really is. Not that I think Trappa would rat us out, but you need to make amends with him.”

“I will,” I say, wondering how I was going to achieve such a task. Most would see Trappa as society would call a street thug, but he wasn’t that. Trappa has legitimate businesses and although he is the leader of the South Dallas Boys, which is one of the most notorious gangs in Dallas, he has given them a makeover. The South Dallas Boys are no longer seen as a gang but masked as a community outreach program.

After filling the containers, Kayla and I shook hands and hugged our family. Once inside the truck, Kayla suggests, “We

need to go to the house so I can gather my belongings.”

“Do you think that is a good idea after everything that’s happened?” I questioned.

“If I’m going to be staying with you for the remainder of the time I’m going to need my luggage,” she replies, staring out of the window.

I nod, steering the truck towards Trappa’s.

Fifteen minutes later, we’re parked in front of Trappa’s house. Normally, he’s sitting outside with a full entourage but not this time and his car isn’t in the driveway. Kayla and I both go for the door handles at the same time.

Kayla whips her head in my direction. “I’m just going in to get my things. There’s no reason for the both of us to go in. Even if Trappa is not here, I’m sure you entering his house without him being there will only make things worse. Stay here please.” She pleads with sadness.

Reluctantly, I tell her, “Go get you stuff. I’ll be right here.”

“Okay,” she returns.

“If you’re not out here within five minutes, I’m coming in and I don’t care who is at the receiving end of my knives.”

“Got it and it won’t come to that,” she says as I let her go. She opens her purse and removes her set of keys, then gets out of the truck.

I keep my eyes on her as she walks up the pathway, then onto the porch. As Kayla stands at the door her shoulders rise from inhaling deeply before inserting the key. When she opens the door, then steps in, I glance at the time on the dashboard. Her five minutes have started.

As I watched the minute’s countdown, I kept an eye on my surroundings. Trappa may not have been at home, but that doesn’t mean he didn’t call in with his people to be on the lookout for us. I stared down at each vehicle that passed, waiting for someone to jump out, but it never happened.

By the time Kayla had one minute left, I had my hand on the door handle, ready to go in and check on her. When the

five minutes were up, Kayla was opening the door just as I pulled the handle. I got out of the truck and met her half up the pathway. Seeing her tear-stained face did something to me. I hated seeing my Kayla like that.

I wrapped my arms around her and pulled her into my chest. She trembled as she softly cried in my arms.

“It’s going to be okay, baby. I promise. Trappa will come around,” I whispered in her ear.

She nodded against my chest as I held her tighter before I released her and took the luggage from her. Kayla followed me to the truck. After sitting the luggage down, I opened the passenger door for her. Once she was in, I secured the seatbelt across her, then closed the door. Next, I loaded the luggage onto the back passenger seat.

When I was back in the truck, I took my love’s hand in mine and kissed the back of it before driving off. I knew the consequences of today had taken a toll on her and it was my job as her man, future husband, and life partner to let her know I would always be by her side no matter what. I believed the issue with Trappa was only a minor setback. He was mad now, but eventually he’d get over it. Like Janae said earlier, Trappa is all about family, and I couldn’t see him being mad at his sister for long.

Chapter 7

Blade

When we made it to the house, Kayla got out before I could go around and open her door. As she went on to the front door, I opened the back passenger door and took her luggage out. I'm a sympathetic guy, so I understood the emotions she was going through. Hell, in my eyes, this was no different than what my parents endured when they announced their engagement.

My daddy, Paul Meier, who is of German blood went through the same thing with my mamá, Ana who is Puerto Rican. My daddy was a successful businessman who worked as a Financial Consultant in Manhattan, New York. My mamá worked for the cleaning company that was contracted with his building. Mamá always laughed when she told me about the first time they met.

Let me say this up front, although my mamá is Puerto Rican and my daddy is German, together they made a killer with a wholesome smile that would slit your throat without thinking twice about it.

Anyway, my mamá was working the nightshift when she entered my daddy's office to clean it. While wearing earphones, listening to music, she began her cleaning routine. After she emptied the trash can, she took out her window cleaner and paper towels. As she wiped the foam from the windows, humming along to the song playing in her ears, mamá was startled when she felt someone tap her shoulder. Thinking someone was trying to attack her, mamá spun around, spraying the glass cleaner in the culprit's face.

My daddy yelled out as he covered his eyes, gasping for air. Once mamá saw he was in a suit and tie and looked like the gentleman from the picture on the desk with an older couple, she dropped the cleaner and paper towels. She ran into the ensuite bathroom to get some cold wet towels.

"I'm so sorry," she said as she tried to apply the towels to his eyes.

Mamá said daddy recoiled back, bumping into his desk.

“I was only trying to let you know I was still in the office,” she recalled daddy saying.

“Like I said, I’m sorry. Normally, at this time of night, it’s just the cleaners and security here. I deeply apologize. If it helps, our cleaning products are eco green. I know your eyes are burning but if you take this cool towel it will help. I promise you won’t go blind.”

Mamá said daddy cursed under his breath before holding his hand out. He snatched it away when she placed the towel in his hand. He immediately began to wipe his eyes. Mamá didn’t know if she should continue working or just walk out. She was sure once Mr. Meier regained his sight, it was curtains for her, but it didn’t go that way.

When daddy was able to somewhat see, he went into the ensuite bathroom and thoroughly rinsed his eyes. When he came out, mamá was still standing there. Mamá said she could tell by the way he stared at her; daddy liked what he saw. It wasn’t a predatory gaze but one with admiration as he took in her peanut butter skin tone and exotic features. When daddy realized that he had been staring for too long he told her, “I will be working late hours for the rest of the week. I will make sure that I am at my desk so you will know I am here so that we won’t have another incident like this one.”

Mamá happily agreed because she needed the job to help take care of her family. After that night, their conversations grew from family backgrounds, aspirations, and future goals. They had a lot in common but the one that stood out the most is they both wanted to have a family of their own. If they had children of mixed heritage, they played out the pros and cons of what their children would go through. A year later, they didn’t care about how society would perceive their children. They wanted to be together but when they came forward, the gigantic hurdle they would have to jump was my grandfather, Miguel Hernandez.

They kept their relationship a secret from the outside world. Not because of my daddy’s side, but my mamá’s. My

mamá is Puerto Rican, so you could imagine how her father reacted when my father, who is German, asked to marry his only daughter. Well my daddy did, and my grandfather flat out told him no, then proceeded to have my two uncles jump my father to make sure his decision was taken. My grandfather wanted mamá to marry the son of his best friend.

Even after taking the beating, my daddy didn't give up. He and my mamá were too much in love to let my grandfather come between them. So, when the opportunity presented itself, they ran off and eloped, which was a good thing because when they returned days later, they came back with the news that my mamá's was pregnant with me.

My grandfather didn't want to hear whatever my daddy or mamá had to say as he beckoned my uncles to come out. Once they saw that mamá didn't have any bruises or was begging to come back to the family, they silently backed off.

Then along came me, a cute honey skinned, healthy German and Puerto Rican baby with blonde hair and blue eyes like my daddy with a mixture of facial features of both my parents. It took some time, but my grandfather finally came around after seeing how good my daddy took care of his daughter and later on his grandson. I think it might have been because of me that my grandfather accepted their relationship. My uncles didn't have any kids, well none that were blood related, so I was the first. Personally, to this day I think my uncles are shooting blanks because neither have had any children or they were being cautious as fuck. Either way, my grandfather slowly regained my parents' trust and favor and in the meantime he was able to build his relationship with me.

If my grandfather can overcome the way he saw my father, then I'm hoping Trappa could do the same with me.

The following day, Monday, I called Mad Dog to let him know I wouldn't be in for work. I was relieved when he told me he wasn't going in either. He said Tech would be in charge with Delta Force Security today.

Since Janae and Michelle were still upset with Trappa's exit the day before, Mad Dog suggested I bring Kayla over to

talk with her sisters and I told him I would. Although Janae and Michelle forgave Kayla for keeping our engagement a secret, the three of them needed to brainstorm on how to get Trappa on board. Personally, I had thoughts of slicing into his skin until he did, but I knew I couldn't do it, but damn if that didn't put a smile on my face.

"Baby, aren't you going to work?" Kayla asks, coming into the kitchen after I ended the call with Mad Dog.

"No, I took the day off," I replied as she hugged me from behind. I turn my head, offering her my lips. I'm making us some bacon and eggs for breakfast.

Kayla presses her minty lips against mine.

"Someone is freshly brushed," I laugh, drawing back.

Kayla waves her hand in the air. "Now you know I don't play about morning breath, which is why yours is just as minty."

I laugh harder. One thing about my woman, she won't kiss or talk to me in the mornings before she hasn't brushed her teeth and I can appreciate that. I've dealt with women in the past who as soon as they opened their eyes, they wanted to talk, not realizing their breath had fermented overnight from liquor, sometimes cigarettes, food, and not to be gross but cum. The mixture is enough to sear the hairs off a hog. Thank the Heavens Kayla wasn't one of those women.

"I leave tomorrow, so what are we going to do today?" Kayla asks, sitting at the table in the kitchen.

Adding the eggs to her plate, then mine, I reply, "Well, the first thing we're going to do is go to Mad Dog and Janae's, so you can talk with your sisters." Sitting the pan back on the stove, I pick up the bacon. Placing two on her plate, then three on mine before sitting it on the table, I retrieved the bowl of fresh cut fruits we picked up from the grocery store. As I sit it on the table, I take my seat in front of her.

"After yesterday, I think I'm the last person either one of them wants to talk to," Kayla groans, picking up a slice of bacon, then taking a bite.

Picking up the pitcher of orange juice, I point out, “Your sisters stood up for you against Trappa. I highly doubt they would be harboring any kind of ill will towards you. You need to talk with them in order to bring your family back together.”

Kayla sighs, dropping the rest of the bacon on her plate. “Do you know I’ve called Keshawn over ten times since yesterday, and he won’t answer? I’ve sent him numerous texts and he hasn’t looked at any of them because they’re still reading sent.”

“Which is why you need to meet with your sisters on how to overcome this. The way I see it, three heads are better than one,” I try to rationalize.

Kayla let my words marinate before she picked up the remaining piece of bacon. “You’re right. My sisters and I will try and make Trappa see that our engagement wasn’t a slight against him. I now know I had many opportunities to tell him about our engagement and I should have. Therefore, this is on me. I know he’s mad and I’m going to give him the time he needs to process all of this.”

Forking through my eggs, I tell her, “That sounds like a solid plan, love and I know the three of you can get your brother to see things our way.”

“And if we don’t?” Kayla surprisingly asks.

Staring her straight in the eyes, I reply, “Just know before we walk down the aisle, he will be there willingly or unwillingly.” Kayla gave me a skeptical expression before smiling. Truly I don’t want to harm her brother because I know how much he means to her, but I meant what I said. When the time comes for me and Kayla to get married, I’m going to make sure Trappa is there even if he’s gagged and restrained in a wheelchair. Kayla wants him to be there so it will be up to him whether it’s voluntary or involuntary.

After finishing breakfast, Kayla helped me load the dishes into the dishwasher before we went to the bedroom to get changed. It took everything inside of me not to snatch her up and toss her onto the bed as I got the full view of her removing my tank top she took from the dresser drawer last night, then

her boy shorts. I think Kayla was trying to throw me off from taking her to see Janae and Michelle with her display and it almost worked as my dick hardened and painfully throbbed to be inside of her. It almost worked until common sense slapped me in the face. We had more important things to deal with. So, I started thinking of anything and everything that would kill the raging hard-on in my pants. My mamá teaching me how to cook, my daddy taking me to work with him, or even the most barbaric missions Delta Force had been on.

I let out a sigh of relief when Sir Dick-A-Lot went back to sleep but made a mental note that Kayla would pay later on that night for teasing me like that whether she did it intentionally or not.

Driving over to Mad Dog and Janae's I kept our conversation going by asking Kayla about the details she wanted for the wedding. That seemed to perk her up as she expressed our colors would be her favorite colors of teal, gray, and white. Her dress would be white, Michelle and Janae's teal because she wanted Michelle to be her Matron of Honor and Janae as the Maid of Honor. My tuxedo would be black with a white dress shirt and teal accents along with Mad Dog and Terrence's. With less than five months to get everything together, we needed to get a jump on things.

Kayla was in better spirits once we made it to Mad Dog and Janae's house. Hearing TJ and Leah's laughter from the backyard, we went that way. I chuckled when we rounded the back of the house to find a giant waterslide and the kids sliding it. Leave it up to Mad Dog and Janae to think of something like that.

"It's about time you all showed up," Janae scoffs as she, Mad Dog, Michelle, and Terrence are seated on the patio.

Leading Kayla up the stairs, I respond, "My bad. I didn't know we were on a schedule." Kayla and I sit on two empty chairs at the table.

Lowering her sunglasses, Janae counters, "Hell yeah, you're on a schedule. Everyone is leaving tomorrow, and we

still need to discuss the specifics of your wedding and how to bring our thick-headed brother in from the dark.”

Kayla peers at her sister before saying, “We’re here now, so which topic do you want to address first?”

Michelle quickly answers, “Have you two set a date?”

“We have,” Kayla answers. “July thirtieth.”

“This year?” Janae questions as her eyes dart from the two of us.

“Yes, this year,” I replied.

Janae looks over to Michelle then back at us. “That’s in less than five months.”

“It is,” Kayla returns as I get up, going over to the coolers from yesterday to get us some drinks. After getting me a bottle of beer and Kayla, a Dr. Pepper, I returned to my seat, placing the can in front of her. “But we want a simple wedding.” She turns to her sisters. “Michelle, since you have been married the longest, I would love for you to be my Matron of Honor and Janae, will you be my bridesmaid?”

The sister’s eyes widened with honor before the two graciously replied together, “Yes.”

“Thank you,” Kayla says, clasping her hands together with delight. “Now we just have to figure out a way to get Keshawn to walk me down the aisle.”

Turning to my brother in arms, I confess, “Mad Dog... Mike you and I have been through a lot shit and seen a lot of shit. Not only are you my Commander but also my brother. With that being said, will you be my Best Man?”

“You don’t even have to ask, brother,” Mad Dog returns. “I’m always happy to see one of our brothers finding the happiness we deserve.”

We clink our beer bottles together and take a hearty swig before I ask Terrence, “Soon to be brother-in-law, will you be one of my groomsmen?”

“I’d be honored,” Terrence replies, then scratches his head, asking, “Isn’t the Matron of Honor supposed to walk down with the Best man and the Brides Maid with a Groomsman? How is that going to work?”

Kayla and I glance over at one another before falling into a fit of laughter. I mean, could you really see Michelle walking down the aisle with Mad Dog or Janae with Terrence? We knew that would be a huge question amongst them.

Gathering her composure, Kayla answers, “We knew how that would uneven things with the two couples, so Johann and I thought it would be better that the guys would be standing alongside him at the altar and the ladies would walk down by themselves.”

“Also, it would look funny if my other brothers walked down the aisle by themselves. So, they will be standing with us.” There was no way I wasn’t going to have those knuckleheads not be a part of the ceremony. They deserved to be by my side too.

Everyone shares their agreements with one another before Michelle says, “We’re good with that.”

Janae taps the table, adding, “Since I’m the bridesmaid, the bachelorette party will be held at Club Mystique.” A sinful grin crosses her face. “Get ready little sister because this will be a bachelorette party you will never forget. I didn’t have one and neither did Michelle, so yours is going to be epic.”

I could only imagine what Janae meant by *epic* as Kayla and Michelle laughed along with her. I’m not a prude. I’m sure there will be male strippers there, which I didn’t have a problem with, but do I want them swinging their package in my woman’s face...hell no. I don’t want to voice my grievances, so I make a mental note to get with Tech to find out information on the strippers who would be coming. I want to make sure they know the rules of keeping their hands to themselves.

As the kids enjoyed the waterslide, the ladies began to discuss colors for the wedding, venues for the ceremony, and reception. Who should be invited since Kayla wanted to keep

things intimate with only our closest friends and family. Kayla settled on the colors of red which meant passion, love, energy, and dominance. The accent colors would be white and black. I didn't care to hear what they stood for because the red described our relationship to a tee.

When it came to where the wedding and reception would take place, Janae suggested Club Mystique that is owned by her best friend Nina Kourakos who is also the wife to Balthazar Kourakos, the head of the Greek Mafia family here in Dallas, I had my reservations. Delta Force has done legit business and some off the record shit with them in the past, but having our monumental day at Mystique is not what I nor Kayla envisioned. After throwing out other places, Kayla and I decided to have it at The Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Gardens. I would again have Tech, do his magic to extend the hours for the reception since the Garden closed at five in the afternoon. That way everyone could continue to celebrate our blessed day longer.

After filling stomachs with leftover barbecue and sides from the day before, I state, "It's been good hanging with you all today and I know Kayla needed this." With a smirk, I continue, "But, I would like to spend the rest of the time Kayla is here, putting a smile on her face before she leaves tomorrow."

"Somebody is about to get her back blown out," Janae says under her breath, elbowing Michelle.

"We'll see how long that lasts," Michelle laughs.

As the two of them giggle, Kayla smiles, throwing her napkin at them. "Don't be mad you all's men aren't still putting it down like they used to before you got married. My back being blown out will continue to happen after we're married." My feisty fiancée then places one hand on the table and the other on her hip, leaning closer to her sisters. "And who says I'm the one getting my back blown out? You can blow a person's back out while riding on top."

Their laughter ceases as they glance at one another before Janae murmurs, "Well damn." The three stare each down, then

Janae yells, “We always knew you were the freak out of the three of us!” She and Michelle high-five each other.

“Shut up,” Kayla snickers. “And for your information, Michelle is a freak. Ask her about the secret drawer she and Terrence have.”

If being exposed was a person, it would definitely be Michelle as she quickly drops her head. Terrence brings his beer bottle to his lips, looking anywhere other than facing the sisters.

“Michelle, no?” Janae lets out, trying to hold in her laughter.

Mad Dog holds up his hand, saying, “For the record, neither my wife nor I have any problem with blowing each other’s backs out..” He shrugs his shoulders. “It’s a mutual thing.”

As the four of them are dealing with what was revealed, I helped Kayla from her seat. We say our goodbyes and hug everyone before I lead her to the truck.

Although they didn’t bring it up, I know how much it meant to them to have Trappa walk Kayla down the aisle, but if he was so dead set against it. I was happy Janae and Michelle made sure to keep the focus strongly on the wedding and not their brother.

As her sisters hugged her, and not knowing that I heard Janae tell Kayla she would be calling her to inform her of the date for the bachelorette party which would be the weekend before the wedding. I shook Mad Dog’s hand before he strongly pulled me close to him.

“Oh, the fellows and I are going to give you one hell of a bachelor party that will rival what the ladies are going to give Kayla. You can count on that.”

I couldn’t help the comical laugh that left me. When Mad Dog let me go, Terrence was all smiles as he shook my hand. No doubt, he and Mad Dog had previously talked about the bachelor party.

Leaving everyone in the front yard, Kayla and I climbed into my truck.

“So, what do the guys have planned for your bachelor party?” she asked.

After locking my seatbelt in, I gave her a mischievous grin before replying, “I’m sure it’s probably the same as what your sister has planned for yours.”

Throwing the gear into drive, I happily squealed the tires before darting off. Of her family, two out of the three of them were on me and Kayla’s side and I’m fine with that. Since the day we laid eyes on each other, our fates had been sealed. No one, not even Trappa himself could come between that.

Chapter 8

Kayla

Since announcing our engagement to our family, a month ago, it's been a rush planning for the wedding. I'm finding out how exciting and exhausting the task can be, but I'm enjoying every moment of it.

I thought Michelle, Janae, and I could handle putting things together in the short amount of time we had, but things started getting overwhelmed with planning and work. So, I hired one of the best wedding coordinators in Dallas to organize the event. Ms. Silvia Latimer, owner of Weddings Extraordinaire is all about her business. After having a video chat with her, relaying where the wedding would take place, the colors I picked out, and the type of food we wanted to be served at the reception, Silvia metaphorically took the bulls by the horn. Not only do we have a caterer, florist, and serving staff, but I fly back to Dallas next week to pick out my wedding dress. Michelle and Janae will be there as well, trying on their dresses. I'd never been the girly-girly type, but I was giddy about seeing the dress she had picked out for me.

KeShawn still isn't talking to any of us and that's fine. After the second week of him not responding to my calls or texts, I did what Johann suggested and let him have his time to process things. I couldn't let his feelings get in the way of preparing for my future with Johann. I love my brother and I could only hope one day he would come around.

After returning to Florida, I immediately called Johann when I pulled into my parking space and saw a gray Land Rover in my guest parking spot with a red bow wrapped around it.

"What did you do?" I yelled into the phone.

Johann laughed, trying to play dumb. "What are you talking about and how was your flight?"

“You know what the hell I’m talking about, and my flight was fine. Johann, what is this Land Rover doing in my guest parking space?”

He finally came clean. “I told you we needed a larger vehicle for when I came to visit. Now we have one. The key fobs are at the property manager office and all of the paperwork is in the glove compartment.”

“Oh, my God,” I said, then added, “I hope you don’t think I’m not going to be driving it when you’re not here.”

Johann laughed harder. “Really, Kayla? I bought it for you to drive whenever you want to. I just need it for space, but it’s yours, baby.”

“Thank you, Johann. You are so good to me,” I purred.

“And will always be,” he returned.

We continued to chat as I backed out of the parking spot, then went to the property manager’s office. I went inside and told the secretary why I was there. She made a call to the property manager, Margo then hung up. Seconds later, Margo was coming out of her office.

“You must be putting in some work to receive a gift like this,” Margo jokes, handing me the small envelope.

Taking it from her, I threw back, “Not as much as he is,” leaving her standing there stuck on stupid. Don’t play with me.

The next day I went straight to personnel at the base to formally hand in the required paperwork for me to officially retire from the Air Force. A week later, I received confirmation that it had gone through. At the time I only had less than seven months left before I would have to decide to extend my time with the Air Force or officially walk away as an Honorable Veteran. Honestly, I was looking forward to walking away. I was ready to be with my man, laying in the same bed with him every night, cooking together, or should I say, messing up the kitchen as we tried to cook. I was just ready for my time in the Air Force to end.

I had spent so much time away from my family only because I was running away from the shit KeShawn and

Michelle had been through. I wanted to be so far away from the past that I chose to hide behind the Air Force, but no more. I've accomplished everything I wanted in my career. Now, it was time for me to go home to be with my family and the man who came in at a time I wasn't looking to be with anyone. I had been single for so long, only dating here and there, and I was fine with that. But see how God will put the person you're destined to be with in your path when you least expected it. I'm sure Michelle and Janae experienced the same thing with Terrence and Mike.

I let out a laugh, listening to my thoughts as I get dressed in my uniform. I and another pilot are testing new F-35A Lightning II fighter jets. Nothing major, just an in and out flight to base in Colombia.

As I'm in the master bathroom brushing my hair back into a bun, my phone starts to ring. I quickly wrap the ponytail holder around the bun, securing it in place before racing into the bedroom to retrieve my cellphone.

I smile, looking at the screen to see its Johann video calling me. With no hesitancy, I hit the accept icon.

"Hey, baby," I greet.

"Hey yourself," he greets back with a warm smile. "I see you're formally dressed, so I can only assume you are doing a flight mission today."

Smiling back at him, I return, "I am." I took the phone back into the bathroom so I can finish getting ready. I sit it on the sink.

"And where are you going today and for what?" Johann asks as I balance the phone on the sink so we can clearly see each other.

Picking up the tube of hand cream, I snicker while replying, "Johann, just like the confidential missions you and Delta Force go on, I can't tell you that, but what I will say is that we're going to Colombia. Maybe I might run into some of those sexy men I hear the other female pilots raving about." I knew it would trigger him, but I couldn't help myself.

Johann's demeanor grew dark. "Don't make me have Tech find out where you're going, Kayla. You got jokes, but I got guarantees."

I think I went just a little bit too far, so to put out the flames, I counter, "Baby, you know I'm just playing with you. Trust me when I say you have nothing to worry about. You are the only Puerto Rican slash German man I want. Which is why I'm wearing this ring on my finger."

"Damn, straight." He growls as his attitude changes into the happy go lucky one that initially greeted me. "I know you can't say too much about your flight but call me when you get settled Stateside."

"I will," I promise. "I can't wait to see you next week."

Johann chuckles. "I have so much planned for us, you might miss your dress fitting,"

"Oh, I don't think so. Silvia would have my head," I laugh.

"That I know. She's a wedding perfectionist. I told you how she had me and the guys at the tuxedo place last week for over six hours. We couldn't leave until she cleared every one of us, then she told us not to go on a binge eating spree because the measurements the tailor had down for us wouldn't change." Johann laughs louder. "Mad Dog was the only one that really took offense because now instead of doing his Sunday steak cookout for us guys, he would have to do chicken. My only concern was having to give up my beer, but after finding out Michelob Ultra has zero carbs, and still has alcohol content, I didn't mind. I don't mind giving up the beef before our wedding. I want to look sexy in my tux anyway." He fixes an imaginary tie around his neck.

"You are so special," I laugh. "Johann, baby, whether you eat beef or not, you will fit into your tux. You're too disciplined in working out to gain an extra pound."

Johann faces me on the screen, making his pectorals jump with a smirk.

"I'm about to go on a no beef or pork diet for the wedding. That's the only way I know to keep my weight or size the

same,” Johann informs, still flexing his muscles.

Closing my eyes, I shake my head. Surely, he wasn’t being serious. “Johann, you can eat whatever you want.”

He stares into the camera, then says, “Really, Kayla? When you pick out your dress next week, are you not going to do everything to ensure you fit into it on our wedding day?”

Shit, he had me there. Ms. Sylvia has emailed me pictures of dresses she has picked out and they were all beautiful, but I’m so active with a high metabolism, I doubt I would have to change my diet.

“Well love, you do what you need to do, because there is no way I’m giving up a nice juicy steak. No, sir,” I say, grinning at him.

Johann throws me a wolfish smile, showing me his pearly white teeth. “If you lived here now, I could think of some ways to help burn off calories.”

“I bet you could, nasty man,” I laughed harder.

“But you love this nasty man.” He smirks.

“I sure do,” I proudly return. “Anyway babe, I need to finish getting ready. I’ll call you as soon as I get back, okay?”

“Okay, but Kayla please be careful.”

“Always and I love you.”

“I love you too,” Johann says before we end the chat.

A little over an hour later, I’m dressed in my CWU 27/P Nomex flight suit and harness with my helmet under my arm. Some might’ve seen it as a scene from Top Gun, but please watch it again and let me know if they were packing a fiery 9mm secured to their side as I walk towards the jets with Fighter Pilot Phelps next to me. Phelps and I have done test flights together in the past, so this would be a piece of cake.

“Those babies are shining like new fucking pennies,” Phelps praises. “I love when we’re the first ones to fly them.”

“Me too,” I say, strapping on my helmet. “They still have that new car smell to them.”

Phelps stops, then turns to me. “Then let’s get these test drives in the air. Maybe we can do some aerial tricks while we’re up there.”

“I don’t think so. At the speed we’ll be going, I don’t recommend it,” I state. “These are not your daddy’s crop duster planes, Phelps.”

“No, they’re not but if I can fly a crop duster upside down, then I know I can with one of these.” He laughs.

“And if you do, I’m sure the higher ups will be waiting for you when we return. Doing aerial tricks are not a part of testing,” I point out, continuing to the jet.

“You’re no fun, Farrow,” he jeers.

Halting my steps, I pivot around to face him. “When I have this suit on, there is no such thing as fun.”

“Damn, she told him.” I overhear an Airman say to another when I reach the stairs to the cockpit.

Placing my right foot on the first step, I told them, “And did. A little advice to the two of you; once you raise your right hand and take that oath, there are no fun and games in the Air Force. Those who think that it is will never make it. Luckily, Fighter Pilot Phelps hasn’t reacted on his impulses.”

I put on my helmet, then continued to climb up the stairs. Stepping over into the cockpit. I take my seat. Next, I lock in my harness, then plug in my helmet for noise attenuation, headphones and a microphone. After confirming communication with Phelps and control, I secure my oxygen mask for LOX, otherwise known as liquid oxygen before sliding down the face mask.

I begin flipping the controls to start the engine. As the jet comes to life, I give the Airmen on the ground a thumb’s up as I push the button for the canopy to close. Taking in a deep breath, I say a quick prayer for a safe flight to and from Colombia. This is part of my routine before every flight. Phelps and I might not be going into battle, but you never know what could go wrong. All you can do is ask the Almighty above to grant you safe travels.

When I finish, the Marshaller is in front of the jet to direct me to the airstrip. Maneuvering the jet, a thought hits me. *Was I really ready to give all of this up? The adrenaline of flying one of these jets, the rank I have risen to in my career, and the stability I have with being a part of the Air Force. Was I really ready to walk away from all of that?* Johann's handsome face flashes in my head, causing me to smile. Yeah, for him I'm willing to let this all go. I've put in my time and now it's time for me to move onto the next chapter in life.

In no time, Phelps coasted alongside me as we exchanged banter between the two of us. The folks listening in probably found our interaction hilarious, but I'm sure they were used to it by now. Being this high in the air, not knowing if anything will happen, it's good to have another person flying along with you.

With the F-35A speed of Mach 1.6 (1.200mph), we entered Colombia in record timing. With the base thirty minutes away Phelps and I began to descend. Unfortunately, I guess someone knew about our arrival because missiles were launched. We had no time to pull eject from the jets as they started to pummel. I type in every code, sequence, or backup that would have kept me from a certain death. The only thing I could do was hold on and say a final prayer. If I didn't make it, at least I would finally see my momma again. When the jet hit the ground, I vaguely remember it being thrown around like a rag doll as the jet tore through trees and foliage. As it finally came to a jolting stop, blood began to run into my eyes. I attempted to blink away the blood, trying to gather in the scenes around me before my eyelids closed.

I don't know how long I was out, but pain surging through my body woke me. I probably have a concussion, a few broken ribs, and the throbbing pain coming from my right femur is a good indication that it's broken too. My arms and legs are bound to a chair in a dark room, and something is restraining my head. "*What the holy fuck?*," bounces through my brain. No one other than the higher ups knew about the test flights, so how the hell could we have been ambushed like this? Especially flying a F-35A aircraft. They're to be one of the best stealth fighter jets, so how the hell could this happen?

As my eyes become more focused, the light in the room comes on. The door opens and a Latino man donned in army fatigues comes in with two other men behind him. He stands before me. “Good, good you’re awake,” he says with a deep accent.

“Is that good for you or me?” I question, frowning at him.

He chuckles as he looks at the armed men in the room. “I would have to say it’s good for me.” He pulls out a cigar and lighter. Putting the cigar to his lips, he lights it, then sucks in enough to get the cigar lit. Once he is satisfied, he takes the cigar from his lips, then blows on the ambered tip.

On his last blow, the man looks at me. “Ms. Farrow, I know you and the others are innocent in all of this. So, to keep you all alive and healthy for you all to go home to your families, I just need a little bit of information from you.”

“Fuck you,” I hoarsely let out as blood and spit drops from my lips.

He looked at the floor, then back at me. He tsked repeatedly before informing, “Ms. Farrow, that is not the way to react to someone that is trying to spare your life. I would think you would have a little more consideration. Since I know who you are and you don’t know who I am, let me formally introduce myself; I’m Enrico Esteban, the eldest son of Ricardo Esteban.”

As the name registers in my brain as the one Delta Force took out in the Dominican Republic, Enrico continues, “Ah, I see you know my father’s name.” He begins walking in circles around me. “The man who was killed by those assholes you were with.”

Through gritted teeth, I lied, “I don’t know what you’re talking about and where is Phelps?”

“Oh, the other pilot, he’s in another room,” Enrico replies. “Now whether he stays alive is up to you.”

I scream out, “Hooah” hoping Phelps could hear me.

When there was no response, Enrico laughed. “He can’t answer you if his mouth is taped up.”

“What the fuck do you want from me?” I scream.

Enrico backhands the shit out of me.

“I don’t want shit from you! What I want is revenge for my father and you’re going to help me,” he sneers as I lick away the fresh blood on my lips. “I suggest you comply for your own good. Your body is already banged up, and that slap is only a taste of what’s to come.”

Glaring at him, I ask, “How did you know about the test flights and more importantly, how were you able to trace the jets?”

Enrico smirks, replying, “Why would I tell you that? Just like your boyfriend and Delta Force, we all have our secrets.” Turning towards his men, Enrico tells them, “Let’s give her some time to think over her options.”

As they left the room, the last man turned the light off before closing the door. Although I showed no fear, I was scared. Closing my eyes to fight back the tears, I pray somehow Johann finds out what has happened. I didn’t want to betray Delta Force, but I couldn’t let Enrico and his men fatally harm Phelps. He’s innocent in all of this. Even if I had to pretend to help Enrico with this suicide mission he had towards Delta Force, then that’s what I was going to do. Enrico didn’t know, but by taking me hostage, he had pretty much signed his own death warrant. All I needed to do is keep Phelps and I alive long enough for Delta Force to ride in like the fucking calvary.

Chapter 9

Blade

As usual after seeing Kayla through our video chats, I was ready to take on the day ahead. She's like that extra shot of espresso for me. I can't wait to see and hold her next week. I often thought of myself as Superman. Yes, kryptonite is a weakness for him, but his real weakness was Lois Lane and that's how Kayla is for me. I can take on a lot of shit but fuck with my woman and the knives come out.

When we ended our call, I left home, and went to the Delta Force Security office. My spirits were up, and I was ready to take on the day.

After everyone had arrived, Mad Dog began to dole out assignments. Lethal and I were paired up to install security systems out North to a business and a residential home tucked off away from surrounding neighbors. Lethal and I began to load the company van with the equipment we would need before heading out.

“Look brother, I'm not trying to be disrespectful, but are you sure you're ready for the whole marriage thing?” Lethal asks, driving through a green light.

Staring ahead, I reply, “I've never been so sure in my life. Kayla is part of me, I always want to stay connected to.” Not wanting to toss out a cheap shot, but I couldn't help myself. “Maybe if you lightened up some, you and Agent Vaughn could get your happily ever after too.”

Lethal tightens his grip on the steering wheel. “Whatever Ashley, sorry Agent Vaughn and I had in the past is over. We are only mutual allies working together.”

Chuckling, I say, “Yeah, keep telling yourself that.”

Our first installation was at a hair supply store. The owner said he has tried different ways to keep thieves from stealing his expensive weaves and wigs, but the culprits always find a way to get around them. We assured him after we installed our

equipment, he wouldn't have that problem again. Lethal and I began to get to work. By the time we were finished, the owner had eight undetectable security cameras placed around the store. We placed a monitor at the front of the door, so thieves could see that from the point of entry to when they leave, there would always be eyes on them. I also gave him the name of a company that could give him an updated security sticker to put on his high-end products. The owner was so pleased with our work, he offered to give discounts to our female counterparts. I graciously declined because Kayla's hair was natural, and she already had a regimen for her hair. Lethal thought about it, no doubt thinking about Agent Vaughn before declining as well.

After loading up our tools, Lethal and I got back into the van and were off to do the residential job. Our ride was more pleasant as we talked about my bachelor party and the shenanigans we would get into. I laid back into the seat, enjoying our conversation.

Before moving on to the next installation, we stopped and grabbed a bite to eat for lunch. Once finished, we continued to our next destination.

When we arrived at the house, Lethal and I looked at each other as we took in the sight before us. The yard was cluttered with broken down vehicles I was sure the salvage yard wouldn't even take. Old tires and car parts laid next to them.

"Are you sure this is the right address?" I asked, staring at the worn down house with shingles hanging off of it and the old sheds in the back.

"I'm sure. This is where the GPS sent us, so..." Lethal replied, parking in front of the house. "Which one of us is going to go knock on the door to confirm?" He laughed when I gave him a *'not me'* expression. "Fine, you know how it goes."

We counted to three, hitting our fist in the palm of our hand. Lethal opened his hand flat just as I kept my fist clenched together.

"Shit," I uttered.

“That’s right brother. Paper beats rock every time,” Lethal joked, shutting off the engine.

“Yeah, yeah,” I said, removing my seat belt. “You just make sure to keep your eyes on me at all times. We don’t know what the fuck is going to be on the other side of that door.”

I grumbled as Lethal saluted me. Grabbing the work tablet, I got out and made my way through the clutter to the front door. Looking over my shoulder, Lethal gave me a thumbs up with a cheesy ass grin. Shaking my head, I turned back to the door, then knocked.

“Who the hell is it?” a woman’s voice yells from inside. Before I could reply, the door swung open. I don’t know what hit me first, the smell that lingered outside or the sight of a robust older woman with wild hair and a few missing teeth standing there. “Who the hell are you?”

‘Please, let this be the wrong address.’ I thought to myself before replying, “Hi, I’m with Delta Force Security,” I glanced at the name on the order, then continued, “Is this the residence of Mrs. Mathers?”

Well shit. “Mrs. Mathers, my co-worker and I are here to install the security systems you ordered.”

“That’s right,” she confirmed.

Glancing at the order again, I start to go over it with her. “So, you want a security system installed inside the house with cameras at the front and back door as well as the sheds?”

“Yes,” she returned, tightening the strap around her dingy housecoat.

“Great,” I said, removing the stylus from the tablet. “If I can get you to sign right here, confirming the order is correct, we’ll get started.” I handed her the stylus, then indicated where she would sign.

Once she scribbled her name, I took the stylus back from her. “Thank you. If we have any questions, we’ll knock at the door.”

“Fine, but don’t make a lot of noise. My babies are sleeping,” she informed.

“Yes, ma’am,” I said, quickly turning, then damn near power walked back to the van.

Lethal met me at the back of the van. “From the amount of time you were up, I guess this is the right place.”

“Unfortunately,” I responded, opening the backdoors. “I don’t understand why she would want to have a security system and cameras for this place. Look at it. Who would want to steal shit from here?”

Lethal shrugged his shoulders, replying, “Maybe she has some buried loot around here. It doesn’t matter anyway because she has already paid, so a job is a job.”

“If you say so, but something about this place isn’t right to me,” I returned, gathering my gear. “I’ll be in the back.”

Midway through the installation, my suspicions about the place were confirmed. I called on the walkie for Lethal to meet me in front of the house.

“What’s up?” he asked as we stood at the van.

Before I could respond Mrs. Mathers appeared.

“Are you done?” Mrs. Mathers inquired through her missing teeth.

“No ma’am,” Lethal replied.

She narrowed her eyes on us. “Then less talk and more work.”

Trying to deflate the situation, I stated, “Ma’am, I just need to converse with my co-worker. Plus, it’s time for us to take a break.”

“Bullshit,” Mrs. Mathers rebelled. “I paid for a service, and I expect it to be done.” She tilted her head back, then yelled out, “Babies, they’re trying to half ass us.”

Seconds later, two big burly inbreeds come through the door. Those are her babies. WTF? From they’re appearances

with scabs on their face, missing teeth, and unkempt hygiene, confirmed what I found out, the place was a meth lab.

Mrs. Mathers stood proudly next to the lab rats at her sides. “Either you finish what you started, or Dewayne and Sylvester will tear you limb from limb.”

Side eyeing Lethal, who smiled, I brought my attention to Mrs. Mathers. “Trust me, you don’t want to do this. Just from what I saw and now your *babies*, I know the house and surrounding buildings are part of a meth lab. The best thing for *you* to do is walk away.”

I guess the toothless wonder thought she could call our bluff as she ordered her sons to attack us. Glancing over to Lethal, I told him, “Quick and painful.”

Lethal nodded as Dewayne and Sylvester came closer to us. Dewayne is the first to feel the sharpness of my knives as I swiped the blades across his chest. He takes a few steps back, stunned by what just happened to him as he touches the gashes, then looks at the blood on his hand. Looking over to Lethal and Sylvester, Sylvester had no fight as Lethal pulled out his 500 S & W Magnum and cracked him in the head with the butt of the gun. Sylvester’s eyes rolled back as he dropped to the ground.

“My babies,” Mrs. Mathers screeched, running down the stairs to her sons.

Holstering my blades, I said, “And this could have been avoided if you hadn’t brought your sons into it. We told you we would finish the job at another time, but you thought we were trying to get over on you.” With my knives in place, I articulated, “This is on you. Now, because of your son’s behavior, we will not be returning. Consider your contract null and void.”

As Mrs. Mathers cried over her sons, Lethal and I gathered our equipment. I did have tiny bit of sympathy for her. What mother wants to see her children get their asses beaten in front of them, but that could have been avoided if she hadn’t commanded them to come for us.

When our tools were loaded, Lethal and I jumped in the van and headed towards the Delta Force Security office.

“You know we have to tell Mad Dog about this?” Lethal asked when we were ten minutes away from the office.

“I do, and I’m sure he will understand why we had to take the action that we did,” I replied, pretending to look at the scenery around us.

I for one knew Mad Dog was going to flip his shit once he heard what happened, but what were we supposed to do? Let the Children of The Corn try to kill us and not fight back? I had confidence he would understand why we did what we did.

Mad Dog actually thought the shit was funny when we told him once we made it back to the office. His only gripe was we should have taken down the three cameras we installed. Other than that, he thought we handled the situation accordingly.

After entering the incident into our files, then permanently barring Mrs. Mathers with any business in the future, I said goodbye to my brothers. I was ready to get home and relax before Kayla called me.

Around six in the evening, I was cleaned up, dressed in a pair of basketball shorts and a t-shirt. I had ordered a buffalo chicken ranch pizza and ate half of it while drinking a few beers. I was still waiting for Kayla to call.

By seven, I called her cellphone to check on her. That wasn’t like Kayla not to call me. Maybe she was exhausted from the test flight. Flying from one country to the next, then back can take a toll.

I waited as the line rang, then her voicemail picked up.

“Hi, you’ve reached Kayla Farrow. I’m either on the other line or away from my phone. Please leave a message after the beep. Thanks.”

Damn I loved the sound of her sexy voice.

The line beeped and I left a message.

“Hey, baby. It’s me. I was calling to check on you. Call me when you get this message. I love you.”

Ending the call, I went into the kitchen to get another beer, then returned to the living room. Picked up the remote control and turned on the television as I sat on the couch. I decided to stay up and watch a movie until she called back.

Sleep must have taken over at some point because this morning I awoke to the irritating sound of my alarm clock going off in my bedroom. There's no telling how long it's been blaring. Sitting up on the couch, I yawn while stretching before Kayla pops in my head. Did I miss her call last night? Snatching my cellphone from the coffee table, I enter my security code to unlock it.

What the hell? There's no missed calls or texts. What is going on? Kayla and I have never had a night or day for that matter, we didn't talk. This isn't like Kayla at all.

I tried calling her again, but this time it went straight to voicemail. I leave another message.

"Baby, I'm going to take it that you were too tired to call me last night and that's fine. I understand. I'm about to get ready for work, so call me when you can. I love you."

Confident Kayla would call me once she woke up, I went into my bedroom to silence the alarm clock, then get ready for work.

Pulling into the Delta Force Security office, I notice everyone's vehicles are parked. Even Trappa's. What the hell is he doing here? He won't talk to his sisters but is here. Finding an empty spot, I park.

I'm surprised to see all of the other guys standing around with Mad Dog and Trappa sitting in the lobby chairs.

"The gangs all here now," Venom mumbles.

Getting straight to it, I ask Mad Dog, "What is this about?"

He tries to appease me by replying, "Why don't you take a seat."

After hearing that shit it couldn't be good. "No, I prefer to stand."

Mad Dog let out a defeated sigh before, saying, "Trappa."

Trappa locks eyes with me, before informing, “I got a call earlier from Kayla’s Senior Colonial this morning, since I am listed as her next of kin. Kayla and the pilot who she was flying with yesterday morning were shot down over Colombia.”

Surely, I didn’t hear him correctly. I dug into my ears to make sure there weren’t any obstacles blocking my hearing. “Say that again?”

When Trappa repeats what he said, a burst of adrenaline hits me. Everything in the room turned red. Anger, rage, and death fills me. My only thoughts are to leave the office to go and find my fiancée, but my efforts are cut off by Lethal and Venom as they grab me and take me to the ground. Venom hovers over me with a syringe in his hand as I try to free myself from their clutches.

Cutting my eyes to Lethal, I plead, “Don’t do this brother. You would feel the same way if it was Agent Vaughn.”

Lethal’s voice softens as he says, “I’m sorry, brother.”

Venom injects me with the contents of the syringe. Moments later, I’m in a world of darkness. I know my brothers were only looking out for me but once I regained consciousness, I didn’t know if the feeling was mutual. Mad Dog always talk about a plan but when shit like this happens, fuck a plan. I need to find out where Kayla is.

Sometime later, I woke up in a groggy state. Getting my bearings, I shake my head, then flex my arms and legs. Thankfully, my brothers didn’t have me pinned down anymore. I was never a threat to them, I only wanted to get to Kayla. I’m sure either one of them would have done the same thing if they were in my shoes.

Taking in the surroundings around me, I knew we were in the back room of the office.

“What’s going on?” I ask no one in particular.

Tech moves in closer, informing, “Brother, I promise you I didn’t know anything about this Enrico Esteban. Nothing in the senior Esteban’s profile listed that he had children.

Obviously, he kept them under the radar from enemies or emissaries like us.”

“Who the fuck is Enrico Esteban?” I questioned.

Tech answers, “He’s the son of Ricardo Esteban. He’s trying to get retribution from what we did to his father. Blade, you are not alone. Delta Force stands with you. Not only is Kayla your fiancée but by extension of you, she is our sister.” He offers me his hand to sit up. I take it. “We’ll get her home.” Tech vows before embracing me. I hugged my brother knowing if I would have reacted on impulse, there was a chance Kayla, and the other pilot might be dead by now.

Mad Dog makes his way toward us, I ask, “What’s going on?”

“Tech’s working on finding the location where the jets went down. More than likely, Enrico has destroyed Kayla and the other pilot, Phelps’ cellphones because he can’t get a signal on them. Tech’s working with someone he knows with the Air Force to get more information. While he’s doing his thing, I sent the Things to get the carrier jet ready. When we find out where they’re at, we’re flying the fuck out of here. Hopefully, we won’t have any complications.”

“We better not,” Trappa, who I didn’t see sitting on the other side up from me, declares. “This is why I didn’t want my sister to be involved with your ass. How the fuck am I supposed to believe you’re going to protect her from the backlash of the shit you all do? My sisters aren’t built for the type of world you are exposing them to.” He gives me a death look before saying, “If you really love her, then after all of this is settled, let her go. Kayla can do so much better than you.”

Although I wasn’t completely one hundred percent, it didn’t stop me from lunging off the seat at him. We exchange blows like two prize fighters going for the heavyweight belt. Tech and Mad Dog try to pull me back, but I push them off me as I continue exchanging swings with Trappa. I hear Mad Dog behind me telling the others, “Fuck it, let them fight it out and get it out of their systems. We’ll stop it before they can kill each other.”

Using my elbow, I slam it down on the top of Trappa's head. He dropped to one knee from the impact and pain.

"I love your sister. I would never let anything happen to her," I bark, spitting blood and saliva onto the floor.

Trappa does the same before punching me in the family jewels. My brothers make groaning sounds as I drop down to Trappa's level. He fists my shirt, saying, "But you did," he roars before head butting me. Stars flash before my eyes as I fall back.

Trappa straddles my body, wrapping his strong hands around my neck, then begins to squeeze. As I choke for air, Trappa hands constrict more. Not wanting it to get to this point, I reach for my knives. They were gone. Obviously, my brothers thought about removing them, but they didn't know about the others secretly had on me. Going to their hiding places, I remove the two stilettos with tapered blades. In one swift motion, I have them anchored cross ways against Trappa's throat just enough to break the first layer of skin. Blood starts to run down his neck, causing Trappa to ease up his grip around my throat.

Looking at him man to man, I state, "I don't want to kill you Trappa, but I will. Either we learn to work together, or all hopes of finding Kayla are out the door. Do you agree?"

Trappa peers down at me with disdain, before rolling off of me. "Fuck you."

"I'll take that as a yes," I say, before letting out a sigh of relief. I don't know how Kayla would react to finding out I killed her brother, but I knew it wouldn't be good, although I was protecting myself. Putting the knives away, I stand.

"I thought we removed all of your knives," Tech says.

Chuckling, I can only declare, "You should know me better than that, brother."

He and the others laugh as he responds, "Duly noted. The next time we know to do a full body search on you."

"And you still wouldn't find them all," I counter, leaving them speechless as I go towards the bathroom.

Shit, they could do a full body search, run me through a TSA screening and they still wouldn't be able to find all the knives located on me. The average police pat down wouldn't register my knives. I love my brothers, but I'm sure every one of us kept some type of secret about ourselves from the others and this one is mine.

Sitting with an ice pack on my neck, Mad Dog plops down next to me.

"How are you feeling?"

"Just peachy," I reply, moving the ice pack to the other side of my neck. "Does Janae and Michelle know?"

"No, we decided to keep it from them," Mad Dog replies. "But to keep them safe, I sent Janae on an unexpected trip to visit Michelle and her family. I informed Balthazar about what happened and asked that he convince Nina to give Janae the days off. Without going into too much detail with his wife, Nina agreed. Now get your fucking head in the game. We got shit to do and I don't need you and Trappa to go another round. If we're going to have a successful mission, you and Trappa need to put your differences to the side. Understood?"

"Roger that, Commander," I responded.

He taps my shoulder as he gets up, then joins Tech. Glancing around, my eyes stop at Trappa who is glaring back at me. For the sake of rescuing Kayla, I'm willing to work beside him, but once this is over, I could give a rat's ass if our paths ever crossed again.

Chapter 10

Kayla

I was finally able to see Phelps when Enrico had his men helped us out of the house, he was keeping us in. Phelps looked pretty banged up as he looked over at me. Even with my lips swollen, I tried to give him a smile, indicating to stay strong and that I was sorry. He slightly tilted his head before the men around him transferred him into the back of an SUV. I was put in another with two of his men sitting next to me and Enrico sat in the front passenger seat.

As the driver pulls away, I ask Enrico, “Where are you taking us?”

Enrico turns in his seat, smiling. “I had two American fighter jets shot down, I would be an idiot to stay here, knowing your government will come looking.”

“So, like I asked, where are you taking us?”

“Home of course,” he chuckles.

Is he taking us back to Florida? I hope so, then I know Blade and the others would definitely find us.

“Florida?” I inquire.

Enrico stops laughing, then answers, “Do you really think I would bring the fight to your boyfriends’ doorsteps? I have a better advantage in my homeland.”

“Which is?”

“The Dominican Republic, of course. Before they caught my father by surprise, but it won’t happen this time. My men and I will be ready for them, and after we kill all of them, you will work for me. With that body of yours and beauty, I know my clients will pay a hefty price to spend time with you.”

Knowing that it wouldn’t get that far because by now Delta Force has learned of the situation, I continue to probe. “And what about Phelps?”

“What about him?” Enrico hisses. “He’s still alive because his life is the bargaining chip for you to do what I need you to do. Oh, I’ve studied you for a while Ms. Farrow and I know how dedicated you are to your family fellow Airmen. And if I have to kill Phelps to get what I want, then I’ll move onto your sister, Michelle and that beautiful family of hers. I know getting to Janae would be a tough one since she’s married to the leader of Delta Force which is why you’re here.”

Leaning forward, I promise, “If you kill Phelps or fuck with my family, they are going to kill you. Hell, just from what you’ve done, they are still going to kill you.”

“Not before I kill them first,” Enrico challenges before facing forward.

Our ride ended at the landing strip where a private jet sat. Phelps and I were boarded onto the jet with Enrico’s men still keeping us apart. Once we were on the flight, despite my numerous injuries the pain in my leg became unbearable.

“Can you give me something for the pain? And I’m sure Phelps needs some too.” I plead.

“Does this look like a fucking pharmacy to you?” Enrico guffawed. “You’re lucky I didn’t make your ass crawl onto the plane. Don’t worry. Once we’re back in the DR, I will have my doctors attend to you. I can’t make money off of damaged goods, right?”

As he continued to laugh, I looked away hoping the love of my life and his brothers would find me before I ended up in a life of certain torture and abuse.

When the plane finally landed, Phelps and I were taken off and forcefully put into cars this time. The discomfort and pain radiating through my entire body, I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy, except for Enrico. Phelps had to be feeling the same way because he cried out when they shoved him in the backseat.

My heart shattered knowing his agony was because of me. Phelps, who could be a narcissist and Neanderthal at times, he didn’t deserve this.

As the driver drove, I sat back, listening to Enrico and his men talk. They must have thought I couldn't understand the language as they spoke so freely around me, but I did. Not only was I fluent in Spanish, but also French and Italian.

Enrico was discussing a shipment of drugs and women coming in the next two days. He wanted them to be ready because he was going to be dealing with someone new, but from doing a background check on the guy, Enrico thought he was solid. As they continued to discuss the specifics of the deal, Enrico finally dropped the name of the other guy, Alhoud. I might not know everything Delta Forces does, but I did know they protected people from human trafficking. I locked the name in my mental rolodex, to give it to Johann, granted that I make it out of this shit alive.

Reading every sign or bulletin board that passed, I tried to figure out our location. I started to get frustrated because none was helping until we came across one that read, Bona. Other than Punta Cana and Santo Domingo, I had not heard of this city.

We pass by what I would call mini mansions before entering the gates of the most extravagant one out of all of them. Men and women are waiting out front with wheelchairs. These men are a bit more gentler taking Phelps and I out of the cars.

Once inside, Enrico approaches me. He holds out a cellphone, showing me Johann's number.

"All I need for you to do right now is to tell your boyfriend you're still alive. Do you think you can do that without trying any heroics?" Enrico asks with wolves' eyes in sheep's clothing.

"Yeah, I can do that," I reply. Personally. I knew I didn't have to worry about shit. Once the call is put through, Mad Dog would have Tech trace the call find out where we're at. But another thought hits me, maybe this is what Enrico wants. He knows what Delta Force is capable of and they would be coming after the call. This could be his way of setting them up

for an ambush. I'm willing to do whatever it takes to keep them from that.

"Go ahead," I responded with a plan in my head.

Enrico hits the call icon before putting the call on speaker. Johann answers on the second ring.

"Kayla is this you?" he worriedly asks.

Holding my emotions intact, I reply, "Yes, baby it's me."

There's a brief moment of silence before Johann inquires, "Are you okay?"

Although I want to tell him everything, I look over to Enrico. He moves his head from side to side, informing me to keep the details to myself.

"I'm fine." I answered, hoping we'd been on the line long enough for them to trace the call.

Enrico snatches the phone away from me, then aggressively grabs my side causing me to scream out in pain.

"Kayla! Kayla!" I heard Johann yell on the phone.

Enrico holds the phone to his mouth and says, "I'll be in touch," then ends the call.

"That was enough catching up." He slides the phone in his pocket.

Enrico grins as my tears fall. "That got his attention. I know they traced the call, so I'm sure I'll be seeing them in less than twenty-four hours. Don't worry, though, I'll let you see your man and say your goodbyes one last time before I kill him. Take her to the special guest room in the back," he orders.

A maid begins to push the wheelchair towards a hall on the right with two of Enrico's men following.

Once in the room, the maid gave me a sympathetic expression as I asked her to help me into the bathroom. Being a pilot you learn how to control your bladder when you have to be on long flights. Some choose to wear diapers, catheters, or collection devices, but I couldn't see myself wearing a

diaper or inserting a tube in my vajay-jay and let's not talk about the collection devices. So, over time I built up my mind and bladder to not to focus on having to go. Now that it's been some time since I have been in the air, I had to go.

After relieving myself, she assisted me to the bed. When she thought I was comfortable enough, she and the men left the room. Enrico called it the special guest room, but there was nothing special about it. Other than the bed, there's a table and chair. No type of décor or ambience. It was more like a prison cell.

Using the extra pillow, I propped it under my leg. The Percocet was starting to wear off and the pain had started to come back.

Less than an hour later, Enrico's personal doctor, a nurse, and two of his men come in. The doctor examined me, then sited everything I already knew, busted femur and ribs. He then had Enrico's men tie my wrists at the side of the bed. I didn't put up a fight as they did as they were told. The doctor had the nurse start a dual IV on the top of right hand. When the IV was correctly inserted, the nurse connected one of the dual lumens to the hanging bag of saline. She then connected the other with a syringe of what I could speculate to be Versed, Valium, or Etomidate. Hell, for all I know it was some kind of happy juice because seconds later I found myself laughing hysterically before slowly falling into a dark abyss.

When I slowly started to come to, I began to flex my wrists around, noticing there wasn't anything there to keep them bound. I glanced down to see I wasn't in my flight suit, but a gown and cleaned up. My leg was in a cast and from the tightness around my ribs I knew they had been wrapped. I wanted to go into the bathroom to see how I looked but my weak body wouldn't let me.

To the left of me was only a stand with a plate of food. On it is a grilled chicken breast, mixed vegetables, a roll, and a bottle of water. No utensils though.

Yes, I'm hungry but I don't know if Enrico has laced the food with something. With despair, I screamed, knocking the

tray over.

“You shouldn’t do that,” Enrico’s voice fills the room. “I know you’re hungry and thirsty. There’s nothing wrong with the food or water, so I would advise you to pick that up. If I wanted to kill you, you’d be dead by now.”

“Fuck you,” I counter.

Enrico’s asinine laughter echoes around the room. “Oh, trust and believe I will be doing that before handing you off to my clients.” He continues to laugh until he shuts off communication. Feeling weak from not having any calorie intake or water, I still didn’t trust Enrico. Thinking of the one thing that he probably left untampered, I painfully hobbled into the bathroom.

Staring down at the toilet before lifting the seat, then flushing it. I watched as the clear water swirled around before the tank began to fill again. Bending down as far as I could, I used my hands to scoop the water to my mouth. If there was such a thing as tasting waters from Heaven, then this toilet water was it.

I drank as much as I could before struggling to get back to bed. Grunting, I retook my spot. After replacing the pillow under my leg, I laid on my back, looking at the wall where a window should be at.

‘Enrico might think he has the upper hand, but once Delta Force locks onto him, he’ll be joining his father much sooner than he thinks,’ I thought to myself before sleep overcame me.

The next morning, I wake to the same maid coming in with a breakfast tray. Like last night, I wasn’t going to eat it, but the maid said something that made me change my mind.

In a very low voice so the guards couldn’t hear, she whispers with a deep accent, “Please, ma’am eat. I prepared the meal myself. You are not alone.”

“What are you talking about over there?” One of the men shouts, causing the maid to jump.

The maid hurriedly turns around, informing, “Señor, I told her to eat, or the master would be upset.”

He regards her, then says, “Somebody needs to inform her of how things go around here. There’s no questioning, debating, or coming to a mutual understanding. Whatever the Boss wants, he gets. You’ve been through enough Gizelle to know that.”

Now knowing her name, Gizelle lowers her head. “‘Sí, Señor ‘”

The man regards her before commanding, “She has her food, so you can go.”

“‘Sí, Señor,” Gizelle says in Spanish, then backs out of the room. She gives me one last reassuring look to eat before she’s on the outside of the door. The asshole in command tells the others to close the door.

He approaches the side of my bed, threatening, “Either you eat, or we will forcefully make you eat. The choice is yours.”

Picking up a strip of bacon, I take a bite. After savoring the flavor then swallowing, I tell him, “I would like to voluntarily eat at my own pace than be forcefully made to. If you would excuse me, I’d like to eat my breakfast alone, in peace.”

I knew my words could have cost me another beating, but I was ready for it. Not only did I have to get Phelps out of this situation, but it was also clear Gizelle was under servitude with Enrico she couldn’t get from under.

The man frowns, saying, “You are so lucky that the boss has given us strict orders not to lay a hand on you because if it was not for that, I would have shown you why we don’t tolerate disrespect from our women over here.”

Finishing the bacon strip, I pick up another. “It’s a good thing I’m not from over here.” Bringing the strip closer to my lips, I add, “Just like all women around the world, we’re tired of your antiquated beliefs. So, if a free will minded Black woman from the United States bothers you, then do as you must.”

“Cunt,” he growls before storming out of the room with the other men behind him.

Chewing on the bacon, I smiled at that little defeat. Sure, he orders not to touch me, but to speak my mind, and not deal with the repercussions, makes me feel a little bit better of my circumstances.

Chapter 11

Blade

“Did you get it?” I scream at Tech. “Fuck, tell me you got it.”

Tech ignores me as he moves from one laptop to the other. I try to decipher what’s on the screens, but to be honest, it looks like some form of hieroglyphics.

“I’m almost there,” he says as his fingers work the keyboards. “Bingo,” he yells. “They’re back in the Dominican Republic in Bonao. Celebrities, Nationals, and some unsavory characters reside in the community.”

Mad Dog rubs his hairy chin. “Somehow, I feel like this is a set up. Why would he have Kayla call us from there, knowing we would trace the call?”

Tech nods, saying, “That’s exactly what it is. I have been monitoring every flight out of Colombia, and if he flew back, it’s off the records.” He glares at us before vowing, “Whoever junior Esteban’s IT person is, I’m personally going to bring them down. I am the number one hacker in the world, and no one will ever take that from me.”

Shit just got personal for Tech. I’ve never seen anyone out maneuver him in the cyber world. Whoever this person is, obviously didn’t know they’d pushed his button. Metaphorically and literally.

After finding out the location, we began to fill the vans with the artillery we would need before three of Trappa’s men showed up, each carrying large cases.

Trappa pointed at them and told us their names. “That’s Jabari, Mako, and Stuna. Three of my best soldiers. They’re coming with us,” Trappa said.

Mad Dog nodded, and I remained silent. Placing the crate full of grenades in the back of the van, I thought to myself, *‘the last time we went to the Dominican Republic, you didn’t bring any of your men with you, but you want to this time?’*

Did Trappa not trust Delta Force to get the job done? I highly doubt he or his men had been or seen the type shit we have.

I get that he and the South Dallas Boys have been through turf wars and members have been killed behind them, but it could never compare to the shit my brothers and I have gone through.

In no time we had the vans filled with the appropriate materials that we needed along with a few new gadgets Tech wanted to try out. Just as we were to get in the vans, a blacked out Suburban pulled up. Not knowing who it is, all of us go for our guns except for Mad Dog.

“Stand down, guys,” he orders.

“Who the fuck is that?” Trappa demands with his pistol still aimed at the SUV.

“Extra back up,” Mad Dog replies as the driver’s side door opens and Agent Vaughn gets out.

“What the hell, Commander?” Lethal growls.

Mad Dog faces him, answering, “I called Agent Vaughn earlier to see if she and some of her team could join us. She said they were in the midst of processing through rescued children and didn’t know if they would be able to make it. I didn’t tell you because it wasn’t definite that they would come.”

The passenger doors open, and two beautiful women step out. Normally, we would see Agent Vaughn’s ladies wearing masks to cover their identities but not this time.

The three walk over to us with Agent Vaughn holding out her hand to Mad Dog. “Looks like we made it just in time,” she says as Mad Dog shakes her hand.

“You did. We were getting ready to leave for the hanger,” Mad Dog returns, letting her hand go.

She then re-introduces the ladies. “This is Viper and her sister Cobra. Now you can put an actual face to their names.”

“Nice to formally meet you,” Mad Dog says, then shakes their hands.

Thing One and Thing Two move closer to get a better look at Viper and Cobra. They must be the two women the brothers had taken a fancy to; on a mission we had worked together.

Agent Vaughn glances over to Lethal. “Lethal.”

“Agent Vaughn.” he says through clenched teeth.

Mad Dog laughs. “Now that everyone’s here, let’s go.”

I got in the one with Mad Dog, Tech, Venom, and Trappa to the hanger that housed our carrier plane. Lethal and Trappa’s men rode in the other with Thing One and Thing Two. Agent Vaughn, Viper, and Cobra got back into their SUV before we pulled off.

“I got an overview of the house, it’s not gated but Enrico has men around the perimeter,” Tech says next to me. He’s sitting in the second-row seat next to Mad Dog. I’m on the third row seat, looking over his shoulder.

Viewing the house, I add, “You would think Enrico would have Kayla call from somewhere else, like before they left Colombia. The area is a ritzy neighborhood, not somewhere you would want to have a gun fight.”

“I agree,” Mad Dog co-signs. “I think there’s a good chance they might not be there when we show up. Enrico knows we’ll find the house.”

“Then why did he do it?” Trappa asks, sitting on the other side of Tech.

Sighing, I slump back in the seat, echoing what Mad Dog said earlier, “Because it’s a fucking set up.”

Trappa glares at me over his shoulders before turning back to Mad Dog. “Okay, so you guys are the specialists in this type of shit, what do we do now?”

Mad Dog grins, replying, “Now we bring the devil to our form of hell and trust me, it’s a lot hotter. Tech, reach out to Lanzo. I think he’s close to Bona. We’re going to need a remote place away from innocent bystanders and out of range from anyone hearing the gunfire.”

“On it, Commander,” Tech returns as he types away on the laptop keyboard.

We arrived at the hangar with the plane fueled and ready to go. We transferred the artillery and other combat equipment along with what Agent Vaughn and her team brought onto the plane.

Once inside, the Twins went straight to the cockpit. Usually, we would have our private pilot flying for us, but with such a short notice the Twins were going to have to step in. As I said before, we all have our roles in Delta Force. Other than being trained killers the Twins are also Aviators. Personally, I never understood why we hired other pilots when the Twins could have been navigating for us, but who am I to question my Commander’s decisions?

Maybe he wanted the brothers to use our flight time to get mentally prepared for our missions. I on the other hand knew the brothers were very resilient. I’ve seen them take on tasks that should’ve required at least three more of us and come out without a scratch. I don’t know much about their background, but from what I’ve witnessed; they are not only fatal with their hands but with any weapon or non-weapon that is close to them.

As the Twins gained altitude after taking off, Tech reached out to our contact, Juan Lanzo. In hindsight, I wondered why we didn’t connect with him the first time with the bullshit with the elder Esteban. It could have been Mad Dog didn’t want to involve him in what was going on. Or Mad Dog did reach out to him which is why we were able to quickly find out where the elder Esteban and the once Secretary of Defense Wright were holding up.

Juan Lanzo is an uber rich gold exporter who relocated his family to the States after their lives were threatened by goons trying to extort money from him a few years back. They were doing well over here after settling in Miami, but two years later, his niece was abducted by traffickers. We didn’t know she was his niece at the time, but when we brought them to the drop off point, he was there with his mother and sister. Although he couldn’t see our faces, Juan praised us and asked

if we ever needed anything, to call him before giving Mad Dog his business card.

Tech, Trappa, Agent Vaughn, and I sit close to Mad Dog as he puts the call on speaker as the line starts to ring.

“Mad Dog, my friend,” Juan happily greets. “To what do I owe the pleasure of this call?”

“Hello, Juan.” Mad Dog returns. “We need your assistance.”

“What’s going on?”

Mad Dog begins to tell Juan the specifics of what was going on with Enrico. When he finishes, Juan immediately gives us access to his countryside home and surrounding buildings thirty minutes outside of Bonao. He also offered an abandoned warehouse he owned another twenty minutes out to use to meet up with Enrico.

As Tech types in the new information, Juan says “Please take this motherfucker out. Not only is he terrorizing the locals but also tourists. I have a few relatives here who have gone missing, and I know he’s behind it, I just can’t prove it. So, whatever I have is at your disposal.”

“We appreciate it, Juan,” Mad Dog thanked.

“Where are you flying in to?”

“We’re flying to Santo Domingo and using the same private landing strip we used before.”

“No, no, no. I will send you the coordinates to my landing strip that is not too far from the house. I will have vehicles waiting for you. The house will have everything you need. Oh, and make sure you check out the garage, I’m sure there’s a few vehicles in there you can use.”

“Thank you, Juan. Will we see you while we’re here?” Mad Dog asks.

“Unfortunately, not this time. I’m in London, closing a very large sale but we will see each other soon.”

“Looking forward to it, my friend,” Mad Dog returns. “Good luck with your sale and don’t forget to send the coordinates, so I can give it to my pilot.”

“Sending it as we speak. Good luck to you, my friend and I will be in touch soon,” Juan says before they end the call.

An alert chime from Tech’s cellphone. “I’m going to take this to the Twins,” Tech informs.

“Okay,” Mad Dog responds. “Cancel the car service and bungalows you reserved.”

“Already done,” Tech says, standing, then making his way to the cockpit.

Agent Vaughn stands too. “I’m going to let Viper and Cobra know about the changes.”

As she walks to the back, Trappa keeps his eyes glued to her ass. “What’s up with her and the other two?”

Mad Dog and I side-eye each other, before Mad Dog asked, “What do you mean?”

Trappa brings his eyes back to Mad Dog. “For one, what’s up with the snake nicknames? If the other two go by Viper and Cobra, what’s Agent Vaughn’s?”

I grin, replying, “Mamba.”

He blankly stared at me, then whispered, “Damn, that’s a deadly ass snake. Hell, a cobra and viper can kill you just as easily.”

“There’s another by the name of Mojave, that’s not with them,” I add.

Trappa shakes his head. “Just as lethal as the others.”

“Speaking of Lethal,” Mad Dog starts, staring Trappa dead in his eyes, “You might not want to let him hear you asking about Agent Vaughn.”

Trappa huffs. “And why not?”

“Because they have history,” Mad Dog informs. “And by history, I mean unfinished history.”

He frowns, moving his head up and down. “Yeah, I’m not even trying to get into that, but what about the other two? I heard Agent Vaughn say they’re sisters.”

Mad Dog leans forward. “I’m not sure if you caught on before we left the office, but the Twins have their sights locked into those two.”

“Damn, you Delta Force assholes have your claws in everything,” Trappa laughs. “I’m telling you now, if I ever meet the one called Mojave and she’s fine, just know I don’t care who is silently lusting after her which only leaves Venom. If there is a spark between Mojave and I, Venom might as well get ready to fight for her. I need a woman like them by my side. One who’s not afraid to handle her shit and hold me down at the same time.”

Mad Dog and I feel the seriousness he tries to hide behind his laughter before Mad Dog tells Trappa, “I doubt that would be a problem. Venom is not one to mix business with pleasure.”

“Good to know,” Trappa says back before Agent Vaughn and Tech return.

Together, the five of us began to formulate a plan to get Enrico to the warehouse with Kayla and Phelps. I prayed that it worked. I don’t know what I would do if shit went left, and I lost the leading lady in my life. I would probably lose to the world like our brother Chains. Then again, I would probably go on a killing spree in the Dominican Republic, permanently removing the Estaban bloodline. Hopefully, it won’t come to that, but if it does, I’ll gladly accept my fate in the afterlife.

Chapter 12

Kayla

It had been over twenty-four hours since I spoke to Johann. Every hour, minute, second that passed, I worried that maybe they weren't able to trace the call, but then I remembered who Delta Force really is. Johann had told me about Tech's skills, so my fate and Phelps were in his hands. I just needed to stay positive that they would be here any moment to take Enrico and his men out.

Gizelle came in earlier with my breakfast, sporting a blackeye along with Deputy Dog. Like seriously, what did they think I was going to do with my leg in a cast and wrapped ribs? Trust, if I were in full physical capacity, I would try everything in my power to get out of here.

As she sat the tray on the nightstand, Gizelle gave me a reassuring look that she once again prepared my food.

If I could, I would have jumped out of the bed when Deputy Dog latched onto her arm, then snatched her towards the door.

"Let's go," he barked.

Gizelle could see the anger in my eyes but shook her head for me not to say or do anything. After the door was closed, I looked over at the food. How was I supposed to eat after witnessing that?

And I didn't. Regardless of whether Gizelle prepared it, I had lost my appetite after seeing the way she had been handled.

Reaching for the bottle of water, I noticed a lump under the napkins. Carefully lifting them up, there was a small steak knife under them. Knowing there were cameras in the room, I inconspicuously picked up the knife, hiding it under my forearm, then slowly brought it under the covers and concealed it in my cast.

After doing so, questions hit me. Could Gizelle be working with Enrico to see how far I would go to get out of here? Or could she really be the person looking for a way out of here? I let the questions marinate. Either way if Gizelle was in cahoots with Enrico or not, when the time came for me to get the hell out of here, she better be on the right side or else she will go down like the rest.

An hour later, *Dog* and another crony re-entered the room. He saw the uneaten food on the tray, then scowled at me. “*Putá*” he mumbles under his breath before ordering the other man to retrieve the tray.

“And you’re an asshole,” I hissed.

Dog stalks towards me, saying, “So, you know our language?”

Covering my tracks, I reply, “I don’t, but I have enough Latino friends to know what *puta* means.”

He chuckles. “When this is over with, I hope the Boss gives me the pleasure of breaking you in. I love it when they’re head strong and feisty like you,” he says, smiling as he grabs his little hardened dick through the slacks he’s wearing.

Looking at the small bulge he was holding onto, I couldn’t help myself from saying, “If that’s all you have, then I can understand why you need to force women to lay with you.”

Dog slapped me, proving that my words were true.

My mouth fills with blood and saliva. When there’s a good amount, I spit it out on *Dog*’s expensive shoes.

“Now, go back and tell your leader how my bloody spit ended up on your shoe. I’m sure he wouldn’t like to hear it was caused because of you, knowing that he told you all not to lay a hand on me. Who will he believe? You or me?” I snickered, spreading my arms out. “I think it will be me because in the state that I’m in, how can I be a threat towards you?”

Dog gives me the death stare, then in Spanish tells the other man to leave before he gives me one last foul look. “Forget about breaking you. Before the Boss has taken out his

revenge for his father, I'm going to personally make sure you are beside them, enduring every ounce of pain we inflict upon them." He starts towards the door.

"Fuck you." I angrily blurt out.

Dog stops, then looks back at me. "No, I think you're the one whose about to get fucked and I don't mean in a good way, but if you ask nicely, I can make that happen before you permanently close your eyes."

I display a bloody smile, saying, "I saw what you were holding, and I think I would get more pleasure from the actor who played the leprechaun in that movie from back in the day. Shit, with that little thing, Chuckie has more than you."

The guy behind him couldn't contain his laughter. He regulates himself when Dog abnormally turns his head to him. The man's laughter is quickly muted as he once again puts on a pensive expression.

"We're done here," Dog says, glaring at me.

"And we are," I defiantly counter, hoping he wouldn't physically retaliate.

A soothing breath escapes me once they are on the other side of the door, and I hear the lock being turned.

My sisters and brother used to tell me about my mouth. Always saying how one day my mouth would get me into a situation, I wouldn't be able to talk my way out of it, and I think I just came close to it.

Keeping that in mind, from then on, I choose to keep my objections, opinions, or overviews to myself. If we were going to make it out of this alive, Enrico and his men would get the docile side of Kayla.

As the time passed, I began to formulate how many steps it would take me to get to the door with or without the cast. It was not a no brainer that without the cast, I would reach it faster.

Around noon, after playing every scenario in my head for us to escape, the door opened. Enrico, Dog, and another man

who I haven't seen before walk in.

Enrico zooms in on my busted lip. "What the hell is this?" He grips my chin, to see the reopened wound clearer.

Dog clears his throat before responding, "Boss, I know you told us not to touch her, but her words landed her in this situation. All she had to do is remain silent and shit would have turned out differently. Her mouth is reckless. Why are we treating her differently than the other girls we normally deal with?"

Enrico lets go of my chin, then turns around to face his head of security. He then looks at the other guy before a snicker leaves him. I jump from the gruff moan of pain that leaves Dog when Enrico punches him in the stomach. Dog leans over with his right arm around his gut.

Enrico bends over him. "I don't fucking have to explain shit to you. Who are you to fucking question me? If I give you an order, then obey it," he angrily spouts, then stands erect. "Go call the fucking doctor to come check on her and if you do this shit again...I'll kill you my damn self. I hope this is the last time we will have this type of issue."

With literally all of the bravado knocked out of him, Dog rises. "It is, sir," he says, looking like a little boy who just got scolded by his father.

"Get the fuck out," Enrico commands.

Dog nods his head before cutting his eyes at me. I hold in the impulse to grin at him with an *'I told you so'* expression. No sense in adding more fuel to the fire. From the coldness in his eyes, Dog's dislike for me has grown even more now that Enrico has embarrassed him and put him in his place in front of me and the other guy.

When Dog leaves the room, Enrico turns back to me. "I apologize for Carmine's behavior. It won't happen again." So, Dog's real name is Carmine? Good to know. Just one more to add to my mental list of those who were going to die."

I simply bow my head as he stares at me.

His gaze lingers before he introduces the other guy. “This is Dannel, my information technologist. He’s the one that is responsible for you being here today.”

Another name to add to my list. Neither Dannel nor I say anything to one another.

Enrico claps his hands together. “The reason for this little introduction is because I wanted you to hear the good news.”

Piqued by his excitement, I ask, “What good news?”

Enrico smiles. “Dannel, you want to do the honors?”

Dannel takes a step forward, informing, “It seems Delta Force Security has gone off the grid. There’s no trace of them which leaves us to believe they are enroute here.”

I remain stoic but, on the inside, I’m crying tears of joy because I know Johann and the others are on their way.

“Isn’t that good to hear?” Enrico mockingly asks. “Soon, this will all be over and the rest of us can go back to our normal lives.”

Normal life? How can you justify selling human beings for profit is normal? Nothing about Enrico’s life is normal, just only to him because it is the way his father raised him. And if Enrico has a son, he’ll probably raise him the same way.

“I thought you would be happy at the news,” Enrico’s bipolar ass says as his demeanor turns unreadable.

I have two options, one laugh in his face and tell him that it’s only a matter of time Delta Force Security shows up and erase all of their asses off the face of the earth which could result in Enrico killing me and Phelps before Johann and the others get to us or two, I act like it didn’t mean shit to me. I go with the latter.

“I mean, why would I be happy? You said yourself, you and your people were going to kill them, then you’re going to sell me off. Who would be happy to know their frightful fear is just around the corner?”

I move back when Enrico sits on the side of the bed. “Don’t worry, love. I’ve decided to keep you for myself.”

When he tries to touch my cheek, I lean back. Enrico takes offense, wrapping his hand around my neck. “Things would go so much better if you accepted how this is all going to play out. You are mine now and that’s just how it’s going to be.”

My stomach churns when this man moves forward and tries to kiss me. I turn my head, and his lips land on my cheek. The feel of his lips against my skin makes me want to vomit.

Enrico laughs, pulling away. “I’m going to love taking you off that pedestal of yours.” He gets off the bed, telling Dannel, “Let’s go see if we can find out where our enemies are at.”

“I’m sure we can do that, sir,” Dannel responds as the two of them walk towards the door. “Their guy is good, but he’s not better than me.”

I lock my eyes to keep them from rolling. If that was the case, then why are they not able to see or find out where Delta Force Security is at? Dannel might have out done Tech on a few things, but he really didn’t know who he is up against. I have faith in Tech to win the cyber war between the two. Hell, we know Tech’s name is Dexter Broussard, but who’s to say that’s his real name. I’ve heard of him clearing people’s digital history with new names, social security numbers, and other documents, so how do we know he didn’t do the same for him and his family? Either way, I know Tech is on our side and that’s all that mattered.

“Wait,” I shout when Enrico reaches the door.

“What is it?” he asks as the doctor walks in.

The doctor sees my face and begins pulling shit out of his bag to begin working on my wound, but I brush him off, appealing to Enrico, “Since we know how this is going to turn out, can I please see Phelps? You and I both know once this is all said and done, you’re going to have him killed. I’m only asking this one thing; let me see my friend.”

Enrico regards me as he mulls over my request. He finally replies, “Fine, I’ll make arrangements for the two of you to meet later this afternoon in the backyard. I’m sure by now, you two would welcome the rays of the Sun.”

“Thank you,” I responded with fake gratitude.

Little did Enrico know, my objective with meeting with Phelps was to let him know to be prepared, because at any time shit was about to get heavy and what little strength we had left, we needed to confine it to what’s to come.

An hour after Enrico and Dannel left, the door opened again. This time Gizelle came in escorted by a different guard with my lunch. She gave me the now knowing look that the food was safe to eat. I gave her a discreet smile.

Gizelle, along with the guard waited until I finished with my meal before she helped me into the bathroom to get cleaned up.

“Leave the door open,” the guard snarls.

“Sí, Señor,” Gizelle returns.

With her help, it wasn’t that much of a challenge for me to undress, then take a shower. The only awkwardness was having to have my leg outside of the tub to not get the cast wet. I however did catch the guard trying to sneak a peek a couple of times.

“Señora,” Gizelle whispered as she looked away, using the shower to cover her voice from the guard.

Rinsing the subs off me, I said, “Yes?”

“Did you enjoy your breakfast?”

I knew this was her way of asking if I had found the knife. Keeping up the charade, I replied, “Yes, I did. It was the nourishment I needed.”

“Buena,” she responded. “I hope you like mañana (*tomorrow’s*).”

Stepping out of the shower, I told her, “If it’s anything like this morning or better, I will be delighted.”

Gizelle gave a quick smile as she handed me a bath towel. As I began to dry myself off, she turned off the shower. Completely dry, Gizelle helped me into something that looked like a hospital gown without the opening in the back. When I

jokingly asked her where the matching panties were, she told me the gown was the only item Enrico said to give me. What an asshole. I never went to bed commando unless Johann was lying next to me. Now, I felt like there was no barrier to keep my lady parts away from these pervs. What could I do? Put back on the same underwear I had on for the last two days or just ruff it? I decided to ruff it. One thing my momma taught me, and Michelle was never to wear the same pair of underwear for more than twenty-four hours and I had already exceeded that. My only recourse of signaling myself if one of those assholes tried to violate me is to drape my cast over my good leg. I would feel it if someone lifted it.

After brushing my teeth, Gizelle let down the toilet cover for me to sit, then she brushed my hair back into a ponytail.

When she was just about finished, the guard came to the doorway, demanding, “Aren’t you done by now? You’re not getting her ready for a fucking beauty pageant!” Gizelle jumped at his harsh tone.

Her hand trembled as she sat the brush on the sink. “I’m done, Señor.”

“Then get her back in the damn bed. I don’t have all day to watch over you two *perras*.”

His heated gaze stayed on us as Gizelle helped me off the toilet. Taking slow steps, we make it to the doorway only for that asshole to stand in our way.

Oh, that mouth of mine. “If you have shit to do, then get the hell out of our way. I wonder how your boss would feel if he found out you were spying on me when I was taking a shower?”

He looked like he wanted to knock my head off but by now I’m sure after what happened with Carmine aka Dog, has spread around the estate.

He remained defiant, until I said, “Fuck it, I’m sure he will give you the courtesy he gave Carmine.”

His Adam’s apple bobbed up and down before he took a step to the side. I knew then I could use Enrico’s influence to

my advantage.

Although Enrico is a fucked in the head, he did keep his word about Phelps and I meeting up. Gizelle came back to the room with a wheelchair and two guards. Damn, did Enrico ever give this poor woman time off?

There was no communication as Gizelle pushed me through hallway after hallway until we ended up in front of a framed glassed patio door that opened up to a beautiful spacious backyard.

I took a deep breath, smelling the aromatic fragrance of all the different flowers. It's amazing how being away from the outside world for forty-eight hours will have you appreciating everything about it when you're finally able to have it again.

Flanked by the guards, Gizelle escorts me to a sitting area where Phelps sat on a concrete bench. A guard stood next to him.

I saw a glimpse of hope in his eyes as I was pushed closer to him.

"That's far enough," one of the guards behind us, said when we're about eight feet away.

Gizelle locked the wheels, then took a step to the side. Looking at the three guards, I grunted, "Can you give us some space? Damn, we're banged up, so what do you expect us to do?"

When they didn't move, I threw out my Ace card. "Oh, so I guess you must be the three that didn't hear about what happened to Carmine when he put his hands on me." From their knowing expressions, they had. "What do you think he's going to do when he learns that you wouldn't let me talk to my friend?"

They convened with each other before one of the guards that came with Gizelle, and I grabbed her wrist. Following the other two, he forcefully pulled her about ten to twelve feet away.

"Are you okay?" Is the first thing out of my mouth to Phelps.

“Honestly, I’ve been through a lot of shit, but I don’t think any of it could compare to this,” he tries to laugh off.

“How are they treating you?” I questioned, looking over his body. Phelps looked better than the day we got on the jet with Enrico. He had minimal bruising to his face and arms.

“All right, I guess. They haven’t knocked me around since we’ve gotten here, so that’s a thing.”

Lowering my head, I said, “I’m so sorry that you have been brought into this.”

“Farrow, you have nothing to be sorry for. Plus, this will be over soon,” Phelps stated.

Looking at Phelps, I stared into his eyes and asked, “Why do you say that?”

“I, I,” he stuttered. “I mean they haven’t killed us, and I overheard the guards saying when Enrico finally gets what he wants, he will send us back to the States. All we have to do is patiently wait for that to happen.”

Trappa used to tell me when a person starts stuttering their asses is lying to you. I didn’t want to think that of Phelps, but something was definitely off with him. Until I could figure that out, I was going to keep any ideas or plans of escape to myself.

The guards let us talk for another five minutes before Gizelle was sent over to take me back to my room. As she pushed me away, I looked over my shoulder to see Phelps laughing with his guard as the guard handed him a cigarette. What the fuck was that all about?

Chapter 13

Blade

As promised, once we landed on Juan's airstrip there were three Suburban's for us to ride in and two cargo vans for our gear and equipment. His men offered to unload our stuff, but we declined. Not that we didn't trust them, we just felt comfortable with doing it ourselves. When the vans were packed, Thing One and Thing Two got in the vans with the drivers. The rest of us piled into the SUVs.

As the driver steers along the narrow lane, I think back to the last time we were in the Dominican Republic. It was under fucked up circumstances too, but it was also the first time I met Kayla.

I was enchanted by her beauty and when she looked at me and said, "*You look like the type who would rather cut the vocal cords of anyone who pleads for their life, because you know whatever bullshit they have to say will be a lie,*" I knew she was the one. Little did she know at the time, but that one statement sealed us for life. Mad Dog and Tech warned me to get involved with her, but I was like a dehydrated man lost in the desert and Kayla was my cool glass of water.

"Blade," Mad Dog calls, getting my attention.

"Commander," I returned.

"We're here."

Looking out the window, I stare at the view in front of us. Juan called it his countryside home, but this was an extravagant three level mansion with a smaller guest house on the right side and a huge garage on the left. There's no telling what's in the back of the mansion.

"Damn," I whisper.

"Damn is right," Tech laughs next to me. "I might have to hit Juan up to see about Madison and I spending our honeymoon here."

Mad Dog chuckles. “Well, before you do that, let’s get our shit out and check out the inside of the house before we see the warehouse.”

“Roger that,” Tech says.

Everyone got out and grabbed their bags. To say the inside of the house was just as extravagant as the outside would be an understatement. House staff greeted us with refreshments like we were on vacation. The head butler, Javier, informed us that each level of the house had four bedrooms. He also said Juan told him to make sure the rooms were equipped with two beds each. Mad Dog made the decision that Delta Force would take the rooms on the first level, Agent Vaughn and ladies on the second, and Trappa with his men on the third. The butler assigned other staff members to take us to our rooms.

Lethal and I took one room, the Twins took another, Venom and Tech took another, leaving Mad Dog with a room by himself. I don’t know how they got the rooms ready so fast, but I was thankful. Lethal is my brother, but I didn’t want to sleep in the same bed with him.

“Where’s your head at, brother?” Lethal asks, tossing his bag on the bed.

Sighing, placing my bag on my bed, then sitting. “Honestly, I just want my girl back. I knew being in a relationship with me could possibly affect her, but I never thought it would be anything like this.” I scratch my head, then say, “Let me correct that, after the shit Mad Dog and Janae went through, I knew it could be a possibility, but I hoped it would never come to this.”

Lethal sits on his bed across from me. “I hate to say it, but if any of us are in a relationship with someone, we always have to worry about shit like this happening one day. But,” he holds up his pointer finger. “If you are serious about someone, the two of you need to have a plan set for shit like this. Shit, Ashley and I have one.”

Surprised to hear that, I ask, “But you two aren’t together and the way y’all act around each other, I thought you two couldn’t stand each other.”

“You thought right,” Lethal laughs. “Only, it’s not me who can’t stand her but the other way around, but that’s a whole other story. Just know if Ashley was put in this type of situation, I have access to find her thanks to Tech.”

Curious, I ask, “What did Tech do?”

Lethal holds out his arm, then turns it over. He runs his finger over the small lump in his forearm that looks like a mosquito bite. “Ashley and I had locators inserted in our arms. We could’ve had them removed when we broke up, but decided to keep them in. They’re not active now, but if either one of us is in a fucked up situation, we can squeeze the locator under our skin to activate them. Shit, I think Mad Dog had them implanted in him and Janae. I’m sure Tech has outfitted him and Madison with some too. It wouldn’t surprise me if Tech hasn’t put one in his grandfather.”

Nodding, I say, “And he probably has. Kayla and I are going to get those locators implanted. Had I known about them, we would have already had them, and I would have known exactly where she was from the start.”

Lethal gave me a sympathetic expression before saying, “And now you can prepare for the future. This mission has turned personal. You, our brother, have had his woman taken because of us. Neither one of us will stop until our new enemy has been taken down and Kayla has been returned to you.”

“I’m so grateful for all of you,” I return.

“Shit, you know as well as I do,” Lethal says, standing. “Delta Force is a family and if one of our brothers needs the others, we’re always going to stand with him.”

“Damn straight,” I boast, coming off the bed to shake my brother’s hand.

“I’m hungry as shit, but first we need to get set up at the warehouse.”

Liking Lethal’s train of thought, I released his hand, then follow him out the door.

We found the others in the living room exchanging war stories. Trappa was even in on it recalling the time our Greek

friend Alistair took down his pedophile father-in-law.

“That’s the crazy motherfucker who should be here right now,” Trappa laughed.

Yeah, we’ve helped the Greeks out multiple times in the past, but this was a Delta Force issue. I’m sure if shit got out of hand, Mad Dog wouldn’t hesitate to put in a call to them. Until that time comes, and it won’t, we can handle this by ourselves.

“We have everyone we need,” I told him before turning to Mad Dog.

Mad Dog said nothing as everyone left the house and got into the SUV’s they rode in prior. I was fine that Trappa was in the one behind us. I had no patience for whatever negative shit he had to say about Kayla and our relationship. I get the whole big brother role, but right now that shit doesn’t mean anything to me.

Think about it, without Delta Force, how would Trappa know where Kayla is? Not saying he wouldn’t have found out the location, but how long would it really have taken him?

If Trappa has an IT person, they could never be on the same level as Tech. Tech can find out your blood type without a specimen.

Once at the old warehouse with busted out windows and graffiti spray painted all round it, we went inside. Old crates, dusty furniture, and rusted out cars and more graffiti greeted us. There was a spot in the middle where you could tell people had been hanging out from the trash, empty beer bottles, and a makeshift fire pit.

“I see why Juan didn’t mind us fucking this place up,” Tech said, looking around.

“Yeah,” I agreed. “I hope whoever has been coming here had a blast at their last get together.”

“Alright, let’s get started,” Mad Dog directed before he began doling out assignments. After giving everyone their duties, we got to work.

Mad Dog helped Tech set up cameras around the perimeter before doing the same inside the warehouse. The Twins along with Viper and Cobra took their sniper rifles to the roof to find positions they will be in. Lethal and Agent Vaughn hid detonator bombs on the sides of the entrance and in front of the warehouse as well as boobytraps in case Esteban tried to send men here before the meeting. Trappa and his men found positions in the warehouse to conceal themselves when everything goes down. Venom, and I set up various points inside and outside the warehouse for extra ammo and weapons. He offered me some of his special bullets, but I turned them down. Using one of his poisonous bullets would be an easy death for Esteban. I'm going to make him beg for his life as I use my knives to slice through his skin. When I'm done with him, his corpse will be unrecognizable.

It took us over four hours to get everything done and now it was time to head back to the mansion.

“So, what do we do now?” I asked Mad Dog.

He looks over at Tech who pulls out a burner phone. Tech replies, “Now you, call that asshole and set up the meeting.” He hands me the phone, then a piece of paper with an address I assume is of the warehouse.

“Tell that motherfucker to meet us with Kayla and the other pilot here tomorrow night at ten o'clock,” Mad Dog instructs.

Glancing down at the phone, Tech already has Esteban's number pulled up. I hit the send button, then put the call on speaker. On the fourth ring, Esteban answers.

“What?” he rudely asks.

Jumping right into it, I reply, “You have something that belongs to me, and I want it back.”

There's a pause before Esteban starts to laugh. “Oh, this must be the boyfriend. I actually was expecting you and your little friends to show up on my doorstep since you're so badass and all, but to get a phone call...I'm quite disappointed.”

“That can still happen,” I threaten.

“No, it can’t because this call confirms that you are here, and my men are already on high alert. If you and your friends get within one hundred yards of my home, you will be shot down.”

Extreme anger fills me as I look at Mad Dog who points to the paper in my hand.

Breathing in through my nose and exhaling through my mouth, I begin to calm down, but it doesn’t stop the visuals in my head of slitting his fucking throat.

I tell Esteban, “And I’m sure it won’t take long for your IT guy to find out where we’re at, so I have a proposition for you. Unlike what you said, if any of your men get within one mile to where we’re at they will be slowly killed. The sound of motherfuckers who think they are the shit crying like bitches only spurs us on to keep them alive longer. By that, I mean, we’ll have their wounds tended to before continuing. Only to prolong the inevitable.”

“Fuck you,” Esteban yells into the phone.

“No, fuck you,” I counter. “I understand you want to avenge what we did to your father, and that’s fine. You want a life for a life, then I am willing to trade mine for Kayla’s.”

Mad Dog and Tech silently protest my words, but I ignore them.

Tech tries to grab the phone, but I move it away from his grip.

“That’s what you wanted right?” I say into the phone.

“You’re damn right that’s what I want,” Esteban says. “But not just your life but every one of those puta’s that had a hand in the death of my father.”

“Fine, then meet us at this address tomorrow night at ten o’clock.” I ramble off the address before dropping the call.

“What the fuck was that?” Mad Dog roars.

Handing the phone and piece of paper back to a shocked Tech, I reply to my Commander, “We wanted him to come to the warehouse and after this, I’m pretty sure he will.”

On the rest of the ride back to the mansion, I was silent as I listened to Mad Dog and Tech strategize for tomorrow night. There was no strategizing for me. Once I see that Kayla is okay, bodies will start to fall.

When the drivers parked outside the mansion, I didn't wait for ours to open the door. I threw the door open and got out.

"Blade, wait!" Lethal yells out, but his words bounce off me as if I had a barrier around me.

"Blade," Mad Dog shouts.

Because of his position over me, I halt my steps, then turn to my Commander.

Mad Dog grimaces at me before saying, "I know where your head is at, we've been through this. shit before. The only way for us to get through it is if we're all on the same page. Do you understand?"

All eyes are on me, waiting to hear my answer.

"Do you understand?" Mad Dog asks again with authority.

"Yes, sir," I deadpan. I nod my head, then continued to the house.

The front door opens before I reach it. Javier steps out. "Welcome back, sir. Dinner is almost finished and will be ready to be served in twenty minutes."

"Thank you, Javier. That gives me enough time to get cleaned up," I tell him, walking inside.

"Very well, sir."

I don't think a cold shower could cool down my emotionally overheated body, but I'm going to see if it works.

Forty-five minutes later, I'm dressed and heading to the dining room. The cold shower actually did simmer me down some. I realize I let my anger get the best of me, and I should have handled the call with Enrico in a different manner. I showed defiance to my Commander which is a big fucking no-no. I owed Mad Dog an apology for my conduct.

Laughter coming from the dining room lets me know I'm probably the last one to arrive. The room falls silent when I enter. Well, shit. Pushing my pride to the side, I address Mad Dog.

"Commander, I apologize for my behavior earlier. I let my anger get the best of me."

Mad Dog bows his head before saying, "Apology accepted. Blade, we all know this is a highly stressful situation you are in. If any of us sitting at this table were in the position you're in, we'd probably react the same way." He points to the empty chair next to him. "Have a seat and eat."

"Thank you, sir," I return, then go over to the chair.

As I pull the chair out, Lethal laughs, "Sit your emotional ass down. I know you're fucking starving."

"Shut up," I throw back, sitting down.

I don't know what's the name of the food on the table, but everything looks delicious. You can tell the food is authentic Dominican Republic dishes. I begin to load my plate with a little bit of everything.

"You don't want to know what you're about to eat?" Venom asks.

Spooning a helping of what looks like chicken in a brown sauce with red and green bell peppers, I reply, "Hell, no and don't fucking tell me either. As hungry as I am right now, this could be an armadillo ass and I wouldn't care."

Picking up my fork, I spear the meat, then gnaw at it like a caveman. The others laugh at my antics.

Mad Dog wipes his mouth, informing, "Before you came, it was decided that the Twins with Viper and Cobra will go back to the warehouse after dinner. They're going to keep watch to make sure Enrico doesn't try to send any of his people there."

I swallow what I think is chicken down. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't because people always say different meats taste like chicken. For instance, frog legs, alligators, rabbits,

shit even squirrels. Whatever this meat is, it's chicken in my mind.

"That sounds like a solid plan," I responded.

"We thought so too," Mad Dog says. "After they leave, the rest of us are going to try and get a good night's sleep for the battle tomorrow. I know we all have different ways to mentally prepare, but I suggest you all get some sleep in."

"Roger that," Delta Force echoes around the room.

Agent Vaughn is about to speak but is cut off as Javier rushes into the room.

"I've just been notified there are four vehicles that are about two miles out heading this way," he calmly says.

"Fuck," I yell as everyone jumps up from the table.

"I guess Enrico's IT guy has found our location and wants to get the party started early. I can't wait to personally meet that motherfucker," Tech says. "Let me get my laptops. I can hack into their vehicles and disable the chips in them. They'll have to walk the rest of the way, giving us a small window to get ready." He races out of the room.

Mad Dog shouts to Javier, "Get the rest of the staff to the guest house, now. And stay there until we come for you."

"Yes, sir," Javier says before dashing out of the dining room.

Mad Dog glares at us, ordering, "Get your shit. We're still going to use the same strategy we had for the warehouse."

"But we don't have bombs in place," Lethal points out.

"Damn the bombs, use your weapons." Mad Dog snarls back.

"Me and my men are going to post up around the garage for now. Once we see them, we're going to loop around behind them," Trappa says.

"Good thinking," Mad Dog returns.

Trappa and his men leave. Mad Dog turns to the Twins, Viper, and Cobra. “Go get the rest of the weapons out of the van and bring them to the living room. Then get to the roof of the guest house.” Thank God, we didn’t leave all of our guns at the warehouse.

Tech re-enters the room, stating, “Their vehicles have been disabled. We have about fifteen minutes before they arrive.”

Mad Dog turns to Agent Vaughn. “You and Lethal will take a room on the second floor. The rest of us will be waiting on them to walk up. We’re going to hit their ass from every angle.”

Not waiting to hear the rest, I ran to my room. Opening my bag, I pull out all of the knives I brought with me. I then took out my special bullet proof vest I designed, and Tech later had it made for me. I put it on, then started loading it with my knives. If I had enough time, I’d put on the bullet proof body suit, but time was not on my side right now.

Lethal bombards the room. “This is the shit I live for; motherfuckers thinking they pop up on Delta Force like we’re never ready for a fight. Those bastards are about to learn a valuable lesson tonight.”

I really want to join in his enthusiasm, but now that I know Enrico is a mere distance from our doorsteps, my only focus is to get Kayla safely away from him before I break one or two of the Commandments.

Once my knives are in place, I sprint out the room. As I round the last corner to the living room, Mad Dog, Venom, Tech, and Agent Vaughn have their vests on and are loading guns. Most of the guns we left in the vans except for four assault rifles and a few Glock 19’s. The Twins, Viper and Cobra must have taken them.

Tech hands me an earpiece and a pair of night vision glasses as I go over to the tables where the guns and ammo are on. After inserting the earpiece and resting the glasses on the top of my head, I pick up the 9mm Glock 19 and a magazine, then insert the magazine in. I switch the safety off, pull the slide back, loading the chamber with a bullet. I then insert it

into the holster on the left side of my vest. Lethal enters as I pick up three extra magazines.

“There’s my girl,” he smiles. Agent Vaughn gives him a funny look, causing Lethal to laugh. “I wasn’t talking about you, sweetheart.” He joins me at the tables. “I’m talking about this beauty right here.” He picks up the AR-15 rifle. Lethal lovingly stares at it before kissing the barrel. He looks over at Agent Vaughn. “You have to be my girl to get this type of special treatment. You remember how special my treatments used to be, don’t you Ashley?”

“Now’s not the time for that shit, Lethal. Get what you need and go to the second floor. Those assholes are going to show up any minute,” Mad Dog barks before Agent Vaughn can respond.

A still amused Lethal acknowledges, “You’re right, Commander.”

With a rifle of her own and magazines in her hands, Agent Vaughn walks past Lethal, retorting, “If you are through making out with your girlfriend, we have a job to do.”

When she’s out of earshot, Lethal turns to us. “Yeah, she still wants me.”

I shake my head as he grabs four magazines and an earpiece from Tech, then runs off behind her.

“That boy is delusional,” Tech chuckles as he starts to tap at his wrist computer. “Shit,” he murmurs.

“What is it,” Mad Dog and I ask at the same time.

“After I disabled their vehicles, I sent a drone up to get visuals on Enrico and his men. At that time they were getting out of the SUV’s. They’re almost here, but...” Tech’s words die off as he looks at the visual on his wrist.

Mad Dog and I hurry to his side to see what is displayed on his wrist. If there is an emotion that supersedes anger, that’s what I’m feeling. You could mix, anger, mad, enraged, pissed the fuck off in a bowl and it still couldn’t describe the emotions running through me as I watch my beloved Kayla being pushed in a wheelchair with her right leg in a cast and

bruises to her face. Walking next to her is who I presume is the other pilot Phelps from the bandages and slight bruising he has.

Unable to control my emotions, I go to the table and pick up one of the AR-15 rifles. I load the magazine in and head to the door only to be cut off by Mad Dog and Venom.

“Blade, I know you want to go out there and kill every one of them, but you’re just one man. You can’t do this by yourself. Push whatever shit that’s circulating in that brain of yours out. If you want Kayla back with you, then think rationally, brother,” Mad Dog implores.

Although I know he’s right, I still want to go out there and kill Enrico and his men. Hell, I even want to kill Enrico’s IT man who thinks he’s better than Tech, but I’ll give that one to Tech.

Pushing my feelings to the side, I tell Mad Dog, “Fine, but Kayla *will* be away from this psycho tonight.”

He nods. “And she will.”

I make one last demand before leaving out the front door. “Enrico is my kill.”

If they said anything back, I didn’t hear it nor care to hear it. Mad Dog wanted me to get my mind right for this shit, and it is. I have three objectives; kill as many of Enrico’s men, kill him, then take my woman home. Nothing more, nothing less.

Standing at the front of the house, Mad Dog, Tech, and Venom come to stand beside me as Kayla in the wheelchair and Phelps appear, followed by a gang of others behind them. They stop yards away from the house. I hope that the others are in place when the shit goes south, and it will. My knees almost buckle when Kayla looks at me with pleading eyes to save her. I have to keep my shit together.

Enrico steps forward and starts counting. “I see four of you but three are missing.”

“They couldn’t make it,” Mad Dog nonchalantly says.

Enrico looks around, chuckling. “You must think I’m stupid.” His cheery expression morphs into one of pure evil. “They’re here, probably with guns aimed at us as we speak. But I’m not stupid,” he moves towards Kayla’s wheelchair. “As long as I have her in my possession none of you will do anything to jeopardize her life.”

“You think so?” I question, keeping my hands to my sides. The overwhelming urge to draw my gun and end Enrico’s life is like a crack addict seeing their next hit dangling in their face. I’m stuck with two hard choices; either hit the pipe or fight through the shit like a new member at their first meeting at Narcotics Anonymous.

Focusing on what’s really at stake at this time, which is Kayla’s life, I start to try and reason with Enrico. “Listen, it’s obvious your IT guy and ours can find out where either one of us is at. Before shit has to get ugly, give us Kayla and Phelps. It’s only a matter of time before the Air Force sends out their Special Warfare group and they will, to locate them.”

Enrico finds my warning humorous as he laughs. “Do you think I give a shit about your countries’ retaliation? This shit right here is minor to them. They’d rather let them die than spend the extra money or manpower to save them.” He takes another step forward. “Think about it, if they cared so much about two pilots being taken down, why did you all find them before they did?”

Not going to lie, he has a good argument, but that still doesn’t overshadow what is going on right now.

“Be that as it may, we’re still going to need you to turn over Kayla and Phelps,” Mad Dog intercedes.

Enrico peers at Kayla, then to Phelps. “Well, here’s the problem with that.” His eyes move from Mad and before landing on me. “Phelps has been an intricate participant in all of this. Without him, we wouldn’t have known about his and Kayla’s test flights to Colombia.”

Kayla whips her head towards Phelps who smiles, lifting his shoulders.

“You son of a bitch,” Kayla rages at him. “You know your career is over after this.”

Phelps moves closer to her, saying, “After what Enrico offered me for this job, I can retire early.” Another shit eating grin spread across his face. “Plus, if I chose, I can return as the only survivor and live off of the tuns of monetary sympathy from the Air Force and country without even leaving my rank. Hell after this, they might even move me up to a higher rank.”

Kayla viciously glares at him. “Not if your fucking dead.”

When the last word leaves her mouth, a single shot goes off. The bullet pierces Phelps in the middle of the head. As his body falls back, I turn towards the garage and see Trappa standing there with his pistol raised.

Enrico and his men scatter, leaving Kayla in the crossfire.

“Cover me,” I yell to the others as I make my way to her. Kayla is bent over in the chair, using her arms to protect her face.

With bullets coming at them from every angle, Enrico and his men hide behind the vans and SUVs. Their rapid gunfire gives me enough time to get to Kayla.

Chapter 14

Blade

“Baby,” Kayla cries out.

“I know love, but I got to get you out of the line of fire,” I tell her, then proceed to push her toward the front door. I kick the door close once I push her through the entrance, then to a safe spot in the living room. “I need to get back out there.”

I start towards the hallway that leads to the back of the house.

“Johann,” Kayla calls out.

I stop, then whirl around towards her.

“I can help. Although my leg is messed up, my trigger finger still works properly.”

Thinking about it for a moment, I go over to tables with the remaining weapons. Picking up another Glock 19 and two magazines, I take them to her.

“If one of those motherfuckers tries to get in here, bury him,” I declare, handing the weapon and ammo to her.

Kayla inserts one of the magazines, vowing, “Trust, you don’t have to worry about that.”

I scan the room, not sure if I should tell her that Trappa and his men were here, but I go ahead and do so.

“Your brother is here along with two of his men.”

As gunshots go off outside, Kayla asks, “Keyshawn is here?”

“He is,” I reply. “He was the first one your higher ups contacted. We can talk about this at another time. Right now, I need to deal with the asshole that thought taking you away from me was conducive to his health.”

Lethal and Agent Vaughn descend down the stairs. They come over to us.

“You don’t know how happy I was when you got her,” Lethal says.

Agent Vaughn touches Kayla’s shoulder. “Are you okay?”

“I am, but I’ll be better when we get the Hell out of here,” Kayla replies.

Looking at Lethal and Agent Vaughn, I tell them, “There’s a utility room in the rear of the house. I’m going to get in there and shut off the power to the lights.” I grab a pair of the glasses, then hand them to Kayla. “Put these on when the lights go out. They will help you see in the dark.”

“I’m going with you,” Lethal announces.

Nodding, I move my eyes to Agent Vaughn, I request, “Will you stay here with Kayla? I don’t want her to be left in here by herself.”

“Of course,” she answers.

“Thank you,” I obliged before telling Kayla, “You’re in good hands.”

Kayla dips her head, sitting the glasses on her lap. I give her a reassuring smile before Lethal and I run to the back of the house.

Tapping the earpiece, I inform the others, “I’m on my way to the utility room. If you don’t have your night vision glasses on, I suggest you do so now. We’re about to see how well these motherfuckers can fight in the darkness.”

“Roger that,” Mad Dog returns.

We reach the utility room and I’m instantly irritated. “Fuck,” I growl as I try to turn the knob and it’s locked.

“Move,” Lethal orders. I back away and he kicks the door hard enough for it to knock it off the top hinge.

As the door hangs to the side, I enter the room and locate the breaker box. Opening it up, I take hold of the main switch and pull it down. The lights instantly go off.

“*Let the games begin,*” I think to myself, lowering my glasses over my eyes.

Leaving out of the back patio doors, Lethal goes to the left and I stealthily move towards the right side of the house. As I round the house, I see the guest house not too far away and do two clicks with my tongue, letting the Twins know I'm close. Two clicks echo back to me.

Moving closer to the front of the house, I find Venom crouched down behind a cluster of shrubs.

"Where's Mad Dog and Tech?" I asked, kneeling next to him.

"They went to the left side," Venom whispers back. He looks over his shoulder at me. "I know you got a plan in that big ass head of yours, so spill it."

As I lay out what I have in store for Enrico, Venom extracts the cartridge from his Ak-47, then ejects the bullet in the chamber. He then pulls another cartridge from his vest and loads it, readies the first bullet for discharge before screwing on the silencer. No need to ask if those bullets were coated with his fatal concoction.

Even if I didn't have the night vision glasses on, I still would have seen the Colgate smile plastered on Venom's face. "I was being nice earlier, but now I'm bringing my party favors. Consider me your plus one," he says.

This is why I loved my brothers. They were down for any and everything. Venom puts on an extra secure pair of gloves, then asks me to show him my most prized knives.

"Let's move out then," I chuckle.

We take off, swiftly moving past the guest house, then enter the thicket of trees. Hitting the earpiece again, I let Mad Dog know, "Commander, Venom and I are moving through the trees to the right side of the house. With everyone in position, we should be able to corral them in."

There's a pause before he comes back on. "I'm sure everyone heard that. Get into formation. Twins, Viper, Cobra, and Viper you all can leave your posts. Trappa the same goes for you and your men. Be ready for the signal to fall in."

“Yes sir, Commander,” reverberates in my ear. There’s no response from Trappa. Being the one who is always in charge, Trappa is not the type of person to take orders from another. Either he’ll do what Mad Dog instructed or he’s going to do shit his way. Either way, I know it will be at our advantage.

Venom and I continue through the woods until we come to a clearing above the driveway. We decided to walk on the pavement instead of the grass, not wanting to step on any twigs or branches to alert Enrico.

We see the first two of Enrico’s men behind one of our SUV’s, whispering back and forth to each other. I gave Venom a signal, letting him know I would handle them. I point to him to move on to the next vehicle. He dipped his head as we separated.

As I grow closer, unbeknownst to them, I’m able to translate what they are saying to one another in Spanish due to my momma’s Latin heritage. Replacing my gun with my knives, I silently approach them. They’re so engrossed in their conversation, neither keeps an eye on their surroundings.

The man on the left protests, “Enrico said this would be an in and out job. Obviously, he didn’t know what he was up against. He’s got us out here with our dicks in our hands, ready for them to be whacked off. You see how they took down the others. It’s only a matter of time before they do the same to us. I say we get the fuck out of here before we become the next idiots lying dead.”

“Too late,” I announce, slitting the man’s throat, then spinning around to impale the other in his lungs with both knives.

Yanking the blades from his flesh, he drops down next to his comrade. He begins to say a prayer of repentance, not that it would help him but if it was something he needed to do to make him feel better upon moving on to the afterlife, then so be it.

The sound of someone doing, “Psst, psst,” lets me know Venom has taken out two more of Enrico’s men.

By my count, there's only Enrico and four of his men left. Enrico may think he's the baddest motherfucker on the streets, but once we're through with him, he'll be the baddest bitch dead after the pain I'm about to inflict on him.

"Enrico," I yell out.

"What the fuck do you want," he hollers back, coming from in front of me.

"Earlier, you were counting how many of my brothers showed up and now I'm doing the same. Only I count other than you; you have four men left. Am I correct?"

Enrico laughs. "Now, why would I answer that? Being the number one tactical force in the world, then you should know I've dispatched reinforcements."

Glancing over to Venom, hoping Tech is on top of that, I counter, "We know about that, and they will be neutralized when they try to come this way."

"Got it," Tech's voice flows. "You're good to go. The rest of us are about to OK Corral their asses."

With that confirmation, Venom and I broke off. He went towards Enrico's men, and I went to the head of the snake.

Close to ten minutes later, in the distance illumination of headlights is growing closer to the house. Then the sound of gunfire echoes through the night air, stopping the vehicles.

"Enrico, you hear that?" I taunt. "Doesn't sound good for your men."

"You say that, but it could be my men killing your fucking brothers. Now show yourself motherfucker, so we can get this over with. Once I kill you, I'm gonna take your bitch back with me and make her my personal pet."

My nostrils flare as I move closer to the sound of his voice. Taking one large step, I'm in front of the last SUV. I peek around it and see Enrico hunkered down, looking towards the melee going on up the driveway. I could easily pull my pistol out and shoot his ass, but that would be too easy.

With his focus on the others, I begin to creep towards Enrico. When I get five steps away from him, my right boot steps on a twig, causing Enrico to spin around. Through the glasses I see the surprise on his face. Enrico aims his gun at me, but I rush him, knocking it out of his hand before slicing across his chest. He counters with an elbow to my chin, that has me staggering back.

Keeping my eyes on Enrico, I shake off the pain. He does the same as he unsheathes two large blades from his sides.

Enrico twirls the Trench knives in his hands as we circle each other. “My father, you know the one you all killed, made sure I had the best to teach me in hand-to-hand combat even if it included using knives. By the time my men finish off the rest of you Delta Force fucks, you’ll be dead, and I’ll be long gone with Kayla.”

My emotions got the best of me, and I lunged at him. Enrico leans back, escaping my blade from cutting his throat, but I’m not so lucky. His knife glides across my upper left arm. I hiss from the pain as blood starts to flow.

Enrico chuckles, twirling the knives again. “And you’re the one they call Blade. I think you had a better chance of shooting me from behind because your knife skills are shit.”

I can’t let him get any further under my skin. Hell, one thing we learned in the service is that motherfuckers will say shit to throw you off and I can’t let Enrico do that. Centering my mind and body, I slowly inhale.

Enrico raises his brow. “That’s right, breathe in your last breath.”

Trappa and his men run up with two of Enrico’s men covered with blood and dirt. They’re ready to shoot their asses but I motion for them to stand down.

When Enrico sees that they aren’t going to interfere, we charge at each other. He tries to stab me in the torso, but the vest prevents him from penetrating. He doesn’t have one on, so I’m able to slash the upper part of his chest, then spin and slash the lower.

With his knife in hand, Enrico runs his fingers over his blood-soaked shirt. He begins saying shit before bringing his blood coated fingers to his mouth, then putting them in his mouth.

“My blood. My family’s blood will not end here.”

Enrico gets into a fighter’s stance with his knives. The elder Esteban might have had his son trained to use knives, but I highly doubt Enrico has ever used his skills in combat like I have.

The lights around the house come back on for us to see the rest of my brothers along with Viper and Cobra successfully walking toward us. Agent Vaughn must have been watching what was going on, and when shit was in our favor, she went to the utility room to turn the lights back on.

“This is some bullshit. Obviously, they have taken out my backup, but I will never surrender,” Enrico rages.

I smirk. “That may be the case, but you and I still have unfinished business. You took my love away from me and for that you have to answer for that. Should you...” I pause, before continuing, “Should you defeat me, they will give you the right of passage.”

Rotating around to everyone, I make them swear, “Vow to it now.”

They grumble amongst themselves before Mad Dog replies, “We vow.”

The last word didn’t clear his mouth before Enrico came at me. The training his father put him through must have gone out the window as he windmills his arms at me. I duck and dodge his efforts to strike me. Dipping down, I stabbed his left thigh. Enrico cries out as I move the blade up, cutting through his muscle, hitting his femoral artery.

Enrico hops back, looking down at his leg as blood begins to soak his pants, then back at me. As he bleeds out, he laughs while falling to his knees. He then drops the knives to his sides.

“So, what now? Are you going to tell the Embassy I had something to do with this? They won’t believe you...they work for me!”

Stalking towards him, I dropped the knife in my left hand to clutch his chin. “We follow our own rules and law, motherfucker,” I state before bringing the knife down and piercing his skull.

A grunt leaves Enrico as I pull the blade out and his body falls back onto his legs. Glancing over to the two men Trappa and his guys are holding, I notice the gadget on his left wrist.

“Tech, do you see what I’m seeing?”

“I sure do,” he replies, typing away on the device on his wrist. “It’s sad that none of the mega heads like me want to band together and do good in this world. It’s because of money hungry bastards like him, we have a bad rep.”

Trappa and his men jump back when Enrico’s IT man screeches as the device explodes. His hand flies into the dark sky.

“Damn,” Trappa gasps as the man sobs, looking at the bloody nub. “So, what are we going to do with them?” Trappa asked Mad Dog.

“No loose ends,” Mad Dog tells him.

“No loose ends,” Trappa repeats before they take the two pleading men towards the garage.

“Johann,” Kayla’s soft voice calls out.

I turn to see her in the doorway with Agent Vaughn helping her stand. I rush to her, dropping my knives along the way. When I reach Kayla, she wraps her arms around my neck as I engulf her in my arms. Her body shakes as she cries.

“Thank you,” she sobs.

“You don’t have to thank me, baby. I will fuck up the Grim Reaper to keep you safe and always with me. I love you, Kayla,” I profess as a tear rolls down my cheek.

“I love you too,” she whispers, sniffing.

“Kayla,” Trappa says behind us.

We slightly separated to watch him walk to us.

“KeShawn,” Kayla says before leaving me to hug her brother. “You came.”

Tough guy Trappa clears his throat, trying to keep his emotions in check. “We may not see eye to eye on some shit, but at the end of the day, you’re my baby sister and if someone fucks with you, they’re fucking with me. That’s how it’s always been, and it will never change.”

As we give the brother and sister their moment, Javier appears.

“Señor Mad Dog, I’ve spoken with Señor Lanzo and he wanted me to convey to you not to worry about the bodies. We have a large incinerator in the back of the garage where we can dispose of them. He also has men coming to take care of their vehicles. This isn’t the first time we’ve had to deal with something like this.”

Well, that explains why Lanzo offered for us to come to the house. No wonder Javier was so calm when he came and told us of the vehicles approaching. There’s no telling what he and the other staff have witnessed here.

“Thank you, Javier. I will give Lanzo a call soon,” Mad Dog returns.

The rumble of a tractor starting has everyone looking towards the back of the house. As it comes into view, one of the female staff members is behind the wheel and several of the men are walking beside it. She stops it as the men work together, picking up the dead bodies and tossing them into the bucket of the tractor. Well, damn.

Mad Dog addresses Javier again, “Javier, we’ll need one of the drivers that took us to the warehouse to take a couple of my men there to retrieve our inventory.”

“Right away, Señor. I will have Casteel drive them there.”

Javier strides over to the men, then converses with them. The one who drove the SUV I was in comes back with him.

“Casteel is ready whenever your men are, Señor,” Javier informs.

“Twins, Lethal, you three go with him. Trappa can you send one of your men since they know where your weapons are?”

“Yeah, Mako and Jabari go with them,” he orders.

“Cobra and I will go with them to help out,” Viper offers.

Mad Dog peers at Agent Vaughn who shrugs her shoulders.

“Thank you. The more hands, the faster it will get done,” Mad Dog acknowledges.

They all fall in with Thing One and Thing Two, following Casteel to the least bullet riddled SUV. Once inside, Casteel starts the engine, then backs up. He steers toward the driveway, then leaves.

“What do we do now?” I ask. “How do we get Kayla home without having to explain all of this or letting it get out that it was Delta Force behind her rescue?”

Tech steps forward, replying, “I’m already ahead of you brother. When the others return, we’re going to get some sleep in before flying back to Colombia in the morning.”

“What?” I demand.

He holds up his hand. “Hear me out, brother.”

“Go ahead.”

Tech continues, “The reason for us going back to Colombia is to take Kayla to the nearest town or family closest to the accident site. We will pay them a hefty amount to tell the authorities that they found Kayla and brought her back with them. She just regained consciousness to let them know who she is.”

I scratched my forehead, puzzled. “Okay, I get that but how will she explain where Phelps is at or how she got the cast on her leg. Obviously, a professional had to put it on.”

“I thought about that too and it will be said that Phelps’ body was never found. Probably drugged off and eaten by the animals in the jungle. As for the cast, we’ll need to cut it off and re-stint it with sticks and twine to make it look believable.”

Kayla reaches out and grabs my arm. “Johann, before we go, we have to go back to Enrico’s house to help Gizelle.”

“Who’s Gizelle?” I ask, covering her hand with mine.

“She’s a maid in Enrico’s house. Gizelle is the only one that understood what I was going through. She even made sure to personally make my meals so they wouldn’t be laced with whatever drug Enrico would give to the others. She endured physical abuse for trying to help me. I saw the bruises and the defeat inside of her that was trying to break her down, but Gizelle still held onto a last string of hope; me. For whatever reason she thought I would be the one to get her out of that Hell with Enrico. She helped me when I was there, so, we have to help her and all the others there who are being held against their will there,” Kayla implores.

I looked over at Mad Dog before an idea hits me. “Throw his corpse in the back of one of those SUV’s. We’re going to free the servants and leave his body there before setting that shit on fire.”

“You heard the order,” Mad Dog shouts. “Venom, Tech, Trappa, and I will go with you to Enrico’s house.”

Trappa releases Kayla before I secure her in my arms. “We’ll get Gizelle out of there, okay?”

“I know you will,” Kayla responds, staring into my eyes. “She deserves a better life than the one she’s been forced into.”

“And she will,” I return before pecking her lips, then motioning for Agent Vaughn to come back and assist Kayla.

I’ve now learned not to tell Kayla goodbye. You never know if that’s the last thing you say to your beloved and you don’t want it to be. So instead of saying goodbye, I tell her, “I will see you again with all of my love.”

Kayla grins. “You already know. Jacked up leg or not; if you’re not here by morning, I’m coming to look for you. Damn, the higher ups or protocol.”

I can only smile back at her. Yep, I’ve been blessed with the woman that’s destined for me. Most women can’t handle being in this position, but my Kayla is willing to lose it all for me, but she has worked hard to reach the position she’s in.

“It won’t come to that, I promise,” I say, then kiss her forehead. “I’ll be back as soon as I can.” I wink at Kayla, pinching her chin.

As I back away, Agent Vaughn along with one of the female staff members helps Kayla back into the house. We’ve taken care of the first part of this mission, now we only have three more to accomplish before all of this is said and done. The second is to rescue Gizelle and the others from Enrico’s estate. Third, we needed to get Kayla back to Colombia so she could put on the performance of her life. Fourth, is to have Kayla come home, then deal with the backlash from Janae and Michelle. I’m sure once they find out what happened, explicit words and name calling will leave their mouths, especially Janae’s.

I will gladly take on their verbal assault. The only thing that matters is that Kayla is safe and back with us.

Chapter 15

Blade

Enrico talked all that shit, but we rolled up to his house without anyone stopping us. Maybe word had got back that he had been taken out or the men he had posted up were tired of his tyrant shit. Either way, we were able to infiltrate his estate.

I was the first one in. Men and women scattered as I had my gun raised, ready to shoot anyone who posed a threat.

“Gizelle,” I yelled. The others cowered, ducking down behind what they thought could be used as a shield. “Gizelle,” I called out again. “Kayla sent us here to get you.”

That last admission must have settled her nerves because seconds later, a petite Latino appeared brandishing a fading bruise to her face.

“I’m Gizelle,” she confirmed.

Mad Dog and I walked to her. He spoke first. “Gizelle, I’m with Kayla.”

“Is she okay?” Gizelle weeps.

“She’s fine,” I replied.

Gizelle clasped her hands together, saying a silent prayer.

“But she wanted to make sure you were safe and any of the people being held here against their will. The men with me along with myself are here to ensure you all return to your families.”

Gizelle turned to the others, speaking in Spanish. “*They are here to help us. If there is anything you need to gather, get it now or leave it here.*”

It didn’t take an egg head to know which way they would decide. They began running away from the house. Hopefully, they will be reunited with their families soon. With no threat of retaliation, they will be able to live a long prosperous life.

When the last servant left, Gizelle was the only one still standing with us.

“Gizelle, so you have any family you can return to?” Mad Dog asked.

She looked at him before trying to get her words together. “Sí, my cousin, Juan.”

We side eyed each other as Mad Dog inquired, “Would that be Juan Lanzo?”

“Sí, Sí,” she enthusiastically responded.

“Shit,” I murmured. “Lanzo did say he had members of his family disappear and Enrico could be the one behind it.”

“There’s only one way to confirm this,” Mad Dog said, pulling out his burner phone. He taps on the screen before we hear the sound of ringing.

“Mad Dog,” Lanzo greeted. “I trust everything went as planned.”

“It did, but we have another dilemma,” Mad Dog heaved.

“What is it, my friend?”

Speaking in code, Mad Dog told Lanzo, “We had one hell of a party earlier, but we shut it down early. When it was over, we found out that there were others that wanted to attend headed by a partygoer by the name of Gizelle.”

Lanzo became quiet and we could only hear his deep breaths come through. He finally said, “Gizelle is good at her craft of assembling the right people to attend these types of parties. She will help link you with everyone that has been a part of the party.”

“Thank you” Mad Dog returned. “We’ll make sure they are on our VIP list for our next party.” Through his encrypted words, Mad Dog was letting Lanzo know once we had the names of the assholes in bed with Enrico, we would give him a private invitation to watch us take them out.

“I look forward to it,” Lanzo said.

“Your name is the first on the guest list,” Mad Dog answered, ending the call. “Well, that’s confirmed. Gizelle, we’re going to take you to Kayla. You’re going to play an intricate part in her getting back to the States. Are you okay with that?”

Gizelle surveyed us before answering, “Sí, Señor.”

We left the house and got back into the SUV, letting Gizelle sit at the window seat. The way she admired the country scenery of her homeland, it made me wonder if she had never been in this part of her homeland.

Twenty minutes away from Lanzo’s, we informed Gizelle what we needed her to do for Kayla.

Blade spoke first. “Gizelle, we’re sending Kayla back to Colombia. She will need someone with her to act as an interpreter, which will be you. The two of you and whoever we leave her with will have to convince the authorities of her branch that she was found unconscious in the jungle after they searched it. She was then brought back to your village and was treated by the medicine doctor there. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

“Sí, Señor.” She answered. “Señora Kayla is the reason why I am away from that place. I will do what I need to keep her safe.”

“Thank you,” he said back to her.

The rest of the ride, we went over the plan and her intricate part of it.

Once the Air Force was notified of Kayla’s location, they would come and get her. Gizelle would have the option of going home to the Dominican Republic or joining the rest of her family in Miami. We called Lanzo to hear his thoughts on the options and it was decided Gizelle would travel on to Florida. Tech would provide official documents for her to prove she’s a legal citizen of the United States of America.

As we pulled up to Lanzo’s the guys along with Agent Vaughn and her girls are standing in the front yard. Tech parks the SUV and we get out before I assist Gizelle.

“Did you guys get everything from the warehouse?” Mad Dog asks Thing One as we walk towards them.

“Yes, Commander,” he replies. One thing about the Twins, they were not heavy with their words. If you asked them a question, they’re going to give you a simple but straight response.

Looking around the neatly cleaned yard that was full of corpses when we left, I say, “I see Javier and his people have taken care of the bodies.”

Agent Vaughn snickers. “They actually had the yard cleared thirty minutes after you all left. Then they came back and sprayed the grass with some kind of cleaning solution before turning on the sprinklers. I don’t know what it was, but there’s no trace of blood out here. Kayla and I sat in the front windows, watching it all.”

“Señora Kayla,” Gizelle says. I’m glad she did because I almost forgot she was standing there with us.

“I’m sorry everyone. This is Gizelle, the one Kayla spoke of,” I introduce.

They greet her with ‘hello’s’ and ‘nice to meet you.’

Gizelle smiles at them before I say, “I’m going to take her inside to see Kayla.”

“Kayla would love that,” Agent Vaughn notes. “She was worried Enrico might have sent Gizelle off and you guys wouldn’t be able to find her.”

“Even if he had, I would’ve put in extra to locate her. Especially after finding out that Gizelle is Lanzo’s cousin,” Tech fills in.

“His cousin?” Lethal responds with a surprised look on his face like the others who are hearing this for the first time.

I smirk. “Mad Dog and others fill you guys in on that while Gizelle and I go inside.”

As Mad Dog starts giving them the rundown on what happened at Enrico’s, I usher Gizelle to the front door. After opening the front door, I let her enter first.

“Señora Kayla,” she shouts, running to the left.

“Gizelle,” Kayla returns with her arms stretched out, sitting on the couch with her leg propped up on the coffee table.

They hugged each other like two lost friends that found one another.

“Thank you, thank you Señora Kayla,” Gizelle cries in Kayla’s arms.

Through her own tears, Kayla tells her, “I had to help get you out of that hell hole. Neither you nor any of the others deserved to be there. Enrico was a sadistic, egotistical asshole. I’m happy that my fiancé and the others were able to break the chains he metaphorically had locked on us.”

Gizelle pulls back, smiling at Kayla. “Two years! Two years I was held against my will. Every time I would try to get word to my family, including my cousin Juan, somehow Enrico was able to intercept it. Each leaving me brutalized by his men, but then I saw you. I don’t know what made me have the feeling deep inside that you would be the one to help take him down, but I trusted my instincts. That’s why even if I had gotten caught, I risked bringing you the knife after Manny backhanded you.”

“Who the fuck is Manny?” I yell, startling Kayla and Gizelle. “I’m going to kill that motherfucker,” I declare.

“Baby, baby calm down,” Kayla tries to soothe the awakened beast inside of me. “He’s already dead. You all killed him with the others.”

“Fuck that,” I growl. “I’m going to need Tech to show me a picture of his ass so I can do him more bodily harm before he meets the pits of Hell.”

Kayla sighs. “Then you might as well do the same to Enrico because he was the first one to be physically abusive, but you can’t because I’m sure by now Javier and the others have incinerated their bodies.”

“Son of a bitch,” I fume, picking up one of Lanzo’s decorative chairs and throwing it against the wall.

Kayla calls my name as I leave out of the front door. Mad Dog is the first one to approach me.

“What the fuck was going on in there?” he asks. I try to move around him, but he cuts me off.

“With all due respect Commander, I need to be by myself right now.”

He blocks me as I try to go around the left side of him. It doesn't help when my brothers circle us in. Knowing they would stop me at every attempt, I dropped my head. I could be an asshole and pull out my knives to slice and dice my way through them, but they know I would never use my knives against them.

Mad Dog takes another step closer to me. “What the fuck has you in this state?”

Raising my head, I look at my Commander and tell him, “That motherfucker and his henchman hit Kayla.”

“Oh, hell no,” Trappa expresses, taking off into the house. His men follow behind him.

Frowning at Mad Dog, I question, “So, you're going to let him go in there and question my fiancée but, I'm hemmed up for getting some air to clear my head?”

“You're damn right,” Mad Dog snarls. “Trappa doesn't know where to go find the rest of Enrico's family, but you do. I won't let you go all vigilante after we've killed the one responsible. Enrico is gone and right now his family is off limits. We don't kill innocents.” Mad Dog takes a step back. “I'm going to let you get some air, but Tech is going to go with you.”

“I don't need a fucking babysitter or someone to try to shrink me,” I argue. Tech has a background in psychology which is why Mad Dog's putting him with me to evaluate my mental stability.

Mad Dog throws up his hands. “Normally, you wouldn't but under the circumstances, you need one now.” He then addresses Tech, “Make sure he doesn't leave the estate.”

“On it, Commander,” Tech says before coming to me. “Come on, brother. You wanted some fresh air, let’s go get it.”

Mugging my brother, I return, “Whatever.”

Leaving the crowd, I head to the backyard with Tech on my heels. Other than Mad Dog, he should know what I’m feeling.

Swiveling around, I ask him, “If it was Madison, you can’t tell me you wouldn’t react the same way as I am.”

Tech regards me before saying, “You know I would, brother but after all the shit Kayla has been through, she’s here with you. The bruises will eventually fade, and her leg will heal for her to walk without any permanent damage. That in itself is a blessing.” Tech stops. I glared at him to see a disgusted expression on his face.

“You’re not the only one to go through this shit, brother. Mad Dog was feeling the same fury when the shit happened with Janae, and I don’t even want to tell you the homicidal shit that was coursing through my veins when those motherfuckers came for Madison.” His expressions turn into one of empathy. He points to the ground. “The ones you want to exact revenge on, are dead. You,” he declares, slapping my chest. “You need to let that shit go. If Enrico physically disrespected Kayla, then trust me brother when I say you earned your revenge by the way you sliced his ass up.”

I hear what he’s saying but it doesn’t stop me from wanting to mutilate their bodies more.

“Come on, let’s go to the guest house and see if Lanzo has any booze in there,” Tech offers. “You look like you need a shot of some hard liquor. We can talk about how you feel, or we don’t have to. I just want to make sure you’re in the right headspace before you go back in there with Kayla.”

Hell, I need more than a shot. Probably a whole fucking bottle to take the edge off.

“Fine,” I relented as we started towards the guest house.

An hour and a half and five shots of Tequila later, Tech and I made it back to the main house. I had mellowed out and

thanked Tech for being there for me when he knew I needed him. When we entered the living room, Lethal and Venom were talking while Mad Dog was on his cellphone.

“Where’s Kayla?” I asked.

“Gizelle helped her to the bedroom,” Lethal replied. “You guys are going to need your space, so I’m going to stay in the guest house tonight. The Twins gave Gizelle their room, so they’ll be over there with me too.”

I nod. “Thank you, brother. I appreciate that.”

“Hold on a sec,” Mad Dog told the person on the phone. He lowered it to his chest, then asked, “You good?”

“I am, Commander. Tech was able to get my ass back in line,” I responded.

“I can’t take all the credit. Those five fucking shots of Don Julio helped too,” Tech laughed. We laughed with him.

“I’m glad it worked.” Mad Dog said. “It’s time for everyone to turn in. We have a big day ahead of us tomorrow.”

“Roger that,” we returned.

I saluted them before leaving the room to be with Kayla. As I walked the short distance to the room, I wondered if she was still up or had fallen asleep? If she was asleep, I wasn’t going to wake her. I planned on taking a quick shower, then getting in bed and just holding her in my arms until I fell into a peaceful slumber.

Chapter 16

Kayla

When the sun rose the next morning, I awoke with Johann's warmth radiating against my body. I tried to savor the moment for as long as I could, but it didn't last.

I felt a nudge in my side. "Baby, we need to get up."

I groaned. "Just a few more minutes."

"I wish we had that, but we don't," Johann laughed, running the tips of his fingers over my satiny skin.

Lethal was gracious enough to give Johann and I the room and opted to sleep in the guest house with Thing One and Thing Two who offered Gizelle their room. I might be grasping at straws but it wouldn't surprise me if Lethal's generous gesture was so he and Agent Vaughn could use the guest house as their little love nest. Johann told me about their past relationship and how whenever they're around each other, they play this game of cat and mouse. I can't speak on anyone's relationship, but if it works out for them, I'll be happy for them. Agent Vaughn is a cool chick and is a badass like Viper and Cobra. They remind me of Janae, Michelle, and I. Agent Vaughn told me there's another member of her team who didn't come and if she's anything like them, I feel sorry for any enemies they cross paths with.

With my good leg, I kick the comforter off of us. "I honestly thought when I woke up, this would be a part of a bad dream. But looking around, reality has seriously slapped me in the face."

We sit up against the backboard when there's a knock at the door and before Johann can tell the person on the other side to fuck off or come back later, the door opens with KeShawn stepping inside. Johann holds me in place as I try to move away from him. KeShawn has never seen me in bed with a man before. Thank God I have on a large t-shirt Gizelle gave me.

KeShawn closes the door, then walks over to the chair near the bed, then takes a seat.

He looks at Johann, then says, "If you don't mind, I'd like to have a private conversation with my sister."

Johann and I peered at each other. "It's fine," I tell him.

"Why do you have to get approval from this motherfucker to talk to me," KeShawn fumes. "I'm your fucking brother! You don't have to ask any son of a bitch about talking to me."

I feel Johann tense next to me. Patting his arm, I say, "It's alright. Go see if breakfast is ready."

"Yeah, okay," Johann mumbles, never taking his eyes off KeShawn.

He kisses my cheek before getting out of bed, wearing a pair of pajama bottoms. He picks up a t-shirt at the foot of the bed and puts it on before leaving the room.

Glaring at KeShawn, I ask, "Was that necessary?"

"Hell, yeah it was. My sister should never have to ask the next motherfucker if it's alright to communicate with me," he cursed.

I roll my eyes. "Whatever, I wasn't asking for his approval."

"If you say so," he throws back.

"And do. Anyway, what do you want to talk about?" I inquire. I'm over his little tantrum.

I know my brother's expressions and the one he's giving me right now is not one of his good ones.

"I think you should rethink marrying his ass," he boldly replies.

"What are you talking about, Keshawn? After last night, I thought all of the negative shit between us was squashed," I counter.

KeShawn intertwines his hands, sitting taller. "You're right Little Sis. The part about you being safe was handled, but as

for the two of you going through with this marriage, that's still a fucking no-go for me."

"But why?" I ask as tears start to fill my eyes. "You've seen Johann will always be there for me just like you."

KeShawn's forehead wrinkles become more pronounced as he glares at me. He moves closer to me, rambling, "And if it wasn't for fucking *Johann*, you wouldn't have landed in this type of situation."

"Aren't you being a little hypocritical?" I said.

KeShawn narrows his eyes at me, hissing, "And what the fuck is that supposed to mean?"

"Even before Johann and I got together, there was always a potential for me to have a target on my back. Let's not forget the type of business you conduct with the South Dallas Boys and your rivals."

KeShawn angrily huffs, getting up from the chair, then starts to pace. He stops, then glares at me. He knows that I am right.

He walks to the edge of the bed. "Let me tell you the difference between my organization and Delta Force. My name rings bells in the streets of Dallas, Ft. Worth, and the surrounding cities. Everyone knows not to fuck with my sisters, especially my fucking enemies, but Delta Force have unseen enemies that will go after anyone that is connected to them. You were kidnapped all because those motherfuckers chose to kill that asshole's daddy."

"And as I recall," I start, "You were right there with them when it happened. Just like you were last night."

Trappa's face morphs into rage.

With my eyes, I shoot daggers at him. "KeShawn however you feel, wasn't it Delta Force that helped you find out where I was?"

"They did, and I'm grateful for that but it does not take away from how I feel about you two being together," he replies, then continues, "As long as you're with his ass, your

life will always be in jeopardy. Is that what you want, Kayla because, that's not how I saw your life turning out."

"But that's it Keshawn. My life is not to be how you saw it, it's for me to decide how it will turn out. And I have decided I want Johann in my life as my husband. I accept the good and bad that comes with him just as he has with me. I love him." I search his eyes to see if he's understanding what I'm trying to convey to him. "Trust me I know where you're coming from and as your little sister, I've always loved the fact that you are so protective of me. It was you, *KeShawn* who sacrificed a lot to make sure Michelle, Janae, and I became who we are today. Many young men back then would've run from such a huge responsibility, but you didn't, and I love that about you. Like you always say, it's about family and I want Johann to be a part of ours. So, even knowing that, you still won't attend our wedding?"

Through sympathetic eyes, KeShawn tells me, "Kayla, you know I'll always love you. You're my baby sister and as your big brother, I did what I'm supposed to do. As for this wedding, I can't give my approval." KeShawn closes his eyes, lowering his head, "If you go through with this, then don't call me the next time a motherfucker kidnaps your ass."

"That's not fair, Keshawn," I cried. "You can't help who you fall in love with."

Making his way to the door, KeShawn stops, then glances over his shoulder at me. "No, and you can't help who your family is."

KeShawn exits the room with me in a crying mess. A minute later Johann comes back into the room. From seeing me sobbing hysterically, I could tell Johann wanted to go after KeShawn and the last thing I needed was for the two of them to start fighting, so I held out my arms to him.

He comes to comfort me. Johann holds me tight as my mind replays what just happened. I have been through a lot and with KeShawn literally walking out on me, I'm going to need Johann now more than ever.

After KeShawn left, Johann managed to get me to calm down. He softly spoke to me, relaying how he was an only child, but he knew how I felt. His brothers in arms and he felt the same way when their other brother Chains left them. Their family of eight turned into physically turned in seven, but they never gave up hope that Chains would return to them one day. He just hoped KeShawn would eventually push his pride to the side for me.

Johann hated that he had become the wedge between us. I got pissed when he said a small part of him was telling him to let me go because he was breaking up my family, but my anger dissolved when he went on to say his heart won't let do that. He loved me with everything inside of him and he couldn't see living the rest of his life without me. That's that unconditional love right there and despite how my brother felt about our relationship, I was going to follow my heart. Am I supposed to walk away from a love like this just to satisfy KeShawn? Hell, no. And I'm sure if the roles were reversed and I didn't approve of the woman he had fallen head over heels for, he wouldn't let her go just because I didn't care for her. Watch, that shit is going to happen and when it does, I'm going to give him back the same energy he gave to me.

When I was ready, we got in the shower so Johann could clean us up. Normally, in that type of situation we would be fucking under the spray of water but, not this time. This time was for him taking care of me.

Once out of the shower and dried off, Johann got me dressed in some clothes Gizelle sent over. He then put on a pair of black cargo pants, black t-shirt, and my boots.

“Johann, can you please fix my ponytail,” I requested.

“Yes, sweetheart,” he replied.

He dug in his bag and pulled out a brush. Johann then undid the messy ponytail I had in since I left Galveston. I hummed as Johann began to brush my hair. That was not the first time nor the last he brushed my hair.

We were at my place one night in the bathroom getting ready for bed. I was in front of the mirror, brushing my hair

back when Johann walked up behind me and took the brush out of my hand. I curiously stared at him through the mirror, but when he did the first stroke with the brush, I closed my eyes, enjoying the bristles moving across my scalp. After that, knowing the gesture would relax me, Johann would do it anytime I asked.

With a fresh ponytail, I sat on the bed as Johann repacked his bag. When he was done, he threw the strap over his right shoulder, then helped me up with his left arm. He wrapped his arm around my waist for support as we left the room.

Johann handed his bag to one of the staff when we reached the living room. He informed us the others were in the living room, eating breakfast. Johann thanked him before we proceeded on.

Entering the dining room, everyone was already there except for KeShawn and his men.

“There’s two seats down there for you two,” Mad Dog said, pointing to the empty chairs next to Gizelle.

Gizelle stands and picks up a serving spoon next to the eggs as Johann helps me to the seat, but I tell her, “Sit, your days of serving anyone is over.”

A confused Gizelle looks around the table at the others. She retakes her seat with a new mindset.

Once seated, I asked Mad Dog, “Where is my brother?”

The room went silent as we sat down.

Mad Dog took a sip of orange juice before he answered, “He and his men left about an hour ago. Your brother had Tech book them an early flight back to the States. I’m sorry, Kayla.”

I guess the others were waiting to see how I would react, but I stunned all of us when I reached for the platter of bacon and said, “I hope they have a safe flight back.”

Viper and Cobra snicker across the table as I place four slices of bacon on Johann’s plate, then two on mine. With all eyes on me, I sit the platter down and pick up the one with scrambled eggs. I scoop an ample amount on Johann’s plate

before spooning some on mine. I then added fresh cut fruit onto our plates before I started to dig in.

Agent Vaughn is the first to address the elephant in the room. “Kayla, are you sure you’re alright with your brother leaving before us?”

Spearing a piece of cantaloupe, I reply, “My brother and I had a conversation earlier and he expressed how he was dead set against my relationship with Johann. I love KeShawn but I’m a grown woman who can make her own decisions in life. He’s in his feelings now because I chose my happiness over how he thought my life should go.” I bite into the sweet melon. Swallowing it down, I continue, “At the end of the day, I respect my brother’s opinions and have always done what he asked me to do, but on this, he can’t tell me who to love and I would never do that to him.”

“Give him some time,” Mad Dog sympathetically says. “I for one know what the two of you are going through. I think if he weren’t in the DR when Janae and I had our wedding, Trappa probably wouldn’t have shown up.” Mad Dog places his fork on a napkin to his left then anchors his elbows on the table. “I’m just going to be blunt, the seven of us knew what we first signed up for and we did what we were obligated to do, but now that Delta Force has become an independent entity, we have to be careful of who we bring into our circle whether its friends or significant others. Trappa is only looking out for you. In our line of business, we have enemies coming for us at no particular time. Which is one of the reasons why I brought my brothers into the security business.” Mad Dog leans back into his chair before adding, “I think once you’re back in Dallas, we can prevent any of this shit happening in the future.”

I have a forkful of eggs in my mouth that I quickly chew up. “I get what you’re saying, which I’ve decided to move back once all of this is cleared.”

The men of Delta Force whoop and holler around the table as Johann locks his arms around me.

“I’m glad you said that because, I was going to bring you back to Texas screaming and hollering if you hadn’t,” he whispers in my ear, then nips at it.

I laugh out loud at his antics. “Baby, after last night, you should already know wherever you are, is where I need to be. Plus, I’m going to be closer to my sisters. Janae is already there, and Michelle has expressed how she’s ready to come home. Maybe with the three of us in the same city, we can knock some sense into KeShawn.”

“One can only hope,” Johann sighs, releasing his arm around me.

“That’s all we can do,” I counter.

We finished eating and everyone gathered their bags. Once the SUVs were loaded, Johann lifted me inside the one with Mad Dog, Tech, Gizelle, Venom, and himself. The twins got in the van that had their gear in while the others got in the SUV behind ours.

On the ride to the private air strip Tech informed us there’s a small poor village ten miles from my crash site. He reached out to one of his contacts in Colombia and had him and his team scope out the village and its occupants. His contact met with the leader and told him what we needed. The leader told him soldiers had already been there looking for two individuals and left a business card for him to call if he heard anything. Mad Dog said that worked in our favor because when the soldiers returned once I notified them, the leader could say some of his men found me while out hunting. The leader agreed to help once the contact offered him a substantial amount of money to see that our plan was carried out.

Not going to lie, I’m nervous as hell. I just hope everything goes according to plan. At least I’ll have Gizelle there with me.

I nestle into Johann’s side, closing my eyes thinking, “*It’s almost over.*”

Chapter 17

Blade

We landed in Colombia with Tech's contact, Bruno and his men waiting for us. Only Mad Dog, Tech, Venom and I accompanied them to take Kayla and Gizelle to the village. Bruno thought it was a good idea for the others to stay at the jet, because he didn't want to spook the village with a lot of people coming at one time.

We did arm ourselves even though Bruno and his men were already armed. It's better to be safe than sorry. Venom also brought his medical bag so he could cut off Kayla's cast for it to be replaced with a more amateur binding.

Over rugged terrain, we were driven over dirt roads off the beaten path deep into the jungle. Different kinds of wild animals could be heard and seen. It was a beautiful sight to behold, but also just as dangerous. All the more reason why Kayla is going to have to put on one hell of an act to dispel any doubts about her story.

Kayla and I went over what she was going to tell them numerous times on the jet until she started to become agitated. I understood her frustration, but it was imperative she knew what to tell them as well as how to answer any questions they asked her. Delta Force has done some crazy shit in the past, but this was the first.

A little over two hours later, we arrived at the village. Chickens, dogs, and goats ran around as the people standing outside regarded us. Others start to come out of makeshift huts to see what all the commotion is about. Children cling to their mothers as the men either hold onto spears or the ones with guns grip them, but don't aim at us. The one I assume is the leader steps in front of them.

Bruno shuts off the engine then gets out. He holds up his hands saying in Spanish, "It's only me. I brought the young lady I was telling you about."

He slowly approaches the leader, then stops. Bruno pulls out a thick envelope from the pocket of his cargo pants and hands it to the leader. The leader looks inside, then nods saying something to Bruno we can't hear.

Bruno turns to us, then gestures for us to get out. Once out of the vehicle, I attempt to pick Kayla up to carry her, but she swats my hand away.

“Save that for after we're married,” she giggles. “Just act as my crutch.”

I shake my head, placing my arm around the left side of her waist. Gizelle does the same on the other side. As we move closer to them, the leader says, “Welcome to our village. I'm Fernando.”

“You speak English?” Kayla asks.

Fernando chuckles. “I do. When I was younger, missionaries used to come to the village often and I was taught the language. Sadly, there hasn't been any here for decades, but with the help of the ones who learned to speak English, we teach it to the younger ones.”

“That's very commendable, Fernando. I'm Kayla,” Kayla tells him.

“Thank you, Señora Kayla, and it's nice to meet you,” he responds with a friendly smile. “Come, let me show you where you will be staying for the short time you will be here.”

The small crowd parts as Fernando turns on his heels and starts to walk between them. Bruno follows first, next Mad Dog, then the rest of us. Meters away, Fernando stops at one of the better-looking huts.

“My people have been informed of what's going on. Before the Air Force people come to retrieve Señora Kayla, most of the villagers will be sent to my brother's village twenty miles from here tomorrow morning. Especially the little ones. They mean well but we all know children tend to forget their lines,” Fernando chortles.

Curious, I ask, “But don't you think the soldiers would think it's odd that none of the children will be here since they

probably saw them the first time?”

Fernando shrugs his shoulders, replying, “They might if no children were here, but I plan to keep the ones who are of age to understand what’s going on.”

Understanding his logic, I return, “I got it.”

Fernando swings his arm out towards the hut. “Please go inside and get Señora Kayla comfortable. I will have food and drinks sent down shortly.”

“Thank you, Fernando,” Kayla obliges before Gizelle, and I assist her inside the hut.

It’s pretty basic inside. Something you would expect in this type of environment. A small bed, table, two chairs, very minimal utensil, plates, and glasses. The floor if you want to call it that is dirt. I would hate to see how they dealt with that through the rainy season.

Gizelle and I take Kayla over to the bed where she sits down.

Venom places his medical bag next to her, saying, “We might as well get this part over with.” He digs in the bag and pulls out a cast saw. Kayla adjusts herself on the bed before laying back. In no time, Venom has sawed through the cast from front to back. He puts the saw to the side, then removes the cast. Although Kayla has only had the cast on for a few days, her leg seems to be healing properly, but there’s still bruising.

“How is Kayla going to explain the new healing of her leg?” Tech questions.

“Easily,” Kayla replies. “I took anatomy and physiology and when I saw how fucked up my leg was, it was either set it myself to keep pushing on or let it heal crooked.”

“That makes sense,” I retorted as Mad Dog, Venom and the others agreed.

“What can we do now?” Fernando questions.

Venom answers, “We’re going to need at least four branches close in length and some vines.”

“I’ll be back soon,” Fernando says before leaving the hut.

I can see Kayla is experiencing some pain since Venom cut the cast off, so I suggest, “Venom can you give her something for the pain?”

“No, no, they will do blood tests and it will show up in my system. I’ll just have to ride it out,” she grunts.

Gizelle sits down next to her. “Luckily, we’re in the land of medical herbs and plants that can’t be read. When Fernando returns, I’ll let him know what we need for the pain to subside it.”

“Thank you, Gizelle,” Kayla whispers.

Fernando re-enters the hut with everything Venom needs to make the homemade splint. As he finishes wrapping the dried-out vines. Venom gets to work securing Kayla’s leg in the shoddy splint. By the time he’s finished, it looks like a neanderthal wrapped her leg up and that’s what we’re going for.

“Not to cut this short,” Tech begins. “But it’s time for us to go. We don’t want to take a chance of being here if any soldiers unexpectedly show up.”

Fuck, that’s something that I wasn’t prepared to hear.

“Are you sure?” I asked.

“Dead ass. The Air Force does have a base three hours away from here.” Tech replies, looking at his wrist computer.

Kayla grabs my hand. “Baby, it’s okay. We already knew this was part of the plan. Gizelle and Bruno are ready. I promise we’ll go through the plan a hundred times over before the soldiers come.”

Although I wanted to stay there with Kayla, I know it’s not an option. Squeezing her hand, I declare, “If you’re not in the States forty-eight hours after they’ve been notified, wherever you’re at, I’m coming to get you.”

Kayla fists my shirt in her hands before bringing my face to her level. “I got this, Johann. I will do and say whatever I need to them as long as it brings me back to you.”

I press my forehead against hers. “And what about Phelps?”

With no remorse, Kayla replies, “When they ask me about him, I’m going to tell them I don’t know where he’s at. Maybe they’ll think his body was devoured by the animals of the jungle.”

I laugh. “They probably will since there isn’t a body for them to recover.” I kiss her soft lip before saying, “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Kayla whispers against my lips.

“Forty-eight hours,” I reiterate.

“Roger that,” Kayla snickers, saluting me.

I chuckled, kissing her again. Glancing over to Gizelle, I plead, “Please take care of her.”

“I will,” Gizelle politely returns.

“Gizelle,” Tech says. “Once Kayla is gone and the village is cleared of the soldiers, Bruno will return for you. He will take you back to the landing strip where there will be a jet waiting to fly you to Miami. Juan will be there to pick you up. I’ve already sent him all of the documentation you will need.”

“Thank you,” she responds with her eyes full of tears.

Tech smiles. “You’re very welcome.”

Mad Dog steps forward. “It’s time for us to go. Kayla, we’ll see you soon and Gizelle, it was very nice to meet you. Wish it could have been under different circumstances.” Gizelle nods.

“Oh, one last thing,” Tech blurts out, digging in his pocket. He pulls out a cellphone and hands it to Kayla. “It’s untraceable, so you can stay in touch with your lover boy.”

“Thank you, Tech,” Kayla tells him. “Not only that but I can call Michelle and Janae. I’m sure they’ve been worried sick.”

Mad Dog chuckles. “You have no idea. Janae threatened to get Nina to let her use the Kourakos jet to fly to the DR.”

“What?” Kayla snickers.

Mad Dog moves his head from side to side. “She did. Janae said we’re taking too long, so I had to call Balthazar to let him know not to let her use it.”

That sounds like something Janae would try to do.

“I guess she will be the first one I call then,” Kayla says through her laughter.

“Please do, because she has been blowing my phone up every chance she gets for updates,” Mad Dog gripes, looking up to the ceiling with annoyance.

As the guys start leaving out of the hut, I stare into my fiancée’s beautiful brown eyes.

“Call me in a couple of hours, okay?”

“You know I will,” she softly says with a sad expression.

I knew she didn’t want me to go, but like she said, we knew this was part of the plan.

I kiss her cheek. “I’ll be in Florida when you return.”

“You better be,” she tries to joke.

My feet feel like they’re encased in cinder blocks as I walk out of the hut. Every step to the SUV becomes heavier.

“*Fuck,*” I roar in my head. I’ve been through some hard shit in my life but walking away from the woman who keeps my heart beating has got to be the hardest.

Getting in the back of the SUV, Mad Dog turns around in the front passenger seat to address me. “Brother, she’s going to be fine. Kayla will be back with you in no time. Believe that.”

I know he’s trying to be supportive, but I had no words to say back to him. I can only lay back against the seat and close my eyes. I silently say a prayer, asking the Lord above to keep Kayla safe and to bless us to see one another again.

We arrive back at the landing strip to find the others doing target practice with silencers on the guns on a row of cans.

“That’s one way to kill some time,” Mad Dog hollers, getting out first.

“It is,” Agent Vaughn returns. “It started off as a competition, but it kept ending in a tie. We should have known how that would’ve turned out in the beginning. So, we scrapped that idea, and just went for target practice.”

“Glad you all were able to do that, but we need to board the jet and head back to Dallas,” Mad Dog informs, then shakes Bruno’s hand. He thanks him for helping us and if he needed any assistance in the future to not hesitate to get in touch with Tech.

Lethal and the Twins holster their pistols. Thing Two grabs a plastic garbage bag at his foot and the three go to retrieve the cans and shell casings. It takes them another forty minutes to complete the task.

Once aboard, Thing One and Thing Two take to the cockpit. The rest of us buckle up, ready to take off. My seat mildly vibrates as the engines come alive. I slightly lunge forward as the jet begins to move towards the end of the strip. Not sure which Twin is steering the jet, but we start to turn. The pauses before we’re moving again, picking up speed, moving faster and faster. The scenery outside begins to flash by and in no time, we’re taking off into the air.

Reaching the appropriate altitude, one of the Twins announced overhead that we could remove our seatbelts. While the others do so and start moving around the cabin, I recline my seat back. I was mentally and physically drained and wanted to spend the rest of the flight to myself as I slept the time away.

Chapter 18

Blade

When we made it back to Dallas from Colombia, we went straight to the office to unload our gear. Lethal and the Twins helped Agent Vaughn, Cobra, and Viper put their stuff in her SUV.

Before they left, Agent Vaughn said, “That was fun. Let me know if you need our assistance again.”

Not sure if the others caught on, but I noticed as she was speaking her eyes were trained on Lethal who was standing right next to Mad Dog. Yep, they fucked, and neither could tell me otherwise. After they pulled off, I started to tease Lethal about it but decided not to. As I’ve said before, whatever they had going on wasn’t my business, especially with what I got going on with mine.

After we had the weapons counted for and restocked, I approached Mad Dog. He held up his hand before I could utter a word.

“I already know. Take as much time as you need,” he said.

“Thank you, Commander,” I responded. “Once I get the call from Kayla, I’ll be heading to Destin.”

“As you should,” Mad Dog returned. “I’m surprised you’re not leaving earlier than that.”

“Trust me, I want to,” I told him. “But I don’t want any of her people speculating why I was there before knowing she was coming home.”

Mad Dog nodded. “I see your point. Do what you need to, brother.”

I shook his hand, then went to my pickup and got in. The whole drive to my house I kept checking my cellphone to see if I had any missed calls from Kayla. There were none, but when I pulled into my driveway, my cellphone started to ring.

I looked at the screen and didn't recognize the number but knew it had to be her.

"Hello," I greeted, putting the call on speaker.

"Hey baby, have you made it home yet?" Her angelic voice asks.

I let out a sigh of relief, responding, "Hey love. I just pulled into the driveway. How have you been doing since I left?"

With a cheerful voice, Kayla replied, "I'm good. Fernando and his people did a...I don't know how to explain it other than their own way of doing a barbecue. Oh, my God Johann, the food was amazing. We have to come back for you to experience that. Then the women did this tribal dance that Fernando said they've never done in front of outsiders. Talk about such an honor."

"You sound like you're not ready to leave," I kidded.

"Quit playing," Kayla quipped. "While I love their hospitality and culture, using the bathroom in a bucket isn't ideal for me."

I broke off into a fit of laughter. "Poor Gizelle. I've been in the bathroom after you've been in there and baby you might want to rethink the things you eat."

"Johann," Kayla screamed on the phone. "I can't believe you just said that. As if you're shit smells like roses."

I choked from laughing so hard. "Not saying it does but at least I'm courteous enough to spray the Poo-Pourri before I go. Plus, I spray the air freshener before I leave the bathroom. You don't even do that." I laughed harder.

"Whatever," Kayla threw back.

I changed the subject because I could feel she was feeling some type of way about being called out.

"Baby, I'm just playing. How are you really doing?" I inquired.

“Other than that part, I’m alright. Gizelle has been a huge help.” She answered. “I’m going to call the higher ups a little after nine tomorrow morning. I’m sure they will take me to the base in Melgar, before sending me home.”

Knowing that would take up the first twenty-four hours, I told her, “Just do whatever they ask you to do and always, always stand strong in your story.”

“Trust me baby, I’ve got this shit down packed,” Kayla said.

Our conversation turned to how she unselfishly let Gizelle use the phone first to call her family. Kayla said she couldn’t stop her own tears as Gizelle cried into the phone as she spoke to her mother. That’s why I loved her so much. She always thought of others before herself.

From there we started talking about dealing with the Air Force to prepare for when she came home. Kayla would be in Florida long enough to push the paperwork for an early retirement. We didn’t think headquarters would dispute it after what she had been through. Before her honorable discharge is issued, I will have Kayla back in Dallas with me.

By noon on the second day, it was plastered on every news outlet that the lone survivor of the two test pilots had been located the day before. For her privacy, they never mentioned her name. The Air Force flew her to the base in Melgar to run tests and other shit.

I knew once Kayla was cleared, they would be sending her back to Destin. So, I quickly booked the earliest flight from Dallas to Destin, happy that everything was falling into place. The ticket was expensive as hell since it was the last minute, but I was flying out the same day. I didn’t complain because I would’ve cleared out my bank account to get there. So, I had four hours to pack a bag, then leave for the airport.

After making it to the airport, checking in, then going through TSA I headed to my terminal. I had another hour before they started boarding the plane.

As I reached the terminal, I laughed to myself when I saw Mad Dog and Janae sitting in the waiting chairs.

Walking over to them, Janae questions, “Now, I know this shouldn’t be a surprise to you. You might as well drop that look off of your face. You should have already known I was going to be here to go see my sister. Michelle is already on her way.”

I shook Mad Dogs hand before, kissing Janae’s cheek, then sat next to her. I drop my bag next to my foot. “Honestly, I can’t say that I’m surprised. I know you and Michelle want to lay eyes on Kayla too.”

Janae puts an AirPods in her right ear, responding, “Exactly, which is why Michelle will be picking us up from the airport to take us to Kayla’s apartment.”

We finally boarded the plane. Mad Dog and Janae were three rows behind me in first class. I paid extra for mine so I could be one of the first off the plane when we arrived. After placing my carry-on in the overhead bin, I sat in my aisle seat and buckled up.

The flight was pleasant, until we landed in Destin.

When the stewards opened the plane door for us to exit. I was the fourth person in line. In front of the person ahead of me was a couple who felt entitled to make the rest of us wait while they took their sweet damn time standing in the aisle talking about their latest vacation. As they continued the chat, the stewardess approached them.

“Sir, can you retrieve your luggage so the others can depart the plane, please?” she asked.

The little weasel of a man regarded her with such contempt before replying, “They can wait. For the price we paid for these seats, they’ll be all right.”

The stewardess’ face flushed red as she stared back at him.

“No, we can’t,” I barked behind him. “So, get your shit and leave.”

“Who do you think...” The rest of his words must have got caught in his throat as he spun around, and got a view of my towering, muscled body.

“What was that you were getting ready to say?” I demanded, moving into his personal space.

The woman with her oversize sunglasses grabbed his arm. “Don’t worry about it, Joe. We’ll use another airline the next time, since this one allows bullies in first class.”

“No, ma’am. I am far from being a bully.” I told her. “I believe people shouldn’t think that their time is more important than others, no matter how much they paid for a ticket.” I turned around to point to the other passengers, then back to them. “We are not on your time. It’s obvious you purchased those seats because you didn’t want to wait in line, but that’s exactly what you’re doing to everyone else.”

Passengers shouted their agreement with my statement and their annoyance with the couple who were now the ones standing there looking embarrassed.

Joe kept quiet as he removed their luggage from the bins. As they walked past the stewardess, she remained professional as she smiled and thanked them for flying with the airline. When I reached her, she said the same thing to me with an extra thank you for standing up to the rude couple. I told her it was no problem; I knew they had to deal with assholes like that all the time.

I walked through the jetway to the terminal, then waited for Mad Dog and Janae. A few minutes later, they’re coming through with Mad Dog toting their carry-on luggage and Janae ending a call.

“Michelle is here, waiting for us. She parked outside of baggage claims in a navy Jeep Cherokee,” she stated.

Moving through the crowd, I ask, “Why didn’t she go to Kayla’s and pick up the Land Rover? Now we’re going to be cramped in like a can of sardines. You know Mad Dog and I need room.”

“Because her flight made it an hour and a half ago and she spent most of that at the rental car place. It didn’t make sense for her to go all the way to Kayla’s then turn right back around to come get us,” Janae explains.

“I guess,” I mumble.

Although the airport was packed it didn’t take long for us to get to baggage claim. It was easy to find the Cherokee Michelle had driven. When she saw us come through the sliding doors, she hopped out of the SUV and ran over to us, hugging Janae, Mad Dog, then me.

Her happy greeting quickly turns into one of anger as she slapped my arm.

“Janae and I should have been notified after you all heard about Kayla’s jet going down.”

I understood her misguided anger, but her directing it to me was not going to happen.

“Michelle, I sympathize with your feelings, and I’m not trying to point fingers, but Trappa is the first one the Air Force notified since Kayla had him listed as next of kin,” I told her.

Michelle focused on Janae. “Did you know that?”

“I only found out after Trappa went to Delta Force and told them what happened with Kayla. Mike called me. After that, I called to let you know what was going on. If you’re going to be mad at anyone it should be Trappa for not calling either one of us.”

Mad Dog intervened, being rational to Michelle. “You can’t be mad at your brother. He was there every step of the way to get Kayla away from that barbarian.”

Janae dropped her head, realizing Mad Dog spoke the truth before addressing Michelle. “He did. Once Trappa couldn’t persuade Kayla to drop Blade, he left.”

“No,” Michelle released, bringing her hands to her mouth.

“Yeah, sis he did that,” Janae countered. “Let’s load our bags before the police circle around for us to move.”

Michelle rolled her eyes. “This is the third time I’ve parked here before they rolled up on me to move.”

With our shit in the back of the Cherokee, Mad dog and I let Janae take the front passenger seat as we endured the limited space of the second-row seating.

By the time Michelle parked in the spot at Kayla’s apartment next to the Land Rover, Mad Dog and I were feeling the discomfort of being in such a compact space. We jumped out of the SUV to stretch before Michelle killed the engine.

After grabbing our bags, we went over to Kayla’s apartment door. I dug in my pocket and pull out my key ring. Finding the one for the door, I insert it, then open the door.

Janae and Michelle bypassed me, entering first. They stopped dead in their tracks as their hands went straight to their noses.

“What the hell is that smell?” Janae asked as we dropped our bags by the door.

Moving past her, I reply, “I don’t know, but it smells like something died in here.”

“I’m going to open the windows so it can air out in here,” Michelle says, going over to the living room window.

“I’ll do the other rooms,” Janae adds.

Going into the kitchen with Mad Dog behind me, I found the source. There’s a pack of chicken wings on the counter that has seen better days. What was once pink, and edible, has now turned into a salmonella party.

I go into the pantry and bring out a roll of garbage bags. Tearing one off, I set the rest on the counter, then shake it open. Mad Dog uses a paper towel to pick the wings before tossing them in the bag. I tie the ends into a knot.

“You should check the refrigerator for anything expired,” Mad Dog points out. “I’ll light some of those scented candles in the living room.” I nod, taking the top off of the garbage can, then carrying it over to the fridge.

Once I was done, I had thrown out an outdated half carton of milk, wilted lettuce, two plastic containers with God knows what in them, some old Chinese takeout, and a bag of wilted grapes that were starting to look like raisins.

With two bags in hand, I go look for the others. I find them standing on the patio.

Stepping out there with them, Janae, says, “We needed some fresh air.”

“At least it’s not as bad as when we first came in,” Michelle jokes. “I’m surprised her neighbors hadn’t reported the smell of a dead body coming from here.”

I chuckled and told them, “I’m going to take this off and toss it in a restaurant’s dumpster. There’s another three days before the trash men come and Florida weather is like Texas, hot as hell. I do not want to spend the next few days smelling this shit,” I declare.

“We’re right there with you, brother,” Mad Dog says. “I’ll go with you.” He takes the bag from my left hand.

We load the garbage bags in the back of the Land Rover, then take them to the local McDonalds. Once the putrid bags were out of the Land Rover, I inhaled a deep breath of clean air. Okay, none of the air we breathe is clean, but what I inhaled was better than the dying flesh that was coming from the back of my vehicle.

On our way back to Kyla’s apartment, my cellphone rang. Looking at the number, I didn’t recognize it. Normally, I would ignore unrecognizable numbers, but something told me to answer it and I did.

“Hello,” I greeted with Mad Dog peeking over at me.

“Johann, I don’t have much time, but I’ll be back in Destin tomorrow. I have to go to the base first to meet with my commanders before they release me,” Kayla quickly says, sounding exhausted.

Trying to stay calm, I tell her, “That’s fine. Janae, Michelle, Mad Dog, and I are already here. Just call me when

you have a time and location for us so we can come and get you.”

With renewed strength, Kayla responds, “You know you will be the first. Tell my sisters I’ll see them after.”

“You know I will,” I promise.

“Soon baby, baby soon,” Kayla professes, making my heart do somersault.

“I know, love.”

“I love you,” she sings in my ear.

“I love you too,” I return before the call ends.

Dropping the cellphone between my legs, I grip the steering wheel with both hands, then glance at Mad Dog. “She’s coming home tomorrow.”

He grins from ear to ear. “Hell yeah!”

As we drove back to the apartment, I had Mad Dog take the notepad and pen out of the glove compartment. He made a list of things I called out that I was going to need to give Kayla the best homecoming. I was sure once Janae and Michelle saw the list they would want to add to it too.

Tomorrow, Kayla and I will be reunited once again. We have literally been through Hell and high water to get to this point and our love for each other has not wavered; and it never will.

Chapter 19

Kayla

Finally, I'm on an Air Force Gulfstream Aerospace C-20 jet heading to Destin. After being poked, probed, and questioned, I was over it all. I just wanted to get home to Johann and my family.

The Air Force sent in their Special Reconnaissance team to Fernando's village to get me, I played my part to a tee. Gizelle held my hand as I sobbed and snotted at how thankful they were to extricate me. The Commander, Taylor, asked Fernando where they found me. He told them a hunting group found me passed out at a nearby stream covered with healing bruises, cuts, and my leg being held in place by the sticks. The men picked me up and brought me back to the village. Fernando added that once he saw me, he knew I was the one the soldiers from earlier were looking for, so he called the number on the card that was given to him.

Commander Taylor looked at the man to his left who carried a medical bag on his shoulder. "Go check it out."

The man comes to the side of the bed. "Hello, I'm Chappy the medic on our team." He introduced, sitting the bag down, then started to examine my leg.

"Nice to meet you, Chappy," I responded. "Is Chappy short for Chaplain?"

He chuckled. "No. It's actually a nickname the team gave me because I always keep a tube of Chapstick on me. I can't stand the feeling of my lips being dry. In these dry climates or in icy cold, I've learned my lesson about keeping my lips moisturized."

"I totally understand," I said as he unzipped the bag and pulled out a syringe and an alcohol swab package.

Chappy held it up, stating, "This is an injection of Toradol. It will help with the pain until we get you back to the base where you'll be able to have the good stuff. It'll take about

thirty minutes for it to kick in, but by then we'll be back on the rugged terrain to the base and that's when you're going to need it most."

"Okay," I answered.

Chappy took hold of my right arm and rolled my short sleeve up, over my shoulder. He ripped the alcohol package open to remove the saturated pad. He began to clean the skin around my deltoid muscle. When he was done, Chappy tossed the pad on the bed, then brought the syringe closer to me.

He bit the cap off, spitting it to the side. "Are you ready?"

"I am," I nervously replied.

I've always hated needles. It's been that way since I was a little girl. One of my biggest memories is when my momma took KeShawn, Michelle and I to get our vaccinations for school. I think I was around five at the time. KeShawn and Michelle took that shit like champs, individually coming out of the room, licking the suckers they were giving for being on their best behavior. Then it was my time to go into the room. I laughed and joked with my siblings, putting on a brave face. They were trying to scare me, but I wasn't going to let them psych me out, so I talked mad shit to them as I walked to the room with the nurse smiling at me in the doorway.

Nurse Benning, I will never forget her name, spoke nicely to me as she helped me up on the examining table. I thought, "*Man, she's really nice,*" but that shit went out the window when two other nurses; a male and a female, came in with that tray of needles.

I was off the table before they knew it, trying to get out. Nurse Benning tried to calm me down with her soft-spoken voice, but by then, to me she was the enemy. So, the three of them overtook me and brought me back to the table. I was small and they probably thought they could overpower me, once I punched Nurse Benning in her nose, they let me go. She and the others left the room, closing the door behind them. I thought I had won the battle until the door opened with my momma coming in with Nurse Benning and the other two behind her.

“Kayla, why are you in here clowning with these people?” Momma demanded. She looked at me with the one expression I knew dearly; why are you embarrassing me in front of these people?

Hanging my head down, I replied, “I don’t want to get a shot.”

“Well, you’re going to get one. You need this to get into kindergarten. If you don’t, you won’t be able to start school,” momma put on her soothing voice to try to appease me.

Being defiant, I responded, “Then I won’t go to school.”

Momma peered at me before she dropped her purse, then came over to me. She took hold of my wrists and applied her weight on top of me, locking me in place.

She looked over to Nurse Benning. “Get it now or you never will.”

Nurse Benning and the other two rushed to us. One held my legs down as the other stabilized my shoulders while Nurse Benning removed the cap from the syringe.

Being sympathetic, Nurse Benning said, “Kayla, I know this is uncomfortable for you, but I promise it will be over before you know it. We’ll do a countdown from three.”

I struggled as she and the other nurses began to countdown. When she got to one and struck me with the needle, I stared at my momma.

“It’s fine, baby. Just breathe. Are you okay?”

“I didn’t even feel it,” I replied, laughing.

I instantly felt the anger coming from my momma. I had put on that dramatic display, only to be amused by it.

Nurse Benning stepped aside as the nurses and momma let my limbs go. I sat up, waiting for my sucker, but never received one.

When we left the room, there was a news outlet there doing coverage for children getting vaccinated, but I felt some

type of way when they went around to all of the other children and avoided me.

Going back to reality, I watched as Chappy brought the syringe down to my arm. It might've been happening in real time, but in my mind, everything was moving in slow motion.

I felt the needle piercing my skin as Chappy began dispensing the Toradol. "This is just to ease your pain." He clarified as he pushed the last of the pain reliever in my arm. Chappy removed the syringe. He looked around for the cap, but stopped when Gizelle handed it to him.

It didn't take long for it to start to take effect, so I laid back, and let the medicine do its thing.

"Did you set the leg yourself or what?" Chappy asked, pulling out a large pair of scissors.

"I did," I replied as he began to cut the vines away.

"That had to be painful," Chappy grimaced.

"You have no idea. I bit through the stick of wood I had in my mouth to keep from screaming out," I lied. "I passed out afterwards."

Snipping away the last vine, Chappy concurred, "I would have passed out too if I was in your position, but it's a good thing you went into survival mode." He sat the scissors down, then began to remove the sticks and vines. "I'll replace these with the brace I brought with me. Depending on how your leg is healing, the doctors at the base will either continue to let you wear it or put you in a cast."

"I'm fine either way," I told him as he took the brace out of his bag.

I gritted my teeth as he lifted my leg. Gizelle pushed the sticks and vine to the side for him to place the brace under my leg. Although I was in pain, my attention fell on the conversation between Commander Taylor and Fernando.

Commander Taylor asked Fernando, "What happened to her flight suit?"

Shit, I hadn't thought about that one. How would Fernando explain that?

My mind was put to ease when Fernando simply replied, "We cut it off and redressed her. The left pant leg was ripped open from where she applied the splint, and the rest was ragged and torn, barely covering the poor child."

"Where is it now?" Commander Taylor questioned.

That made me nervous, but I didn't let it show. I did, however mentally cross my fingers that Fernando wouldn't say they burned the suit because it was flame resistant.

"It was traded to a man who comes to the village from time to time to trade. The suit was used in exchange for food supplies. My people are excellent hunters but there are some things that can't be hunted." Fernando stood tall in his response.

Commander Taylor considered his response before telling Chappy and another man to go get the gurney, so they could carry me to the Duck which is a M-706 Cadillac Gage Commando. It is a 4x4 amphibious armored SUV.

They left out of the hut as Commander Taylor began speaking with Fernando again. With the little time for privacy, I squeezed Gizelle's hand, whispering to her, "I can't take the phone with me, so I'm going to leave it with you. I'm sure Bruno and his men were watching everything and will let some time pass before they come to get you. You can either keep the phone or give it to Fernando."

"I will give it to Fernando after I call my family to let them know what time Bruno says I'll be landing in Miami," Gizelle conveys before becoming teary eyed. "I'm so happy I had the pleasure of meeting you, Kayla. If it weren't for that, I probably would still be Enrico's slave. You and your family have given me a new lease on life and I'm not going to take it for granted."

Placing my other hand over hers, I sincerely say, "Messed up situation and all, I'm happy that our paths crossed. You helped me when you didn't have to and now, we're helping

you. Don't think this will be the last time we see each other. I live in Destin, Florida now but I expect to see you before I move to Dallas."

Wiping her eyes, Gizelle responds, "I would love that."

Shaking our hands, I tell her, "We're family now, girl. I have two other sisters and now you're the third, which is why I'm going to extend an invitation for you to attend me and Johann's wedding that's coming up."

"Señora Kayla," Gizelle gasps, letting my hand go as she covers her mouth with hers.

Giggling, I say, "You can bring a plus one. After all, you have enough time to find a new beau. Your cousin Juan will be invited too. After all of this, how can we not have you all come be a part of the celebration?"

Gizelle lowers her hands, giggling. "I don't know about a plus one because once I get situated, I plan on spending a lot of time catching up with my family." She smirks, staring at me. "But then again, you never know."

I was about to tell her to bring one of her family members, but Chappy and the other guy came back in the hut with the gurney.

Gizelle says to me in Spanish, "*Voy a verte pronto* (I will see you soon)."

"*y lo harás* (And you will)," I tearfully declared.

Commander Taylor tells Fernando, "The Air Force will send others to come and question you and your village more thoroughly. From my standpoint everything sounds legit. So from me, and on behalf of the United States Air Force, I would like to thank you for swiftly contacting us."

Fernando shakes his hand. "Me and my people will be here if your superiors need additional answers."

Chappy and one of the men began to unroll the gurney. I didn't think I needed it, but I continued my role as wounded and helpless. Chappy and the others laid the gurney on the bed

next to me, then another soldier lifted me onto it. Once on it, Gizelle grabbed the sheet from the bed and tossed it over me.

“Thank you,” I said with a smile.

“You are very welcome,” she responded, smiling back.

“Let’s get her to the Duck,” Commander Taylor ordered Chappy and the others before shaking Fernando’s hand.

“Thank you for getting in touch with us.”

Fernando released his hand, replying, “It was the right thing to do.”

Chappy with his back facing me took ahold of the gurney at my feet while another soldier secured the head end. As they lifted me off the bed, Fernando placed his hand on my shoulder. “Stay blessed.”

“You too. And thank you for everything you and people did for me,” I acknowledged.

Fernando bowed his head, squeezing my shoulder, then let it go.

Chappy and the soldier carried me out of the hut. I closed my eyes and let out a sigh of relief, thinking, “*It’s almost over.*”

Once they had me situated in the Duck, Chappy asked how I was feeling? I told him I was fine and ready to go home.

Sometime during the ride to the base, I fell asleep. When I woke up, Chappy was shaking my shoulder, calling my name.

“Kayla, wake up. We’ve made it to the base,” he said as I blinked at the dryness from my eyes. “There’s a stretcher here to take you inside. Are you in any pain?”

“No, I think the Toradol is still working,” I replied.

“Good,” Chappy responded. “Dolph the one who helped me before, and I will get you on the stretcher. I know you said you’re not in any pain right now, but when we transfer you to the stretcher, let me know. Okay?”

“Okay.”

They lifted me from the gurney, then onto the stretcher. I did feel a little bit of pain, but it was nothing to complain about.

When I was on the stretcher and strapped down, I was rushed into the medical side of the base. The base doctors and nurses wasted no time doing their jobs of prodding and poking on me. They took blood samples, x-rays, and scans. Lucky for me the doctors decided I didn't need a cast and decided to have my leg splinted instead. I was mentally and physically tired by the time I was taken to my private room. That part was done, now I had to wait for the inquisition.

The next morning, I was fed breakfast before the higher ups came into my room. They questioned me for over two hours. I never deflected from the story Johann, and I came up with. When they asked me about Phelps, I told them that the last time I saw him was when we were flying together before my jet went down. They informed me that they have not yet recovered his body, so it's going to be determined that he had succumbed to the crash and his body was destroyed by the elements of the jungle.

If only they knew, Phelps was a traitor who went against his fellow airman for money. I wanted to tell them that, so bad, but I didn't. That would require me to explain my statement, and I wasn't going to do that.

I didn't know if they were satisfied with my answers, but once they were done, they gave me their gratitude for surviving the crash before they quickly left like they came in. I spent the next few hours stressing over whether they believed my story. I got my answer when a soldier came in and told me I was going to be on a flight back to Destin the next day.

"Do you have a cellphone I can use?" I asked. "I need to let my family know."

The soldier went into his pocket and brought out a cellphone.

"Thank you," I told him as he handed it to me.

The first number I dialed was Johann's. As it rang in my ear, I prayed Johann would answer the call. When Johann answered the phone, I let him know I would be flying to Destin the next day. I was excited to find out Michelle, Janae, Mad Dog, and him were already there, but also a little disappointed that KeShawn wasn't.

Before ending the call, we expressed our love for one another. I gave the soldier back his phone and thanked him. After he left the room, I got comfortable in the bed and quickly fell asleep, dreaming of rejoining my family.

Chapter 20

Johann

“What’s taking so fucking long? Why hasn’t Kayla called me yet?” I fumed, pacing back and forth.

It’s past four in the afternoon and no word from Kayla. My anxiety and agitation grow with each minute that passes. I know she has to be back by now.

“Calm down, brother,” Mad Dog says. “You know how this goes. I’m sure Kayla will call as soon as she can.”

I stopped and stared at him. “She better or else I’m going to that fucking base to get her,” I growl as there is a knock at the door. Storming towards it, I snatch it open, then yell, “What?”

“Well, that was not the greeting I was expecting,” Kayla giggles in front of me in crutches and civilian clothes.

“Kayla,” Janae and Michelle screech behind me.

“Baby,” I whisper before engulfing her in my arms, crutches, and all. Kayla laughs more as I lift her off her feet. “I was starting to get worried. Why didn’t you call me? How did you get here?”

“Because I wanted to surprise you all and from your reactions, I did. I had one of the base Security Police bring me home,” she replies.

“Stop hogging her, Blade,” Janae fusses. “We want to hug her too. You got the rest of your life to hug her as much as you want to.”

I reluctantly sat Kayla back on her feet, then helped her inside the apartment. The sisters hug each other as one while crying. When Janae and Michelle release Kayla, Mad Dog gives her a hug as well.

“Glad to have you back, sis,” he tells her.

“It feels good to be back,” she returns as he steps back.

I place my hand on the small of her back. “Let’s go sit on the couch.”

Kayla adjusts the crutches under her arms, then hops to the couch. I remain at her side in case she stumbles or falls. At the couch, she spins around and hands me the crutches before sitting. I prop the crutches against the couch, then take one of the decorative pillows on the coffee table. I carefully raise her leg and rest it on the pillow.

“Thank you, baby,” she says.

“You’re welcome.” I sat next her. Lacing my hand with hers, I bring it to my mouth and kiss the back of it.

“So, what happened when they came to get you at the village?” Mad Dog inquires as he and Janae sit on the loveseat and Michelle in the recliner.

Kayla began to tell us everything that went down from the time the Special Reconnaissance team arrived to when they took her back to the base. I was relieved they believed her story, because when she hadn’t called earlier, I was starting to wonder if they didn’t. As for that motherfucker Phelps, Kayla was told his family was notified he had been killed because of the crash and his body wasn’t recovered. His family will have a memorial service for him in a couple of days. I objected when Kayla said she would attend, but after she explained it was just for appearances, I understood. She had to show face as the saddened team member who lost her comrade.

The following hour was spent with Janae and Michelle questioning Kayla about what she went through in the Dominican Republic to them scolding her because she didn’t reach out to them.

“Listen I know you’re upset, but I didn’t call you guys because, I didn’t know if that psycho had people keeping track of you two and guess what? He did. He said the only reason why he couldn’t get to you Janae is because Mad Dog was always around. And Michelle knew about you and your family too.” Kayla weeps. “So, I went through that shit to protect my family. I would’ve given up my life if it meant no harm came to you all.”

I cradle Kayla in my arms. She lays her head on my chest, sobbing. I bite my tongue to stop me from blowing up at Janae and Michelle. I understand where they were coming from, that was not the right time to bring it up. We're supposed to be rejoicing in the fact that Kayla was home, not making her feel like shit because she didn't call them.

Seeing how their words had hurt Kayla, Janae and Michelle leap from their seats and rushed over to her. They cry as they drop down to their knees, taking Kayla's hands in theirs. They began to apologize and asked for her forgiveness. As Kayla nodded, they hugged her.

It's already enough for her to have to deal with Trappa's bullshit, but to get hammered by the last two people you have left as a family is too much. All Kayla needed now was to be surrounded with love and support.

I guess Mad Dog saw the anger radiating off me, so he gets out of his seat and walks over to us. "How about you and I take a stroll on the beach while they work this out?"

"No, I'm good right here," I decline.

Kayla lifts her head, saying, "It's okay, baby. We need some time to work through this."

I looked at Kayla to see if she was really okay with me leaving her here with her sisters.

"It's fine, Johann. I promise."

"Okay," I say before kissing her brow.

I lead Mad Dog to the patio doors before unlocking them, then sliding the door open. Stepping outside, I take a deep breath. Mad Dog steps out, then slides the door closed.

"I know you're pissed about what just happened and so am I. Janae and Michelle could have waited to ask Kayla that," he points out. "But I don't think they meant any harm."

I face him and glare. "You don't think they meant any harm? While retelling her experience, Kayla pretended like it didn't bother her, but I felt her body tense up when she spoke about what Enrico did to her."

“You’re right, Blade but like I said, I don’t think they meant any harm. It’s just the way it was delivered which is why I asked you to take a walk with me. As sisters, they will work it out. And you need some time to cool off.”

“Yeah, okay but if Kayla is in the same state when we return, you all are going to have to get a hotel room. I won’t have any negativity around her,” I declare, walking off the patio, heading to the beach.

“And I respect that,” Mad Dog counters, catching up with me.

We trekked about a half mile up the beach before coming back to the apartment. I was happy to hear the girls laughing when I opened the patio doors. Mad Dog’s cellphone went off and he stayed outside to answer the call.

“Wait, Kayla what did you call the man?” Janae snorts.

“I called his ass Deputy Dog because he was slow and thought he had on big boy draws,” Kayla laughs.

“I don’t know, sis,” Michelle laughs. “After his ass put his nasty hands on me, the next time he came in that room I would have been like that man from that one prison documentary with a cup full of piss and poop. He would’ve gotten a facial he’d never had before.”

I chuckle because Michelle is usually the more sensible one out of the three, but to hear her say that makes me see her in a different light. She’s just as off the chain as her sisters. I wonder if Terrance has ever seen this side of her.

Letting out a fake cough to make my presence known, I stroll into the living room. All three of them bring their attention towards me.

“So, I guess you all are in a good space now?” I ask.

They smile as Kayla replies, “We are. I was just telling them how Enrico’s dog had more bark than bite.”

I sauntered over to her, then retake my seat. “Bark or bite, that motherfucker got what he deserved by touching what didn’t belong to him.”

“I know that’s right bro-in-law,” Janae cheers, clapping. “Touch one of us and try to keep living a peaceful life. I think the fuck not.”

“Exactly,” Mad Dog concurs, entering the room. “Tech just called. Gizelle has safely arrived in Miami and is back with her family. Lanzo wants us to come to his estate there the day after tomorrow for her welcome home party.”

“I’m down,” Kayla swiftly responds. “If it wasn’t for Gizelle I wouldn’t be sitting here right now.” She maneuvers herself to face me. “Baby, we have to go. I told Gizelle I would see her before I moved to Dallas. Plus, I invited her to our wedding.”

In the short time Kayla and Gizelle spent together, I know they built a bond so there was no way I could say no.

“We’ll be there, love,” I tell her.

Leave it to Janae to yell, “We’re going to need to go shopping. Kayla is going to have to find something to cover that splint.”

My lady lifts her leg from the pillow, laughing, “Hide what? Shit, I’m proud of my splint. I could’ve ended up in a full body cast or a casket, so I don’t have a problem with showcasing my splint.”

Michelle and Janae fall into a fit of laughter with her before Michelle says, “Then I guess we need to find a dress that compliments your off-white splint.”

“Shut up,” Kayla cackles, throwing a decorative pillow at Michelle. She then turns to me. “Baby, are we getting takeout or are you going to cook tonight?”

“Whatever you want, sweetheart,” I returned, massaging her good leg.

“Can we get some steak tacos?” she requests.

“If that’s what you want.”

“I do,” she confirms.

“Then that is what you shall have,” I say.

I leave to go to the kitchen as Mad Dog stops me. “What do you need me to do? I’m a good sous chef.”

Other than watching Mad Dog flip some steaks on a grill, I didn’t know if he had any other skills besides that. Trying to let my Commander and friend down lightly, I tell him, “I got it. I’m going to keep things simple.”

Mad Dog regarded me before saying, “Do your thing, brother. If you need me, just holler out. I’ll be in the living room with the ladies.”

“Will do,” responded before going into the kitchen.

I retrieved all the ingredients needed and put them on the island. Next, I turned on the stove top grill and added a couple of drops of vegetable oil. While letting that heat up, I washed off the flank steaks, then seasoned them. I smiled when the meat hit the grill and started to sizzle. The aroma of the cumin, garlic powder, and other seasonings awoke my senses. As the steaks were grilling, I rinsed some rice to cook a pot of Spanish rice. I didn’t have any dried black beans, so I had to settle with the two cans Kayla had in the pantry. With those three started, I moved on to cutting up the vegetables. Cilantro, sweet yellow onion, tomatoes, lettuce, avocado, and of course some limes. I put them in individual bowls and covered them until it was time to take them to the table.

Almost an hour and a half later, I called for everyone to head to the dining room. As Michelle helped Kayla to the dining room table, I had the serving platters filled along with their place settings laid out, and a pitcher of sweetened iced tea and another with iced water.

I sat at the head of the table with Kayla on my right. Mad Dog took the seat at the other end while Janae sat on his right and Michelle next to Kayla.

“Everything smells wonderful,” Michelle expresses, glancing at the platters of sliced flank steaks, Spanish rice, and black beans with a garnish of cilantro on top. The bowls with vegetables surrounded them along with warmed tortillas, sour cream, Queso fresco (a white, soft, and crumbly cheese that resembles feta cheese), and my homemade Chimichurri sauce.

Kayla and I loved its spiciness, but just in case the others couldn't handle it, I sat out some mild and medium salsa.

"It sure does," Janae added, using the tongs to put two tortillas on Mad Dog's plate. "It's nice to have steak cooked differently for a change." She side-eyed Mad Dog, who frowned back at her. Janae laughed, leaning over to kiss his cheek. "Baby, you know I'm just playing. I love your steaks."

He grumbled. "I can't tell."

"Johann is really a good cook. You all are about to be in for a surprise," Kayla hyped me up. "This is just one of the delicious meals he can cook."

"You've been holding out on us brother-in-law," Michelle said, scooping rice on her plate.

Picking up Kayla's plate I began making her two steak tacos the way she like them. Onion, cilantro, avocado, Chimichurri sauce with a drizzle of lime juice. She wasn't a huge fan of black beans, so put a small spoonful of rice on her plate.

"Do you want tea or water," I asked Kayla, placing her plate in front of her.

"Tea please," she replied.

As I filled her glass our attention was directed to the end of the table. Janae tapped the table as she chewed with her eyes rolling to the back of her head. Shit, I hoped she wasn't choking.

"Oh, my God! This shit is fire," she dramatically complimented. She swallowed down the rest of the food, then held up a finger as she took a drink of water. When she had enough, Janae pointed the same finger at me. "You're going to give me the recipe for that sauce. The way it enhanced the meat! Mmm-mph!" She turned to Mad Dog, holding up her taco. "Baby, you got to try this."

"I'm about to," he said, pointing to the three dressed up tacos with all the vegetables on his plate.

Janae shook her head. “No, you have to take a bite of the way I made mine with just cilantro, onion, a little bit of lettuce, and that weird looking cheese. With all of that on your taco, you’ll barely be able to taste the sauce.”

“Fine,” Mad Dog sighed, then took a huge bite of her taco.

“Damn, baby I said take a bite not a chomp,” Janae fussed, looking at the small portion left in her hand.

An amused Mad Dog drizzled a healthy portion of the sauce on his tacos before lifting one and offering it to his wife. “Here love, take a chomp out of mine.”

“No, I’m good. I just know not to share my tacos with you in the future.”

We laughed at the two, as I prepared my plate with a little bit of everything, then poured a glass of iced water.

“Blade, can you put this sauce on other meats?” Michelle asked, going in for round two.

“You can put it on whatever you want,” I answered.

She hummed, savoring the flavor of the Chimichurri sauce and steak. “I’m going to need that recipe too.”

“I promise you and Janae will have it before you leave,” I vowed. That was a recipe my mamá taught me a long time ago and as I’ve gotten older, I put my own little twist to it. I never used measuring spoons or cups. I only went by taste, so the best I could do for them is write down the ingredients and tell them to go by taste.

When we were finished, there were no slices of steak left, barely two ladles of rice, and a handful of beans sat at the bottom of the bowl. That was on my part. I loved black beans. Dried or canned, I was going to eat them. You would think I’d turn my nose up at them because mamá served them every time she got a chance, but nope. They were still one of my favorites.

Janae and Michelle sent Kayla, Mad Dog, and I into the living room so they could clear the dining room and clean the kitchen. I wasn’t going to argue because if I fed you, the least

you could do is help with the cleanup. Let me stop tripping because they hadn't offered. I would have done the job with no questions asked. They were our guests at the apartment, and I didn't expect them to do anything else other than be there for their sister.

I gripped Kayla's crutches in my right hand as I used my left arm and hand to aid her back into the living room. As we approached the couch, I tossed the crutches to the side to help her sit down. Once she was comfortable with me elevating her leg again, I sat next to her. Wrapping my arm around her shoulders, I drew Kayla closer to me, then kissed her forehead.

"You just don't know how thankful I am to have you back with me."

Kayla looked up at me. "Trust me, I do."

As Mad Dog sat in the recliner, Kayla said, "Hey, I didn't get the chance to bring this up before we parted ways, but on the ride to Enrico's house, he and the one I called Dog were talking in Spanish about a shipment of women and drugs that were coming in."

"Did he mention where they were coming from?" Mad Dog question, scooting to the end of the recliner.

"No, he didn't. He did say they were to arrive two days after we got there. We are days past that, so I'm wondering what happened to the women," Kayla replied.

Rubbing my chin, I asked, "Did he say anything else?"

Kayla closed her eyes, moving her head from side to side while snapping her fingers. "He did mention the name of the guy who he was dealing with." She continued her actions, trying to recall the name. "It started with an A. Al, Al something."

"Alhoud," Mad Dog and I shouted at the same time, starting Kayla.

"Yeah, that was it. I guess you've heard of him."

"Yes, we have," I told her.

Mad Dog stood, pulling his cellphone from his pocket. “Excuse me, I’m going outside to give Tech a call.”

I gave him a nod as he went to the front door, then stepped out.

“Can you tell me what’s going on?” Kayla asked.

I sighed, because it was Delta Force business, but she already knew what Enrico and Alhoud were up to.

Kayla tapped my knee, saying, “It’s okay baby, you don’t have to tell me. I understand. All I ask is whatever you all do, please make sure those women are okay.”

Bringing my free hand under her chin, I raised it. I lower my head, bringing my lips close to hers. “I will,” I whispered against them before capturing them in a passionate kiss.

Kayla softly moaned as I deepened the kiss, sensually swirling my tongue around hers. My dick instantly went rock hard when she began sucking on my tongue. My sexy little minx knew what that shit did to me.

As we were enjoying our little make-out session it was cut short when we heard Janae say, “Y’all so nasty. You need to take that shit to the back.”

Kayla and I began laughing because we weren’t embarrassed at all. We just fell into our own little bubble and forgot there were others around.

Michelle playfully swatted Janae’s arm, teasing, “And what are they going to do back there? He can’t lay his big body on her because of the broken ribs, and she can’t play cowgirl because of the ribs and broken leg.” She pointed at us. “What we just saw is the best they can do right now.”

“You’re right, sis,” Janae snickered as they high fived each other.

Leave it to my sassy woman to put them in check. “Yep, Michelle you’re right but I can still lay on my back and let my man make my kitty purr.”

I laughed out loud as their jaws dropped. They didn’t expect her to come back on them like that.

“TMI, Kayla,” Janae screeched.

Kayla looked at me, holding her hands up. “Weren’t you the ones that came in here talking about how we’re nasty and what we couldn’t do in bed? I was just setting the record straight.”

“They did and you did,” I chuckled.

Janae waved her hand. “Whatever, where’s Mike?”

Still laughing, I pointed to the door. “He stepped outside to make a call.”

“That can only mean one thing,” Janae said as she took his seat and Michelle sat on the loveseat.

Despite the spat the three of them had had earlier, the evening turned out to be a nice homecoming for Kayla. Mad Dog eventually came back in and joined in our conversation about the wedding. The funniest part was who was going to call Silvia, the stern wedding coordinator, and explain why we missed our appointments. Janae and Michelle were adamant that it wouldn’t be them. Mad Dog gracefully bowed out, saying that’s why he did his and Janae’s wedding without a coordinator. With the three of them not wanting to feel the wrath of Silvia, I told Kayla she and I will video call Silvia the next morning to let her know we had a family emergency which was why we hadn’t been in contact with her. If she had a problem with it, we would hire another coordinator.

Eventually Kayla grew tired, and her pain meds were starting to wear off. I was going to help her to the master bedroom to take a bath and get dressed for bed, but Janae and Michelle volunteered to take care of her. I wanted to rebuff their offer, but knew the sisters needed this time together.

I kissed Kayla again before Janae stood on her left side and Michelle on the right. They dipped down, letting Kayla lock her arms around their shoulders. They counted to three, then lifted Kayla up.

My eyes stayed trained on them as they went down the hallway, then into our room.

“Blade,” Mad Dog called, getting my attention. “Tech was able to find the women Enrico spoke about. They were still in the cargo freight, on a ship in the harbor. Tech and the others are going to go and get them. He said there’s no sign of Alhoud entering the country, so I’m assuming he found out about Enrico and decided not to show up.”

Scratching my head, I asked, “When are they leaving out?”

“They’re gearing up as we speak, so I would say within the next hour.”

I sat back on the couch. “Damn, I wish we were going with them.”

“They can handle it, plus Tech’s going to keep me up to date,” Mad Dog shared. “Your main priority right now is Kayla. The brothers can handle it without us.”

“You’re right. Did Tech get any information on Alhoud’s whereabouts?”

“He’s going to work on that while they fly to the DR. Hopefully, by the time they get the women situated, he’ll have it,” Mad Dog answered.

I nodded. “We need to take his ass down ASAP.”

“I totally agree with you,” Mad Dog responded.

We carried on our conversation until Janae and Michelle returned. That was my cue to go to Kayla. I said goodnight to them, then made a beeline to our bedroom. Finally, I was going to be able to hold Kayla in my arms again.

Chapter 21

Kayla

It's been two months since the whole ordeal with Enrico. Janae, Mad Dog, and Michelle stayed two extra days with Johann and me. I was sad to see them go because we were having so much fun, but I knew they needed to get back to their lives. I really appreciated them being there for me when I needed to be surrounded by my loved ones.

Speaking of loved ones, everyone was surprised when KeShawn called the day after I made it home. We were sitting out on the patio, eating lunch when the house phone started to ring. Johann got up and went inside to answer it. Moments later he returned, handing the cordless phone to me. As Johann sat in his seat, I held the phone to my chest and asked, "Who is it?"

"Somebody checking on you," he replied, then picked up his hero sandwich and took a bite.

I looked at Michelle then Janae. They hunched their shoulders.

I finally brought the phone to my ear and greeted, "Hello."

"Good to know your back and safe," KeShawn said on the other end.

"KeShawn," I beamed. Michelle and Janae froze in their seats at the mention of his name.

"Trappa?" Janae mouthed.

I shook my head up and down. Janae glanced over at Michelle who gave her a look of uncertainty.

"Yeah, it's me. I was just checking to see how you were doing, although I hoped you would have reached out to me once you touched down," Trappa responded.

I took a deep breath before telling him, "My leg is in a splint and my ribs are bound, other than that, I'm all right. I

really wanted to call you, but after our last encounter, I didn't think you would answer my calls the same way you did after finding out about me and Johann's engagement. You went MIA on your sisters, but I will say, "I'm thankful that you put that shit to the side and joined forces with Delta Force to come rescue me."

"That's what big brothers are supposed to do. I would kill a motherfucker over you three," he returned.

"Speaking of the three of us, Michelle and Janae are here. Do you want to talk with them?"

After a brief pause, he replied, "Naw, I'm good. Tell them I said 'Hey.' Look I got some business to handle, but I just wanted to make sure you're okay."

"I am."

"Good." He responded. "Take care of yourself, little sister." The call was dropped. I laid the phone on the table.

"What did he say?" Janae questioned.

Swallowing my tears down to put on a brave face, I replied, "He said to tell you and Michelle 'Hey' and that he would kill motherfuckers over the three of us."

Michelle reached over and grasped my hand. "Did he say anything about attending the wedding?"

"Nope," I replied, staring down at my chicken Caesar salad. My appetite had left the building.

Janae reached across the table to take hold of my other hand.

"Whether he's there or not, you're still going to have the most beautiful wedding. Michelle and I are going to make sure that happens." She rolled her eyes. "Hell, if it needs to be done, we'll have security to turn him and his men around." We laughed. "Y'all think I'm playing, but I'm not. The way Trappa is in his feelings, he would be the one to stand up when the preacher asks if anyone saw any reason why the two of you shouldn't be married."

While the shit was hilarious, I could definitely see KeShawn doing something like that. I didn't want to ban my brother from my wedding, but Janae's assumption gave me thought.

After they left, it was only me and Johann left in the apartment. When I tell you this man waited on me hand and foot, that still couldn't describe everything he did for me.

I was woken every morning with a tray of fresh cut fruit, an English muffin, strawberry jam (my favorite), and a tall glass of freshly squeezed orange juice.

As the days passed and my leg healed more, I contemplated on whether to keep Johann in the dark about it so I could continue to get the specialized treatment. My conscience wouldn't let me go through with any deceit, so by the fifth day I told him that I thought I didn't need the crutches or pain meds. He wanted to argue, but after I told him the crutches felt like an enabling device and the meds could be addictive, Johann immediately jumped on my side.

Now, I'm walking with a cane for assistance and the prescribed pain meds have been replaced with a regular Tylenol 3.

With therapy, I've learned to work through the pain, so I don't take the Tylenol 3 as often. Some days I don't need it at all. I only take it on the days I push myself extra hard.

The following Monday after being in Destin, I had Johann drive me to headquarters at the base. After they found out the traumatic shit I had been through, my early retirement was pushed through without question. I could finally leave Destin and return to Dallas but before that could be done, I had to attend Phelps's memorial.

Johann was dead set on not attending, and I understood, but I had to show my face. At the last minute, he gave in, stating, "I can't have you out there by yourself."

I was happy he changed his mind. Despite me being willing to put on a façade for the Phelps' family and if they

looked sideways, it was reassuring to know Johann would be there to have my back.

We didn't go to the repast. Instead, we decided to return to the apartment and spend the rest of the day on the beach.

I had the perfect little black two-piece bikini Johann had never seen before. It was tied around the neck and on the sides of the bottoms. The black Brazilian cut set was sure to have him drooling and that's what I wanted. Johann's been so gentle and attentive to me, but just the touch of his skin against mine made my core throb. It's been too long since the last time we were intimate, and my body was craving for him. Yes, there have been kisses here and touching there, but it wasn't enough and with the help of the bikini, I was going to get what I wanted.

Once dressed, and taking a Tylenol 3, I sashayed my sass out of the master bathroom the best I could in the splint. Johann was sitting on the edge of the bed, scrolling on his cellphone. His thumb went still when he looked up at me.

"Do you like it?" I grinned, trying to do my best sexy three-sixty in the splint, showcasing my firm covered breasts and exposed ass cheeks.

I got my answer when he tossed the cellphone on the nightstand, then stood. As Johann grabbed the anaconda hidden behind his swim trunks, I knew he was feeling the same sex deprived effects I had.

Johann stroked his cock as he closed the space between us.

With his dick in hand, Johann leaned down, then whispered. "I may not be able to fuck you the way I want to, but I'm going to give us both the release we've been wanting."

Johann picked me up, then took me over to the bed. He gently laid me on the soft bed spread. He then climbed onto the bed and delicately centered my body in the middle. His blue eyes never left mine as he reached for the bows on the bikini bottoms, then slowly untied them. The fabric loosened against my skin and Johann pulled it from me, tossing it onto the floor. He grunted as he stared down at my neatly trimmed

mound. As barbaric as it may have been, my pussy was dripping with anticipation.

Slowly sliding his hands under my legs, Johann began to lower himself onto the bed. Using his shoulders, he brought my legs over them as he hungrily peered at me. My chest rose and fell knowing what was going to happen next. My eyes rolled to the back of my head as Johann let out a low growl before feasting on my pussy. Through the darkness behind my eyelids, I was able to find his hair and latch on with my hands.

The suction of his lips and tongue around my clit had me squirming like a fish out of water. At the time, it didn't dawn on me that my stimulated movements would leave scratches on his back from the splint but shit he didn't stop, and I wasn't going to stop him either because Johann was eating the hell out of my core as if he couldn't get enough.

Johann had me scooting towards the headboard and did the one thing that he knew would send me over the edge. I was already close but when Johann inserted his thumb into my already lubricated asshole from my juices flowing down and then his pointer and middle finger into my canal, then began to fuck my holes as he sucked on my clit like a pacifier. I exploded calling out his name. My entire body trembled with ecstasy as I conditioned his beard. *Damn, damn, damn.*

Johann with his glistening beard jumped up and removed his swim trunks, letting his veiny, hardened dick sprang free. Like my bikini bottoms, he threw trunks on the floor. He panted, taking hold of his dick before moving his head between my slits. I moaned, wanting more. I just had my outer orgasm, now I wanted my inner orgasm. Some women don't know that there are two, and there's nothing wrong with that. You can experience an orgasm either through oral sex or regular sex. I'm greedy, so I want both. Shit, if your mate knows your erogenous zones, they will make you cum every time, even if it's just massaging your feet.

As Johann leaned over me, I licked his lips, tasting my essence. With his dick glistened with my natural nectar, Johann slowly entered me. Instead of pain, pleasure filled me. Never and I mean never had I been with a man with the girth

or size of Johann. From the first time we were intimate he had me trying to grab invisible rungs of a ladder that didn't exist. I wanted to climb away from the assault he was putting on my nether regions, but when he shifted gears, and the pain was replaced with pleasure I began throwing my ass back at him.

"You good, baby?" Johann asked, still moving his dick in and out of my walls.

"Keep doing what you're doing, and you'll find out sooner than you'll know." I purred.

My body tensed, then relaxed from the unexpected swat to my ass. That shit only heightened the mood, but Johann became worried.

"Kayla, am I too rough?"

Turning my head to look at his gorgeous face as he still unhurriedly moved within my walls "Baby," I gasped, trying to get my words out.

"Tell me you love me," Johann whispered, sensuously gliding across my clit.

The way his enlarged mushroom head dick was connecting with my G-spot, Johann could have gotten anything out of me.

My walls locked around his dick as I repeated, "I love you; I love you; I love you."

"I love you too," Johann returned.

I cupped his face, then brought his lips to mine.

"Mmm," he hummed, increasing his pace.

I could tell he was being careful, trying not to hurt me and I understood but the Tylenol 3 had kicked in and I was feeling no pain. The only thing I wanted to feel was my man owning my pussy like he always did.

"Harder, baby," I begged.

"Are you sure? I don't want to hurt you," Johann asked, never stopping.

Resting my splinted leg on his back and bending the other, I planted my foot on the bed. Johann ceased his movements, staring down at me. I began moving my pelvis up and down, fucking him from the bottom. Johann closed his eyes, biting his bottom lip.

“Fuck,” he moaned.

Swirling my hips, I joked, “Johann, if you don’t fuck me the way I’m used to, I’ll finish the job on my own.”

He took that seriously because the next thing I knew, Johann’s hands were locked behind my knees, and he was fucking the shit out of me. Grunts, moans, and skin on skin slapping against each other echoed around the room.

“I tried to be nice, but you want the beast and you’re going to get him,” Johann growled, pushing my knees to the side of my head.

I latched onto his forearms, digging my nails into his skin. Yes, this is what I wanted. Damn that sensual shit. Don’t get me wrong, there’s a time and place for it but getting fucked is what my body needed.

“Yes, baby. Yes, baby,” I babbled.

That spurred Johann on. Sweat from his brow landed on my breast as my own rolled down my face like someone turned on a faucet. I felt Johann begin to swell within my walls.

“Wooo, shit,” I screeched as tiny volts started to spread throughout my body. Johann leaned further over me, holding me in place not giving me any room to squirm from underneath him. Not that I wanted too anyway.

He had full domain over my body, and I gladly gave it to him. When he finally exploded inside of me, it set off my orgasm. My pussy felt like a vacuum, sucking in every drop of his seed.

As our euphoric high began to dwindle, Johann slowly lowered my legs, slowly removing his semi hard dick. He rested his head on my chest, then wrapped his arms around my back as I got comfortable and began to stroke his hair. I don’t

know how long we stayed in that position but when I woke up our positions had changed, and I was on Johann's chest.

"Baby are you ready to go?" Johann asks, knocking the memories out of my head.

Today we're meeting with Silvia to do wedding cake tastings and checking out the venue we're going to use for the wedding and reception.

"I'm ready," I reply, giving myself one last look in the mirror. I was cute as always in a pair of high waisted skinny jeans, an oversized white off the shoulder t-shirt, and a pair of white and tan espadrilles. The splint is long gone. When the doctor cleared me to stop wearing it, I quickly threw it in the garbage. Weeks prior, I already knew I didn't need it anymore but left it up to Sir-Care-A-Lot, Johann to make me still wear it.

I've been back in Dallas for the last two months and I am loving it. Janae and I have lunch together at least two or three times a week and her best friend Nina has joined us a couple times. I was baffled to learn that her husband Balthazar and his family were a part of the Greek Mafia Family, but after getting to know Nina, I couldn't see her with anyone else. Nina's an Alpha female like Janae and needed someone a notch above her level.

When Nina couldn't make it, it was nice to spend one on one time with Janae. Michelle surprised us, announcing she, Terrence, and the kids are looking for a place here in Dallas. Michelle promised they would move here and be settled before the wedding. I know she said she was ready to come home but I didn't think it would be that soon, but I'm happy that for once in a long time, we would be together again after so long.

We had less than three months until the wedding and now we were down to the wire. If we didn't have to deal with the shit with Enrico, everything would be running on schedule. When we reached out to Silvia once we were back at home, she threatened to cancel our contract and deposit, but after we told her our fake excuse of why we weren't able to show at our meetings, she kept our deposit. Silvia took up her contractual

duties, and I actually loved how she kept everyone in line. That meant nothing could go wrong under her watchful eyes because they would be on everyone essential to the wedding.

“Let’s get going,” Johann says, coming up behind me as I stand in front of the full-length mirror, then lacing his arms around my waist. He pecks at my neck, saying, “I’m not trying to be on Silvia’s bad side.”

I giggle from the ticklishness of his beard on my neck. “You sound like you’re afraid of Silvia.”

Johann continues to peck at my neck, stating, “I’m not scared of Silvia. I’m just not one to be ordered around for the most important day of our lives. I know she has a job to do, but at the end of the day it’s all about you and me. I wanted to keep things simple, but here we are going to meet with the wedding coordinator from Hell. I would have been all right if we had the wedding in the backyard. It’s big enough for it. Plus, every time we look out the kitchen windows, we’ll always see where we profess our love to one another, not like at someplace that could be closed or abandoned a year or two later. Just think of the beautiful story we will tell our future children as they play in the same backyard their parents tied the knot in.”

Letting his logic sink in, I nodded. It would be nice to sit in the backyard and reminisce to our children about the day their parents celebrated the biggest day of our lives. Even before then, I could see myself and Johann spending many evenings lying on a blanket, staring up at the stars in the one peaceful place we’d made our own.

“Let’s do it!” I say with enthusiasm as I turn to face him.

His eyes brightened as he stared back at me. “I was hoping you would agree to that.” He takes my hand in his. “Great, we’ll tell Silvia that we want to cancel the venue and have the backyard decorated instead.”

“I hope she doesn’t make a big deal out of it. You know she’s all ritzy and shit,” I countered with a smile.

Johann laughs, drawing me close to him. “I’m sure Silvia has had couples change venues many times. Plus, she’s still going to get paid the same amount either way.”

“Fine, but we need to take some pictures of the backyard so she can start working out the details on decorating and setting up.” I said, wrapping my arms around his neck.

He softly kisses me, then says, “You go take the pictures and I’ll lock up the house, then start the Rover. It’s hot as Hell outside, and I want to make sure it’s cooled down before we get in.”

“All right,” I responded, removing my arms from his neck.

Before Johann lets me go, he inquires, “Are you sure you want to do this? If your heart is set on having the wedding at the Gardens, we can still have it there. My idea was only a suggestion.”

Placing my hand over his heart, I reply, “I’m sure, baby. With everything that we have been through, I don’t care about having some over-the-top wedding. I just want a small gathering with our family and friends. Hell, if I knew I wouldn’t have to fight Michelle or Janae, I’d be happy with only you, me, and the Reverend in the backyard.”

Johann let out a roar of laughter. “Yeah, we know that’s not going to happen and I wouldn’t let it either because after your sisters tear into you, they’ll come for me next and I’m not willing to deal with their wrath.”

I push out of his arms, giggling. “Seriously, the man known as Blade who is quick to slice a person’s skin as if it’s butter is scared of two women who together make one of him?”

“Hell, yeah,” he quickly replies. “Janae is known for pulling out her 9mm and I don’t know what Michelle will do which makes her even more dangerous.”

My facial muscles ache from laughing so hard. “Wait until I tell them this,” I shout, trying to take off out of the room when Johann catches me around the waist with his right arm. I

continue to laugh, struggling to get out of his grasp. “Let me go.”

“No, not until you promise not to tell your sisters what I said,” he says, trying to be stern but I could hear the humor in his voice.

“And if I don’t?” I cackle.

Johann grinds his dick against my ass, responding, “It’ll be a long time before you get any of this.”

“Seriously, Johann? You’re going to withhold sex from me?” I squeak.

“You damn right,” he answers as his manhood throbs against my ass cheeks.

“This is so not fair. You’re playing dirty,” I argue as I start to move my hips up and down. “You can’t take your love away from me, Johann.”

He reaches around and kneads my right breast, causing me to let out a pleasure filled moan.

“I can and I will,” Johann declares as he stimulates my nipple while moving his erect dick up and down the crease of my ass.

I spoke on those erogenous zones earlier and Johann is manipulating some of mine right now.

Knowing I was on the losing side against Johann, I say, “Fine, you win. I won’t tell Michelle or Janae. Are you happy now?”

“I am,” Johann proudly answers, removing his hand from my breast, then taking a step back. “Go get the pictures and I’ll meet you at the truck,” he laughs, slapping my ass.

I give him a payback look over my shoulder before leaving the room. His ass has the nerve to wink at me before blowing me a kiss. This was far from over. Johann might’ve thought he won the war, but it’s only just begun.

Chapter 22

Blade

Finally, after months of preparations, the day has finally come. Today, I will be professing my love for Kayla in front of all our family and friends. The day we went to Silvia's office and told her we wanted to have the wedding in our backyard instead of the Gardens, I was ready for her to disagree on the change. To our surprise, Silvia thought it was a wonderful idea.

After looking at the photos Kayla took of the backyard, Silvia quickly went to work on setting everything up. With the backyard being ten times smaller than the Gardens, that cut her work in half.

Last night the girls gave Kayla her bachelorette party at Club Mystique. The guys set up my bachelor party at Elite Gentlemen's Club. Balthazar had our VIP section loaded with an assortment of different liquors, champagne, appetizers, and Cuban cigars.

I only wanted to have a night out with the fellows before declaring my heart and soul to the woman I love the night before, but that shit was derailed when four dancers entered the VIP section.

"So, which one of you is getting married tomorrow?" the thick redbone African American woman yelled over the music. She had red hair, with flame pasties covering her nipples and what could only be described as a widened strip of red dental floss barely covering her lady parts.

Before anyone could answer, Alistair pointed his finger at me and replied. "It's that motherfucker right here. After tonight, he's turning in his player's card."

The enticing woman walked over to me, placed her hands on top of my knees, then leaned over. She seductively licked her lips before saying, "Damn, it's always the fine ones that get snatched up. Anyway, my name is Siren and if it doesn't

work out, come back and holler at me. In fact, holler at me either way. I'm sure I can do things your future wife won't. Now, back to business; how about we go to the Champagne Room so I can give you a private dance. What happens in the Champagne Room, stays in the Champagne Room." Siren lifted her right hand, then ran two fingers down my shirt. When she got close to my dick, I grabbed her wrist.

Trying to be polite, I told her, "Thank you for the offer, but I'm going to have to decline. You're not my type."

She snatched her wrist out of mine as she stood. "I'm not your type?" she hissed, frowning. "I'm the baddest bitch in here. I'm every man's type, shit even some women."

"Exactly," I responded, picking up my bottle of beer, then took a drink.

"What the fuck is that supposed to mean?" Siren asked, putting her hand on her hip.

"That's enough Siren," Balthazar warned.

Glaring at her boss, Siren waved her hand in my direction. "No, I want to know what this asshole meant. It's obvious he can't see a fine ass woman in front of him. Maybe he needs some glasses. And if he's passing me over, then I know his woman must look like a dog."

"Siren!" Alistar yelled, getting up from his seat but I held up my hand to stop him from advancing on her. I knew he wouldn't lay a finger on her, but you could tell he was irritated by her words.

I tapped Siren on her leg to get her attention. When she looked at me, I laid it all out to her. "It was not my intention to offend you, but you offended me first when you spoke about my fiancée. Her beauty is ten times higher than yours, and she doesn't even need to wear all that shit you have caked on your face. She has natural beauty and I'm guessing once you wash off all those layers, you'll look like a totally different person." Siren gasped but I continued. "That shit about going to the Champagne Room was never going to happen. I get it, it's a way for you to earn extra money but I love my woman too

much to disrespect her like that.” Looking at Balthazar, I informed him, “Apparently, there is more than dancing going on in the Champagne Room.” His head twisted towards Siren.

“And what?” she threw at him. “Don’t sit there and pretend you don’t know what happens in those rooms.”

“I know what’s not supposed to be happening,” Balthazar swiftly countered. “And if you’re violating the rules of this establishment, you might as well clean out your locker.”

“And will,” Siren said, turning to the other three dancers. One was sitting on Venom’s lap and the other two had taken up space on Thing One and Thing Two laps. Siren thought they were going to rally around her, but when the three didn’t move, she stood there alone with her lips pressed tight. “Fuck all of y’all. I could be making more money at Phantom Phreaks.”

“Then take your ass there,” Alistair countered. “And I promise, after the first night of not making the same money, you do here; you’ll be back.” He leaned back on the couch, resting his feet on the table in front of him.

Siren thought about her options, then said, “Fine. I’m taking the rest of the night off and I will be back tomorrow.”

“That won’t be necessary. Your services are no longer needed,” Balthazar said before waving over one of his bouncers. “Make sure she gathers all of her belongings.”

“Yes, sir,” the burly guy returned.

Siren huffed, then stomped out of our VIP section as he took a step towards her.

Balthazar looked at me. “I want to personally apologize. I hope Siren’s little display didn’t bring down the mood of your bachelor party.”

“There’s no need to apologize. I’m good,” I told him. “I was ignoring her shit until she disrespected Kayla. That right there is a no-go for me. She’s lucky I didn’t send an SOS to Kayla like we had planned to do if our parties had gotten out of hand.”

“Thank God you didn’t,” Balthazar sighed, sipping from his champagne flute. “Some of you weren’t here when the ladies showed up when I was giving Alistair an impromptu bachelor party. Shit got wild when one of the dancers he used to mess with confronted Hailey.”

Alistair swipes the champagne bottle from the ice bucket, then laughs. “My Hailey put Vixen in her place. After that night we haven’t seen nor heard anything about Vixen.” He took a swig from the bottle before elaborating, “And just to be clear, we had nothing to do with her disappearance.”

In some ways I believed him, but I also have to wonder why he felt it was important to let us know that. Whatever the case, I threw that shit in the back of my mind. It didn’t involve Kayla, Delta Force, or me.

As the night progressed with other strippers coming into our VIP section, I declined several of them who offered lap dances. I’m sure they were good at what they do, but the only woman I wanted grinding on my junk was Kayla.

First of all let me put it out there, I’m a man just like all the others in Elite. However, I’m just a man who values what I have at home and no other woman can knock her off the pedestal I’ve put her on. So, although I turned down the lap dances, I still tipped the dancers.

As the night grew to a close, I was feeling pretty good as we walked out the doors of Elite. I kept my drinking to a minimum because I didn’t want to have a hangover the next morning. As shook the Greek’s hands, Balthazar promised that they would be on time for the wedding. After that, I hopped in Mad Dog’s truck.

The ladies were sticking with the tradition of the groom not seeing the bride until it was time for the wedding, so I was staying at Mad Dog’s house with the fellows while the ladies stayed at the house with Kayla.

My brother’s along with Terrence decided to stay at Mad Dog’s as well. I loved that they wanted to show their solidarity when I needed them the most because so many thoughts were bombarding my mind.

'Is it right for me to bring Kayla into my world?'

'Maybe she needs to be with someone who doesn't come with all the shit I do.'

'Is Kayla marrying me just to defy her brother?'

'What if later down the road, Kayla begins to resent me because she retired early and left the one thing she loved to do which is flying airplanes?'

Luckily, I was able to voice my concerns to Mad Dog and Terrence in the truck before we made it to the house. Out of all of us, they're the only married ones and their advice and wisdom kind of subsided the butterflies in my stomach.

"Trust me brother, I know what you are going through," Mad Dog said as we rode on the interstate. "I felt the same way the night before Janae, and I got married. At least Kayla knows about your wedding. If you can remember, I sprang ours on Janae. Luckily, she didn't flip her lid and still choose to marry my ass."

Terrence scooted forward so we could see him from the backseat. "Michelle and I had a beautiful wedding, but I'd be lying to you if I said I didn't have the same feelings you're expressing right now. Hell, we were in college, and I knew eventually I would go pro. While Michelle said yes to my proposal, I damn sure didn't want her to think I was like some of the players in the league who had wives at home and mistresses in every other state. She never brought it up, but that first year of being signed, I could feel her trepidation every time I left for an out of state game. To put her mind at ease, I would facetime her every chance that I got. That didn't make me a pussy because I just wanted my wife to be at peace. Players get a bad rep, and I wasn't going to be one of them. When I said my vows to my wife, I meant that shit. My daddy and momma have been married for over forty years. I'm the youngest out of nine and if you ask anyone of my siblings if my daddy ever stepped outside of our parents' marriage, you might as well be ready to fight. My parents have been faithful to one another after all these years, and I plan on being that way with Michelle." He tapped my shoulder, then said,

“Tomorrow is going to be a good day shared with two people who love each other witnessed by friends and family.”

Mad Dog pulled into his driveway with several headlights illuminating behind us.

As he killed the engine, then removed the keys, he shifted in his seat to face me. “Look, Johann and you know we rarely call each other by our given names, but I feel the need to do so at this time. I’m speaking to you as your brother, not your Commander.” I gave him my full attention as he continued, “There’s no need for you to second guess Kayla’s decision to marry you. She knows what she’s walking into. Hell, if she didn’t walk away from you after the shit Janae and I went through, then to go through this shit with Enrico, I’d say that woman loves you despite what we bring to the table. Don’t let cold feet have you running away from the best thing that has happened in your life. She loves you and you love her and that’s all that matters.”

I nodded knowing everything he said was true. Nothing could keep me from professing my love for Kayla. I was sure the way I was feeling, every groom had been through it at some point.

Peering at Mad Dog and Terrence, I gave them my gratitude. “I want to thank the two of you for giving me your insights on marriage. I also want to say, indecisive or not, I would still marry Kayla tomorrow, I know she’s the one for me and I would do anything to make sure she stays by my side.”

“That’s what the fuck I’m talking about,” Mad dog said as he exited the vehicle. Terrence and I got out along with the others. Headlights from a sedan appeared, then parked in the driveway. My hands went directly to my blades and I’m sure the others did with their weapons.

When the driver got out and went to the back passenger door, my father emerged. A calming sensation washed over me.

“I guess I shouldn’t be surprised by this greeting,” Daddy said, looking around to all of the armed Delta Force Security

members.

“Daddy,” I smiled, walking over to embrace him. “When did you get here and where is mamá?”

He took a step back, then grasped my shoulders. “We flew in almost two hours ago. We went to your house and the ladies were there and might I say they were in very good spirits.”

“Obviously, from the liquor,” Tech laughed.

“That’s what I figured,” daddy chuckled.

Tilting my head to the side, I asked, “When you say they were in very good spirits, how good of spirits were they?”

“I assure you son, they were giddy but not drunk,” daddy replied as the driver came up to us with daddy’s luggage in hand. I took it from him. “And the reason why I am here is because after Kayla introduced your mamá and I to the other ladies, Janae called me and Uber before handing me her house keys. She told me I had to stay with you guys tonight.”

“I swear my wife is something else,” Mad Dog laughed, bringing his fist over his mouth as he shook his head.

“She is, but she’s very sweet and polite,” daddy added.

“Get on her bad side and he’ll be singing a different song,” Venom said under his breath.

“I heard that,” Mad Dog acknowledged.

“And you know it’s true,” Venom jovially threw back, having the rest of us laugh, agreeing with him. “Am I wrong?”

Mad Dog stared at him until he couldn’t hold in his laughter anymore. “No, you’re not, but I’m going to tell her what you said.” He started walking to the front door with Venom on his heels pleading for Mad Dog not to tell Janae what he said.

Daddy and the others followed behind them as I took my wallet out and gave the Uber driver a twenty-dollar tip. Janae probably had already added a tip, but that was my way of thanking the driver for getting my daddy here in one piece.

I entered the house and found everyone in the living room.

“So, how are we doing the sleeping arrangements?” Lethal inquired.

Mad Dog scratched his head before replying, “Since Mr. Meier is here, he and Blade will take the larger guest room since it has a California king size bed in it. The rest of you can draw straws on who gets the last guest room.”

Tech closed his eyes, shaking his hand in the air. “Yeah, that’s not going to work for me. These men and I have been through too many missions for me to learn their sleep habits.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Lethal asked, raising his eyebrow.

Tech whirled in his direction, then held up his pointer finger. “Since you asked, I will start with you. You have nighttime flatulence.”

“Bullshit,” Lethal laughed.

Tech wasn’t lying, I’d shared tents and rooms with Lethal in the past and let’s just say there have been many times he had me seeking shelter somewhere else.

Tech moved on to Venom. “You talk in your sleep and there’s nothing wrong with that, but you like to talk about some crazy shit I care not to repeat to the others.”

“No I don’t,” Venom protested as he looked around at the rest of us.

Tech ignored him before moving on to the Twins. “You two,” he shook his head. “I don’t even know how to describe your behavior. I don’t know if it’s sleepwalking or what, but I did wake up in the middle of the night with the two of you standing over me. Talk about some freaky shit.”

“And again, I call bullshit,” said Lethal.

Tech reached into his back pocket and removed his cellphone. “You call bullshit? Obviously, you forgot my name and what I do.” He began to tap away at the screen. When he found what he was looking for, Tech held up his cellphone, asking, “I got footage of everything I just said. Who wants to see the facts?”

Of course, Daddy, Mad Dog, and I threw our hands up, but the others started to bum rush Tech. Mad Dog began to run interference, trying to keep them from getting to Tech's cellphone. Daddy even got in on the action, knocking Lethal into the invisible sidelines.

"Okay, okay, okay," Mad Dog huffed with his arms extended out. "The Twins can take the extra guest room. Lethal and Venom you can have the den and Tech you can sleep in my office. I have an air mattress that will fit in there."

They mumbled amongst themselves before agreeing.

"I'm good with that, but all I need to know is there a lock on the office door?" Tech questioned. "I need to know that I will be safe from The Ring Twins."

Thing One responded first. "If that girl could move through televisions, what do you think we can do?"

Tech's face drained to an eggshell white. I seriously hoped he wasn't buying into all of this shit as factual.

"Sorry Mr. Meier in advance for my language, but I have to say what is on my mind." Mad Dog expressed as he went behind his private bar.

"Do what you need to son," daddy responded as we moved closer to the bar.

When Mad Dog sat the one-of-a-kind bottle on top of the bar, I already knew what it was. "As you all know, I've had this bottle for years and only pull it out for special occasions and this is fucking one of them." He placed nine shot glasses on the bar, then began to fill them with the Henri IV Dugnon Heritage Cognac.

Daddy stared at the glasses confused. "There's eight of us here, what's the extra shot glass for?"

I picked up my shot glass, then replied, "The extra one is for our brother Chains. In times like this, we always make sure he is with us in spirit."

We had a rotation for who would take Chains shot. This time it was Lethal.

“I get it,” daddy responded as he picked up his shot glass.

We followed suit, then held up our shot glasses. “First of all, I want to thank my daddy and brothers which now includes you too Terrence, for being here with me. I know these last few months have been crazy while we put the business aside to deal with my personal issues and I thank each and every one of you for that.”

“You know we always got your back, brother,” Venom yelled.

I grinned with happiness knowing my brothers would always have my back, and the vow would always be reciprocated on my part.

“To me marrying the woman of my dreams,” I boasted before we threw the shots back. Damn, that Cognac was smooth and very tasty. It’s the kind of liquor if you weren’t careful it will sneak up on you and have you fucked up before you knew it.

Lethal didn’t waste any time after he took his first shot, then raised the other. “This one is for our brother Chains. He’s not physically with us, but emotionally and spiritually he is with us. We honor you brother with this shot.”

After he swallowed the shot, we slammed the glasses on the counter. Daddy was a couple of seconds off, but he fell in line with us in paying tribute to Chains.

“Alright, fellows, it’s time to turn in. We have a big day ahead of us tomorrow,” Mad Dog announced. “As you all know the wedding starts at one o’clock, so we need to be at Blade’s house no later than eleven. You all have met Ms. Silvia and I for one don’t want to be on her bad side for not being on time.”

“Exactly,” Venom concurred. “Have you seen that crazy look she gives when you try to make suggestions? She’s like a tyrant hiding behind wedding dresses and suits; and I love that shit!”

“You’re probably the only one,” I said, sitting the glass on the counter. “She reminds me of one of those dictators we

dealt with in the past. It's either her way or no way. Truthfully, I was surprised she didn't object to us changing the wedding to the backyard."

Venom sat his glass down, then approached me. "I get what you are saying, but Silvia is a kind-hearted woman who only wants to make couples' dream weddings come true."

"You sound like someone who has gotten close to her," Tech brought forth. "This is the first time I've heard you speak about any woman like that."

Venom's brows scrunched together as he said, "Whether I speak on someone's credibility or not, I'm telling you and everyone else Silvia is legit."

To keep things from escalating, Mad Dog got in between the two of them. "The two of you can feel the way you feel, but don't bring this shit to the wedding."

Venom sighed. "On that note, I'm turning in for the night."

He left, going towards the extra room, leaving the Twins and Lethal to decide who was going to share the room with him. I already knew the outcome when the Twins sent Lethal to the guest room with Venom. Those two weren't going to be separated.

Terrence decided to bunk in the reclinable loveseat in the den. Luckily, Mad Dog had enough bathrooms to accommodate all of us before we retired for the night.

Before heading to bed, Tech asked me and Mad Dog to come with him to the office. Once there, he let us know Alhoud is still off the grid, but his sister has become a prime witness against him in exchange for a lesser sentence. We've dealt with assholes like Alhoud before. They think that when enough time has passed everyone will have forgotten about them, but that's when they make their first mistake because Delta Force will be right there to take his ass down.

After learning that, Mad Dog and I left the office, then went our separate ways. Entering the room daddy and I were sharing, he had already taken his shower and was lying comfortably in the bed, looking at the screen on his phone. I

went inside the bathroom to take my shower before re-entering the room in a pair of pajama bottoms.

“You’re not tired yet old man?” I asked. There was an empty clothes basket in the room, so I tossed my worn clothes in it before turning off the light, leaving the muted flatscreen on the wall to partially illuminate the room.

“I am,” daddy replied before placing the cellphone on the nightstand next to him. “I’m up way past my bedtime, but I wanted to speak with you before I dozed off.”

Lifting the covers on my side, I got in then threw them over me. “What do you want to talk about because personally, I never would have thought that I would be spending the night before my wedding in bed with my daddy.” I laughed, trying to make light of the situation, but when daddy didn’t return the same sentiment, I knew whatever he had to say to me was serious.

Daddy raised up, resting his head on his right hand as he focused on me. “Son, I just want you to know how proud I am of you. Kayla will be a good addition to our family. Your mamá and I have always prayed you would find the right woman to accept your lifestyle with Delta Force Security. So far out of all the women you have dated, Kayla is the right match.”

“And she is,” I said. “Trust me when I say, Kayla is it for me. I’ve never met a woman that completes me the way she does. I can’t see my life without her.”

Daddy grinned as he cupped his hands together. “And when you say your vows tomorrow; I want you to hold on to them close to your heart and always remember them, because they are sacred words that you are promising to the Lord and Kayla. The rest of us will be there to bear witness. Remember that.”

“Yes, sir,” I proudly returned.

“Good, now let’s get some sleep. I can’t have you showing up to your wedding with bags under your eyes,” daddy laughed, getting comfortable.

I laughed along with him before turning onto my side. Daddy didn't have to worry about me keeping my vows close to my heart because they would forever be engraved. Nobody is perfect, but on this matter, I plan on staying true to every word.

Chapter 23

Kayla

I honestly think I got a total of five hours of sleep last night and I'm not feeling tired, just wedding day jitters and the excitement of Johann seeing me in my wedding dress. Out of all the ones Silvia presented to me, I fell in love with the sleeveless mermaid tulle halter dress with the sweeping train. I know veils are traditional, but I didn't want one. Why cover my face when Johann already knows what I look like?

I'm surprised to hear voices and movements outside of my bedroom door. After the bachelorette party last night at Club Mystique and the nightcaps when we returned, I would think some of them would sleep until the last minute.

Speaking of last night, all I can say is '*Boy, we had a time last night!*'

When the party bus pulled up to the house at eight all the ladies were at my house ready to get turned up. We did a celebratory shot of Patron on the way to Mystique, then Janae placed a tiara on my head before Michelle put a *Bride to Be* sash on me.

Once we made it to the club, I saw the line of people being turned away. I soon found out why. Nina did the most, closing business to the public just for my bachelorette party. I knew she was losing money and told her she should open up the club for women only, making it a lady's night since there were going to be male strippers there.

She giggled, saying, "Little sister, this is your night. We don't need those thirst heifers taking the strippers' attention away from you. Don't worry about me losing any money. I can shut Mystique down for a week or more and it wouldn't hurt my purse. Tonight, is all about you, so enjoy."

I understood why she and Janae were best friends, they didn't care about what others thought of them or how they conducted business, and I loved it.

As we got off the bus, Janae had photographers there to take our pictures. I felt like a celebrity as the flashing lights were hitting us from every angle. This was the closest I would ever get to feeling like I was at an upscale event, and I was loving every second of it.

“I told you this club ain’t shit. Everybody wants to hype it up, but you can see they only let in who they want. They let those other ladies in, so why not us?” a woman said loud enough for us to hear as she stood at the head of the line with her girlfriends.

Janae was the first to respond. “Excuse me?”

With attitude the woman sucked her gold teeth before rolling her neck, replying, “I said what I said. If you didn’t hear it, then that’s on you. My girlfriends and I came out to have a good time, only to be turned around because there’s a private event going on.”

“Did you check Mystique’s calendar on the website?” Nina questioned.

“Why the fuck would I do that?” the woman hissed. “I’m LaToya from North Dallas. If you haven’t heard about me, then I suggest you Google me.”

Nina turned the corners of her lips down, frowning as she stared at the woman. “Well, LaToya from North Dallas, as far as I know you’re not a part of this private party tonight. If you were, your name would have been on the list and it’s not. Tonight, is a private event, and you are more than welcome to come back tomorrow.”

The woman sized Nina up before, shouting, “Girl, fuck you! I’m not coming back to this raggedy bitch.”

“No, fuck you,” Nina laughed. “Obviously you don’t know who I am, so I’m about to tell you...”

“I don’t give a fuck who you are,” the woman interrupted, dropping her purse to the ground, then began to remove her earrings.

“Oh, you trying to flex?” Janae challenged, stepping out of her expensive heels.

I got in between them, saying, “It’s not worth it. There’s no need to prove any point to her or her little friends. We look too cute to be fighting them.”

“Not worth it?” Michelle hissed. “She’s the one that is being disrespectful, and we can still be cute whooping their asses. It’s been a long time since we’ve beaten respect into someone and I’m feeling very nostalgic.”

“And what the fuck do you think y’all are going to do?” the woman asked, hyping up the others around her.

Janae snickered, replying, “We can show you better than we can tell you.”

The woman scoffed, then said, “I’d like to see you try. Me and my girls will drag your asses out here.”

Well that definitely was the wrong thing to say because Janae, Michelle, Nina, Nina’s sister-in-law Hailey, Agent Vaughn, Madison, her sister Pilar, and myself dropped our belongings and started towards them. We said nothing as the women continued to talk shit. Before a punch could be thrown, security got in between us.

“Move Miguel,” Nina ordered the buff Hispanic man.

“I’m sorry Mrs. Kourakos, but your husband specifically gave us orders to make sure things didn’t get out of hand tonight. He said he didn’t want you ladies to show up at the wedding tomorrow with cuts and bruises.”

Nina peered up at him. “Miguel, who do you work for?”

“I work for you, Mrs. Kourakos,” he replied.

“Then why are you taking orders from my husband?” Nina questioned.

Miguel looked at the other security guards before answering, “Because we don’t want any problems with your husband.” He leaned down, then said in a low tone, “No disrespect to you Mrs. Kourakos, but I know how powerful your husband’s family is. So, please will you and your party go inside, and we’ll take care of things out here.”

“Are we doing this or not?” LaToya yelled from behind the security guards.

“Let me get this hoe,” Hailey exploded, trying to get around another security guard. “I’m not in the wedding.”

Nina grabbed her arm, saying, “You might not be in the wedding but think about how your husband is going to react if he sees the slightest scratch on you.”

“But weren’t we all about to fight their asses?” I inquired, still ready to lay hands.

Nina glanced at me, replying, “We were, but I can’t even be mad at Zar for doing what he did. All of us are successful businesswomen who don’t need to stoop to their level tonight.”

“That’s right bitch you don’t want any of this,” LaToya taunted.

Nina swivels her head in LaToya’s direction, giving her a crazy look. Nina giggled as she told LaToya, “See you didn’t let me finish, LaToya from North Dallas. I said we wouldn’t stoop to your level tonight, but best believe you will be seeing us again and when you do; I want you to have that same energy. Come on ladies.”

“Is that little threat supposed to scare us?” LaToya heckled as her friends laughed.

Nina stopped in her tracks, then looked over her shoulder. “No, just you. Miguel, make sure I have a copy of tonight’s video footage on my desk and that group there is indefinitely banned from the club.”

Miguel nodded as LaToya snickered. “Banned? Bitch you can’t ban us.”

That made Nina grin, knowing she had the upper hand. “I can and did since I own Club Mystique. Now, get the fuck off my property before I have you arrested for trespassing.”

The way LaToya and her friends’ faces dropped had us high-fiving Nina. She thought she was bad, but Nina proved her wrong without laying a finger on her.

“You need to learn to keep your damn mouth closed sometimes. This is the second club you’ve gotten us kicked out of and it will be the last. I’m never going out with you again,” I heard one of the ladies telling LaToya before we went inside.

Other than that ordeal, the rest of the night was amazing. When we made it to our section right in front of the stage there were women already sitting at a table. Janae introduced me to Sabre who was visibly pregnant (Nina’s brother-in-law Xander’s fiancée), and Karisa (his sister). I hugged them both and thanked them for coming out to celebrate with me.

From then on, I don’t think I’ve ever laughed so hard in my life. It was just us in the club but by the way we were cutting up, you would have thought it was filled with partygoers. The strippers Janae hired were on point as they did their thing. I’ve never seen that many wanks in one night and when the one named White Chocolate came out and started his routine, he had all of us stuck on stupid until he reached into the G-string and pulled out his hardened, massive penis with a Prince Albert piercing.

All eyes went to Hailey as she stood up and yelled, “Boy, you’re not special. My Alistair has one of those.” Realizing what she had said, Hailey slapped her hand across her mouth.

“Girl, if you don’t sit your ass down out here telling your husband’s business,” Nina said, snatching Hailey back into her seat. I’m going to blame it on the alcohol for her outburst and our roar of laughter.

By the time night was drawing to an end, there was one stripper left. The deejay announced him as Renegade. Suddenly, Jay Z and Eminem’s song *Renegade* flowed through the speakers around the club. Artificial smoke filled the stage as Renegade walked out in camouflage costume and a matching mask covering his face. By his skin tone I couldn’t determine if he were biracial, Latino, or a heavily tanned Caucasian. Either way, it didn’t matter as he began to slowly gyrate his body to the beat of the song. He squatted into a Sumo stance, and tilted his head back, extending his very

elongated tongue as he made his dick bounce in sequence. Damn, if he wasn't talented.

The ladies were going crazy as they bum rushed the stage to shower him with money. All the other dancers had been cool, not really touching me too much, but for some reason I knew it was not going to play out the same with Renegade.

As he began to peel off his layers of clothing, I was trying to think of ways to get the hell out of there. Janae turned around to see my panicked expression, then shouted, "You're going to keep your ass right there and enjoy this last ride." Easy for her to say.

As Renegade made his way down the stairs, they were filling his G-string full of money. First of all, I'm not bashful or shy but when he got in front of me doing hydraulics with his member, I covered my eyes.

Strong hands took a hold of mine, taking them away from my face. They were Renegade's. He straddles my legs, moving his body like a snake. He stroked my hands down his chest before whispering in my ear, "If this is making you uncomfortable, I'll keep it PG." He winked at me before running my hands through his hair. The ladies were enjoying the show as they cheered him on, tossing more money. Renegade then let go of my hands, then took a step back winding his body as he slowly stuck his long tongue again, curling the tip.

"Gat damn!" Michelle hollered.

The man definitely was good at what he does. When he was through with me, Renegade turned his attention to the ladies. Before his set ended, Renegade was only in his mask and tasseled cover dick thongs. As the music faded away, Renegade was hovering over Karisa. She blindly reached up to the table and grabbed the last of the money she brought with her.

"You were worth every penny," she said, stuffing the money in his G-string.

Renegade kissed her cheek. “Thank you. I’m happy everyone enjoyed the show. Just know doing this is not my livelihood, I’m doing this to help pay for medical school expenses.”

“Body and brains; what a combination,” Karisa said with a smile.

Renegade winked at her. What a dangerous combination.

We spent another hour laughing at one another on how we acted towards the strippers, having a few more drinks, and eating food Nina had ordered from the kitchen. This would be a night I would never forget. I got to spend it with my sisters and new friends.

When we left the club, the line was empty and the party bus along with Karisa’s Benz were waiting for us. After hugging Karisa and Sabre goodbye and telling them we’ll see them at the wedding, we got on the bus and headed back to my house.

By the time we made it to the house another vehicle was pulling in behind us. Once it parked, I was surprised to see Johann’s parents getting out.

“Who is that?” Janae asked as the driver opened the bus door.

“My new in-laws.” I replied, dashing off the bus to greet them.

“Mr. and Mrs. Meier it’s so good to see you,” I beamed, hugging Mrs. Meier’s first, then Mr. Meier.

“It’s good to see you too, Kayla,” Mrs. Meier returned, placing her hand on my forearm. “And no more of that Mr. and Mrs. business. We are family now, so you can start calling us mamá and dad.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“And who are these lovely ladies?” Mr. Meier asked as Janae, Michelle, and Nina joined us.

As I introduced them to mamá and dad, my new in-laws hugged them as if this weren’t their first time meeting them.

While dad went to retrieve their luggage from the Uber driver, I walked the others to the front door. When mamá asked how the bachelorette party was, the four of us went mute as dad came up behind us.

Mamá caught on quickly to our silence, whispering, “I want all the details later.” I laughed, unlocking the door, then stepping in to turn off the alarm.

Dad and mamá were excited to learn more about the girls and I was too. It was different with me telling them about my sisters, but now it was even better because they were able to see for themselves how special they were to me.

When the hour grew late and I started to yawn, Janae politely told dad that this was a girls only sleepover. I thought he would’ve been offended, but he chuckled, taking it all in stride. She sent for him an Uber, then gave him her house key and the code to get into her and Mike’s house.

“The guys should be back by now, if not go inside and make yourself at home,” Janae told him.

“Thank you,” dad responded.

The Uber showed up fifteen minutes later and dad hugged and kissed us before getting inside. When the car pulled off, mamá shifted her footing, saying, “Now, fill me in on this bachelorette party.”

“On that note,” I said. “I’m tired and need to get some sleep. I’ll leave these three,” point to Michelle, Janae, and Nina. “to fill you in.”

“You’re right,” Michelle affirmed. “Tomorrow is your day and you’re going to need all the rest you’re gonna need. Go to bed, sis.”

I placed my hands over my heart. “I will and thank you all for being here with me tonight. Tomorrow will be the biggest step I’ve ever taken in my life. I might seem calm and cool on the outside, but internally I’m scared as shit.”

“Awww, we know how you feel sis,” Michelle said as they engulfed me into a mega hug.

Mamá lovingly cupped my cheeks, raising my head to face her. “*Hija* (daughter), there is no need for you to be scared. You and Johann love each other and that’s all that matters. Even if everyone sitting out there witnessing your nuptials disagreed with your union, it’s still not enough to keep the two of you from fulfilling the happiness you both deserve.”

“That’s right, mamá!” Janae boomed, jumping up from her seat. “I’m ready for someone to stand up and object to this wedding. I promise you; it won’t end well for them.”

“And it won’t,” Nina co-signed. “Go to bed because we already know Silvia’s crazy ass will have us up before the butt crack of dawn. We’ll play interference with her for as long as we can, so you can sleep in but after that...you’re on your own.”

Glaring at them, I said, “On that note, I will see you all in the morning. Good night.”

“Good night,” they echoed as I left for my bedroom.

As I giggled to myself, replaying last night there was a knock at my door.

“Come in,” I say, sitting up in the bed.

The door opens with Michelle, Janae, Nina, and Mamá entering. Mamá’s carrying a breakfast tray.

“Good morning, Mrs. Bride. Today’s the day,” Michelle announces as mamá sits the tray over my lap.

“Are you nervous?” Janae asks, plopping down on the bed.

I smile, shaking my head. “No,” I reply, picking up the glass of orange juice. “If anything, I’m more giddy than nervous.”

“Well, that’s good,” Nina chimes in.

I take a sip of the juice, then rejoice, “In a few hours, I’m going to be Mrs. Johann Meier! I’m way too happy and in love to be nervous.”

“And that’s the way you should be,” mamá says, lightly pinching my chin.

Curious, I ask, “Has Silvia made it here yet?”

Janae rolls her eyes, sighing, “Yes. She and her crew got here an hour ago. Silvia is already barking orders.”

“For real,” Michelle co-signs. “She wanted us to wake you up when she got here, but Mrs. Meier stepped in and told her no.”

I look at mamá. “Really?”

“Yes, really,” she returns, folding her arms across her chest. “She might be the coordinator of the wedding, but she doesn’t run this house. If I say you’re going to sleep in another hour, then you’re going to sleep in another hour.”

“Wow,” I whispered, impressed with mamá’s actions.

Janae taps my leg, snickering. “And you should have seen Silvia’s face. I don’t think she’s ever had anyone put her in her place like Mrs. Meier did.”

“Damn, I wish I were there to see that. Did any of you video it?”

“Nope,” Nina responds. “It happened so fast; we did have time to pull out our cellphones.”

Man I wished they did. I like Silvia and all, but she can be a little pushy at times.

“Anyway, we wanted to bring you some breakfast and tell you it’s show time,” Michelle laughs. “The makeup artist and hair stylist are here. Silvia said the catering service and staff will arrive within the next hour. She and her people are in the backyard getting everything together out there and I must say sis, your wedding is going to be beautiful.”

“It sure is,” Janae gushes, clasping her hands together.

I grin so hard; I can feel the muscles in my cheeks.

“Yeah, so hurry up and eat your breakfast,” Janae chortles. “Then get in the shower and wash your musty ass.”

I nudged her with my foot, cracking up. “My ass isn’t musty. I took a shower last night before I went to bed.”

They laugh as she gets up from the bed, saying, “Well wash it again. We want you fresh, fresh today.”

“Get out of my room,” I yell, tossing a pillow at her.

As the three leave the room, mamá lingers to tell me, “Today is going to be a good day. I love you, daughter.”

That really touched my heart. It’s been so long since I’ve been seen as someone’s daughter and it’s nice to know mamá thinks of me in that way.

Tears of happiness fill my eyes as I express, “I love you too, mamá.”

With her own tears of happiness streaming down her face, mamá comes over and wraps her arms around me. Like she said prior, today is going to be a good day and I wholeheartedly believe her.

After mamá left the room, I drank the rest of the orange juice, ate a piece of bacon, and a piece of fresh cut fruit. I was ready to get my day started, so I went straight into bride mode.

After taking a shower, I put on my full-length robe before going to meet up with the others. My house was abuzz as I encountered members of Silvia’s staff on my way to the kitchen. Walking down the hallway, I noticed a makeup artist had set up in one of the guest rooms and further down the other hall, another room had become a mini salon. The last guest room looked like a dressing room with garments bags hanging on racks.

As I enter the kitchen, Silvia is there going over specifics with one of her assistants when she looks up and sees me.

“There you are,” she says, handing the tablet to the guy, then rushing over to me. She links her elbow with mine. “We have so much to do in so little time. The wedding will be starting in under four hours and we need to get your makeup done and your hair. Your sisters and mother-in-law have already been taken care of. They’re outside taking pictures of the backyard. Did you decide on how you wanted the stylist to do your hair?”

As she drags me to the room with the makeup artist, I tell her, “I would like to have it flat ironed, then have it brushed into a stylish bun in the back.”

“Perfect, that will complement the cut of your dress,” she responds, ushering me into the makeup chair. “What about your makeup?”

“Nothing too heavy, I like to keep a natural look.”

“I think that’s a good idea. Naomi will get you right,” Silvia says, pulling Naomi towards me. “I’m so sorry for the abrupt introductions, but Kayla this is Naomi. Naomi, this is Kayla the Bride.”

“Nice to meet you,” Naomi smiles, extending her hand out to me.

I shake it, returning, “It’s nice to meet you too.”

“Okay, now that’s out of the way, Naomi let’s get this bride’s face beat and when you’re done with her, escort Kayla to Lance to get her hair done,” Silvia doles out.

“No, problem,” Naomi says in response.

Silvia leaves the room in haste. “Is she always like this?” I inquired with Naomi.

“This is just the mild version,” Naomi replies, picking up her makeup palette.

Two hours later, my makeup and hair is done. When Lance the hair stylist asked me to describe my dress, I did him one better and showed him a picture of it. He loved it and said he had the perfect idea to go with my bun. After he had my bun laid, he went into one of his bags and pulled out a rhinestone and flower décor headband. He situated it over my hair, having the fullest side rest upon the left side, then used hair pins to set the end of the hair band around my bun. It was simply amazing. I thanked him for doing an awesome job right as he put a bonnet over my head to prevent me from messing up his handy work. As he was doing that Silvia, Michelle, Janae, Nina, and mamá waltzed into the room.

“You look beautiful, little sister,” Michelle says.

“Thank you.”

Our moment is cut short by Silvia. “Okay, so you’re done here. Now, it’s time to get dressed. Let’s head over to the changing room. I’m sure you’re probably thirsty and a little hungry, so I had the cater whip up a few veggie and meat trays along with different beverages.”

And I was. That piece of bacon and fruit had long left my stomach.

I felt like a fairy princess as they whisked me away to the other room. Alexis was in the room; she was the one who fitted me for my dress.

I briefly spoke with her before going over to the trays and filing a plate. I wasn’t going to put my dress on then eat, risking having food drop on it and leaving stains. Michelle and the ladies did the same before we sat down in the chairs.

Once I had my fill, the others stepped out while Alexis helped me into my dress. I stood in front of the full-length mirror, staring at the woman looking back at me. Simply stunning. I know it’s me, but at the same time, I’m seeing two different sides of me. The one looking at the mirror is the old Kayla with the sharp tongue and didn’t take any shit off of anyone. The one staring back at me through the mirror is the new Kayla. The one who’s ready to nestle into married life, be there for my husband, hold us down, and who is ready to take our future to another level. Oh, but don’t get it twisted; the old Kayla still hides behind those eyes. I will never be one of those cookie cutter wives. I just have to navigate on bringing the old Kayla out.

“Oh, my God, Kayla,” Michelle sobs behind me. “Momma would be so pleased to see you today.”

I turned around to hug her. “And she is. Momma is with us today just like she was on the day you and Terrance got married. So, stop trying to ruin my makeup.”

She laughs, patting under her eyes. Alexis hands her some facial tissues.

“Thank you,” Michelle says, taking them, then dabbing her eyes.

Janae steps in front of me. “For real sis you look amazing. Blade is going to lose his shit when he sees you.”

“That’s the point,” I laugh, doing a little shimmy.

They all laugh before Nina says, “Just so you know, your man and the rest of them are here.”

I choke on my laughter. “They are?”

“Yes, they are,” she replies.

I didn’t notice when they first came into the room and had their right hands behind their backs.

“What’s going on?” I ask.

Janae moves closer to me. “Well, to keep this tradition going; we’re here to give you something borrowed, something blue, something old, and something new.”

She presented me with her tennis bracelet. “Something borrowed.”

After she locks it onto my wrist, she steps back, and Nina takes her place. “Something blue.” She gave me with a blue garter belt.

She moves from her spot and mamá takes over. “Something old.” She holds out a pair of diamond earrings. “Paul gave these to me on our wedding day. I’m passing them to you so you can give them to my first granddaughter when she gets married.”

Before I could ask for some, Lance was pressing tissue in my hand.

The only person left was Michelle and I wondered what she had new for me.

She glances down at the black velvet box, then says, “When I was given the task of giving you something new, I honestly didn’t know what to get you, but I knew what I wanted you to have.” Michelle’s eyes fall upon me. I can see the distress in them which puts me on edge.

“Calm down, Kayla it’s nothing like that,” she assures, spinning the box in her hands. “This right here some might consider as something old but, for you I think it’s something new.” She offered the box to me.

With shaky hands, not knowing what to expect to be inside I lift the top back. I gasp, staring down at the contents. “Michelle,” I barely let out. In a beautiful gold frame is a picture of our momma, dressed up and smiling. I haven’t seen this picture in ages. I remember it used to hang on the living room wall and after momma passed away, the picture went missing. “Where did you find this?” I asked, running my finger over momma’s beautiful face.

“I found it in a crate in the garage buried deep under some boxes. I was in there looking for my old collection of dolls for Leah and stumbled upon it. It was in bad condition, so when I got back home, I took it to my friend’s print shop to see if it could be digitally restored. Luckily, she was able to do it, so I had extra copies made for you, me, and KeShawn,” Michelle replies.

Holding the picture, my words get stuck in my throat. “I don’t, I don’t...”

“And you don’t have to. Today is all about you and Johann,” Michelle declares. “The past is the past and right now we’re focusing on the future.”

There was nothing left for me to say after that. Michelle made sure our momma’s presence would be at the wedding and I couldn’t ask for anything more. As you can see no one asked or mentioned any parts of our daddy. As far I was concerned, he could continue to shovel shit in the deepest pits of Hell.

With an overwhelming sense of peace flowing through me, I continued to have what I dubbed The Glam Squad to finish getting me ready for the wedding. By the time they were done, the Queen was ready to make her appearance.

Epilogue

Blade

“Kayla, love I’m not trying to rush you, but the car will be here soon,” I shouted, standing on the veranda, staring into the clear night sky.

“I’m almost ready, baby,” she returns from the bedroom.

Two days have passed since the wedding. Kayla and I are on our five-day and four nights honeymoon in Ibiza. It was my task in picking where we would go and at first, I thought about going to Juan’s estate in the Dominican Republic but thought better of it. After our last two encounters there, I didn’t want flashbacks of what happened to overshadow our honeymoon, so I chose one of the most spectacular villas in Ibiza. Neither one of us has been here before and it will be the romantic place for us to start new memories as husband and wife.

The day of the wedding, I woke up before my alarm clock. I hopped in the shower, then threw on a pair of sweat bottoms and t-shirt before going into the kitchen to make some coffee. As I entered the kitchen, Mad Dog and daddy were already there with the coffee maker going. Thirty minutes later, the guys started trickling in, needing a cup of Joe. As we stood around, shooting the breeze, trying to figure out who was going to cook breakfast, there was a knock at the front door. Mad Dog sat his cup on the counter, then went to the living room. He looked through the peephole, and said to us, “Two men and two women, holding trays.” He disabled the alarm, then opened the door.

“Can I help you?” he inquired.

“No, we’re here to help you. I’m Nadia, one of Silvia’s assistants.” The petite woman in front said. “Silvia has sent us here to make sure you gentlemen are to be groomed, dressed, and on time for the wedding.”

We strangely looked at her as she pushed past him with the others following.

Nadia then spins on her heels, and says, “Silvia has sent over complimentary breakfast for you all. Where can we sit, these?”

Offering free food to hungry men was a no-brainer. Mad Dog simply pointed in the direction of his kitchen. The four of them followed his direction with the rest of us trailing behind them like starving puppies.

Nadia gave us enough time to get our fill of pancakes, bacon, sausage, home fries, and scrambled eggs. After that, it seemed like she turned into a miniature version of Silvia. She ordered one of the men to retrieve garment bags from their van, which contained our tuxedos.

The other guy, Howard, was a barber and she told him to get our hair right, which I had no problem with. I had planned on going to my personal barber that morning but since they were here, I’d let them do it. Howard actually did a good job on my hair, but when it came time for him to do Mad Dog and Thing Two’s hair, he was in for a lost battle when he suggested that they should let him cut their locks. Mad Dog outright declined but with Thing Two, he didn’t have to say a word as his brother, Thing One spoke for him.

“If you cut his hair, I will cut you,” Thing One declared, giving Howard a threatening look.

Howard held up his hands, obviously squeezing his ass cheeks together. “I’m sorry. I just thought since you’re twins, you would want the same cut.”

Thing One narrowed his eyes at him before saying, “Whether my hair is short and his is long, we will always look the same. The way we keep our hair is to help others know which one of us they’re speaking too. Not only that, but this is also something we’ve been doing since we were kids.”

I nodded my head, knowing how he felt but at the same time, this is the most I’ve ever heard any one of the Twins speak. Except for Mad Dog, the other brothers stared at them in awe. We knew their bond was tight, but not hair tight.

By the time Howard finished our haircuts, we were moved onto Melissa the stylist. We laughed when she asked if everyone had showered that morning. Everyone raised their hand except for Venom.

“Yeah, I’m going to need you to go do that before you get dressed in your tuxedo,” she said.

While he left, Melissa, Nadia, the other guy, Adorian, began to help us get dressed in our white tuxedos with white dress shirts and vests. How I stood out from the others was their vests were red and mine was black. Venom returned as Nadia added the finishing touch to our ensemble by pinning red roses to our lapels. At least it didn’t take them long to get him decked out like the rest of us.

Finally, the time came for us to go to the house. I was sitting on pins and needles praying that Kayla wouldn’t catch the runaway bride syndrome and high tail it, but once we made it to the house and Michelle and Janae assured me, she was inside, I felt ten times better. I laugh about it now, but just from knowing that didn’t keep me from trying every underhanded trick I could think of to see her, only to be thwarted by Silvia’s staff. You can’t blame a man for trying, right?

The time for the wedding to begin had come. I was starting to grow impatient as the guys lined up with me beside the minister while the guests took their seats. Looking around at the way Silvia had the backyard laid out, one would think we were at the Botanical Gardens.

The Greeks with their ladies, Gizelle, Juan, and a few of our other friends had turned in their chairs as an instrumental jazz beat flowed through the speakers.

Janae was the first to come through the patio doors. I must say, my sister-in-law with all of her feistiness looked amazing in her red dress. When she reached the end of the aisle, Mad Dog stepped out and gave her a kiss on the cheek before she moved to the bridal side. We then focused on the patio doors as Michelle appeared in her A-line cut red dress. Terrence let

out a sharp whistle, causing everyone to laugh as she began her trek down the runway.

The moment of truth was now upon us. I hadn't seen my woman for over twenty-four hours and don't get me wrong because we've been apart far longer than that, but on a one-of-a-kind day like today, I really needed to lay eyes on her to make sure it was official.

The deejay switched the music to Stevie Wonders 'Ribbon In the Sky.' Everyone stood, anticipating Kayla's entrance. I swear my heart stopped for a millisecond when I saw my soon to be wife and daddy step out on the deck. I was so engrossed with her dress, hair, shit everything about her, I barely recognized daddy standing next to her. Kayla needed to get to me the fastest way possible and I didn't see that happening with daddy shuffling along.

I was ready to storm the stairs of the patio when they stopped at the edge. Daddy whispered something in Kayla's ear, then moved to the side. To everyone's surprise Trappa came through the patio doors. My Kayla was also taken aback as she was suddenly surprised that her brother was there, wearing the same tuxedo as the guys. Trappa kissed a shocked Kayla on the cheek, then whispered something in her ear. He pulled a gold locket and chain from his pocket. Kayla cried as he clasped it around her neck, Trappa had to hold her up as Kayla opened the locket and broke down more. I started towards the patio but stopped when Kayla hugged her brother. I later found out it was a picture of her as a little girl and her mother on the inside. Michelle and Janae even left their spots and joined in on their family hug fest.

"Let them have this time," Mad Dog said to me, gripping my wrist.

And I did. I knew how much this moment meant to Kayla.

Once Kayla had gained her composure, she instructed her sisters to go back to their places. Once they were back in formation, Trappa began to escort Kayla down the aisle. The minister began his spew of words and when he asked who was

giving the bride away, Trappa proudly stepped forward and said, "I am."

He then faced Kayla and kissed her forehead before presenting me her hand. He looked me straight in the eyes and declared, "I love my sisters and want nothing but the best for them. I will always be their big brother and will forever have the need to protect them, but they're grown now and have found the men in their lives to help with that role and it took me a while to come around to that understanding. Like I said, I love my sisters and I will not stand in the way of happiness. That being said, I'm trusting you to take care of Kayla and to always protect her."

"You have my word," I vowed, taking Kayla hand from him as the sisters dabbed their tears away.

Trappa then did something I did not expect; he held his hand out for me to shake. Hoping that would clear our slates and put us on the path of becoming family, I shook his hand.

After Trappa sat down, the minister began the ceremony with a prayer. When he was finished, Kayla and I stood in front of our family and friends professing our love for one another and by the time it was over, everyone went crazy as the minister introduced us as Mr. and Mrs. Meier.

Before we could move on to the reception, Silvia waved the photographer over for us to get the wedding pictures out of the way. I don't think I've ever taken that many pictures in my life. Half of them we probably wouldn't keep, but we had fun doing it. The guys and I even got in a few silly poses.

Once that was done, Silvia brought Kayla and I to our table she had decorated with our colors and two high back chairs that looked like thrones. The others took their seats at the beautifully decorated tables as well. As the servers began filling the water and champagne glasses, Michelle and Mad Dog took the opportunity to give their speeches. Both were very entertaining as they recalled funny parts of our past before wishing us the very best as husband and wife.

Everyone was enjoying the selection of food. We asked the caterer to prepare prime rib with au jus, parmesan crusted

chicken breasts, garlic mashed potatoes, steamed vegetables, spring green salad, and buttery rolls. There were also charcuterie boards of meats, cheeses, dried and fresh fruits and vegetables, toasted nuts, briny olives, and complementary condiments of honeys, jams, jellies, chutneys, and mustards.

When the deejay announced it was time for the Bride and Groom dance, Kayla side eyed me because she left it up to me to pick the song. As I helped her stand, Kayla whispered through her smile, “I’m telling you now, I’m not twerking in my wedding dress.”

“Get ready to make that ass clap, baby,” I laughed, escorting her to the makeshift dance floor as the others cheered, whistled, and clapped.

At the center of the dance floor, I smoothly pulled Kayla close to me. She giggled, sliding her arms around my neck as I nodded to the deejay to start the song. Seconds later, the soulful melody of Jodeci’s *‘Forever My Lady’* began to play.

“Oh, you went way back,” Kayla said as we swayed to the beat.

“I did. Out of all the songs I thought of, the words to this one truly spook the words from my heart.”

Kayla batted her lashes at me before standing on her tiptoes, then sensuously kissed me. More whoops and screams come from around us.

As she leaned back, Kayla said, “I love you.”

“I love you too,” I proclaimed, tightening my arms around her waist.

We finished our dance, then it was time for us to do the tossing of bouquet and garter belt. The ladies went into a frenzy as Kayla threw the bouquet over her head. You would have thought Karisa had just made a touchdown from the little dance she put on.

The ladies laughed as she held up the bouquet, and then said, “Wait until I show Renegade this tonight!”

The guys and I looked at Xander, wondering who Renegade was. He shrugged his shoulders, not knowing but I was sure he was going to find out.

Silvia brought an empty chair onto the dance floor for Kayla to have a seat. She giggled like a little girl when I dropped down to one knee, then began running my hands up the back of her legs. Kayla gasped as I lifted the bottom of her dress and stuck my head under it. Starting right below her knee, I kissed my way up to the garter belt. I deeply inhaled, breathing in her womanly scent before nipping at the inside of her thigh causing Kayla to squeal a bit. I then used my teeth to pull the garter belt down her leg. I removed her shoe, then slid the belt over her foot. Everyone roared with laughter when I came from under her dress and shook the garter in my mouth like a bear who just caught some salmon in his jaws.

I rose, then instructed the guys to get behind me. I counted to three before chucking it over my head. Hearing grunts and laughter, I turned around to see Lethal holding the garter. I joined in the laughter when he looked over to Agent Vaughn, grinning and wiggling his eyebrows at her.

The last thing left for us to do was cut the cake. We chose a three layer, round red velvet cake with cream cheese icing. Red and white fondant roses were adorned around each tier and at the top in cursive writing was our cake topper that read *Mr. and Mrs. Meier*.

With that part of reception over, Kayla and I excused ourselves to go inside the house to change into comfortable outfits we had picked out to have fun with our guests. She put on a slim fitting floral dress with brown espadrilles that would be discarded two seconds after we started dancing. I, on the other hand, was dressed in a tan linen suit.

Returning outside, the party had already begun. Guests were either at the bar, on the dance floor, or laughing and talking while sitting at the tables. One of the servers approached and offered us flutes of champagne. I declined but picked one up and handed it to Kayla. I was ready to hit the bar to get a real drink.

That was probably the best evening I had with my people in a long time. Even Trappa stuck around to dance with his sisters and smoked cigars with the guys.

I felt like my family and extended family were right with the world and while I appreciated everyone for coming out to experience this milestone with us, after a while, I was ready for them to go home. Kayla and I had an early flight the next morning, and I wanted to properly consummate our marriage. Mamá and daddy were going to stay at our home while we were on our honeymoon before flying back to New York.

The next morning, Kayla and I drove to the airport. Less than two hours later, we were on our way to Ibiza.

The last two days have been amazing with my wife. The first day we spent locked in the villa, letting our inhibitions run wild. The only people we saw were the ones who brought us our food.

The next day, we had breakfast on the veranda before heading out to do some sightseeing and shopping. After a late lunch, we returned to the villa to put on our swimming attire to hang out at the beach. That night, we went to dinner at one of the well-known restaurants there before hitting a few bars to have drinks and do some dancing.

This morning we were scheduled for a six-hour Ibiza Beach Hopping Cruise at ten. We arrived with four other couples waiting to board the catamaran as well. We introduced ourselves and found out two of the couples were from New York and California. The other two were from Europe and Canada. The couple from New York were here celebrating their honeymoon also.

The catamaran had everything from food and drinks, snorkeling gear, jet skis, and paddle boards. We got along with the other couples and had a good time hanging out with them.

After the cruise ended, we exchanged numbers with couples, saying we would be in touch. The sun was still high in the sky when we made it back to the villa. Since we were tired from today's activities, Kayla and I took a shower

together and decided to take a nap before it was time for us to get dressed to go to dinner.

“I’m ready, baby,” Kayla says behind me.

I turn around to see her stepping out on the veranda. My eyes roam over her body as she saunters to me wearing a peach colored spaghetti string dress that hugs her body and stops mid-thigh. Her hair is brushed up into a curly Afro puff with coils hanging above her ears. She has on the diamond earrings mamá gave her along with the necklace and charm of her and her mother. Gold bangles adorn both of her wrists. Her sweet smelling perfume reaches me before she does.

When she’s close enough, I quickly draw her to me. Nuzzling her neck, I whisper along her satiny brown skin as I palm her ass, “You know we can stay in and order dinner.”

Kayla snickers, pressing her hands against my chest. “I don’t think so, Mr. Meier. We have reservations that we are going to keep.”

“But I got something better than reservations,” I try to persuade, making sure she feels the raging erection behind my pants.

“Johann!” she cackles as delicately trace my tongue along her neck. Kayla let a low moan escape her.

I have her just where I want her, I think to myself until the sound of a vehicle’s horn blare in front of the villa.

“Shit,” I murmur.

“It’s okay, baby,” Kayla says, lovingly staring up at me. “Let’s just go have dinner and instead of checking out the clubs afterwards, we come back here, and I will be your dessert.”

Shit, I wanted her to be my dessert right here, right now but I’m willing to compromise.

“Fine,” I return, letting her go. “But we’re only ordering appetizers, then getting the Hell out of there.”

“I don’t think so,” she says. “Appetizers don’t count. You’re going to have to eat all of your dinner before you can

have some of this dessert.” Kayla spins on her heels, then takes a step towards the veranda entrance. She yelps when I swat her on her ass. “What was that for?” she asks, rubbing her ass cheek.

Chuckling, I reply, “That’s for telling me when I can eat my dessert. I’ll let it slide this time because we’re on our honeymoon, but the next time I want to eat my cream pie before my steak and potatoes, I’m going to do so.”

Kayla grins, moving her head from side to side. The driver honks again and I escort her inside, then close the veranda doors and lock them. Kayla grabs her purse when we reach the front door. We exit to see the driver standing outside the luxury car I ordered.

I wasn’t going to rush the night, hell we had one more left. Tonight, I was going to enjoy the company of my wife. I had the rest of my life to take pleasure in the one dessert no man would ever have the opportunity to sample.

Since that day Kayla and I came into each other’s lives she has always been the one for me. Whether it be family or outside people coming for us, they’re going to fuck around and find out how I feel about mine.

‘What’s mine is mine. Try and take it and see how you will find yourself in one of those fuck around and find out moments. Even if we go through bad storms in our marriage; we will always be there to get each other through to the other side.’

The End

About The Author



Sonja B. is a Bestselling Author of Interracial Romance with an extreme passion and talent for gifting us with remarkable stories.

She is a wife, mother, and daughter who enjoys spending time with her family. She is an avid reader and when she's not cooking, traveling, or shopping you can find her enjoying a good paranormal romance story.

Her writing career was born from her love of paranormal romances. Her catalog presently consists of:

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