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BROKEN DEEDS MC

SECOND GENERATION: FLAMEOVER

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

ESTHER E. SCHMIDT

BROKEN DEEDS MC

SECOND GENERATION:

FLAMEOVER

By Esther E. Schmidt

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BLURB

Little white lies never hurt anyone, right?

A spur of the moment decision and a little white lie leaves Kain Lawson clueless and wanting more after a one-night stand. Four years later, Kain finds his lie coming back to haunt him.

After her father's death, Roise is left to deal with the company he left behind and to cope with her stress, she decides to move to Esdonville. The same town where the hot firefighter from her one-night stand lives. The little white lie Roise told might not seem so white when covered in soot from the fire he just rescued her, and her daughter, from.

A fire throws them back together, but the heat might be too much with an arsonist risking their lives. Can they overcome the little white lies they're both guilty of? When fire burns hot, there's no stopping the ravenous outcome. Unless there's a firefighter involved.

*Kain and Roise's story is a complete standalone. For a greater reading experience this novel should be read **AFTER***

*the Broken Deeds MC series, and **BEFORE** the Broken Deeds
MC Second Generation series.*

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PROLOGUE

Four years ago

– KAIN –

A wise man used to say, “*It’s not your eyes giving you the visual, it’s your brain converting the information, allowing you to see what’s right in front of you.*”

The wise man being my adoptive father, Broke Lawson. The one who raised me into the man I am today. I consider Broke my father in all ways since my biological father died when I barely had taken my first step. I might not remember my biological parents, but my adoptive parents made sure I knew who they were.

It’s also the very reason I wanted to become a firefighter. *Just like my biological father.* Okay, it’s also because Depay—a good friend and former colleague of my biological father—has been a massive part of my life as well. And with Depay being a firefighter EMT, let’s say it’s in my blood and has been an active part of my life.

I release a deep breath and I cross my arms in front of my chest while I watch some chick walk away. She basically gave up trying to catch my attention when I straight out ignored her. Tight skirt, big tits, model like figure and yet I show no interest at all because I couldn't get past the dollar signs in her eyes.

Growing up in a motorcycle club where your dad's the vice president—and a very wealthy man—really gives perspective on things. Mainly on women, but all people really. I learned the hard way how there are different kinds of people in the world. Most thrive on personal gain, some have respect, while others are anywhere in between. Yeah, I might be a young dude at the age of twenty, but I have got an old soul whose brain is drenched with information.

I like seeing what makes people tick. I blame it on Broken Deeds MC. The club takes cases the government hands them in secret to take on and gets justice by any means necessary. You might say growing up I skipped on jigsaw puzzles and jumped straight into solving cases along with my Broken Deeds MC family. It gave me a lot of specialized education.

Maybe that's why I haven't found a girl who spiked my interest; I'm too observant, always suspicious, and never let my guard down. And, dammit, for once I would like to have a chick interested in me for who I am; the guy behind the muscle and the cash in my name.

Some of it is probably my own fault because I'm standing here in the lobby of my hotel in Vegas looking like I own the place—which I do. The chick who tried to spike my interest overheard the manager introduce someone to me, making it clear to her I was the owner. Hence the dollar signs in her eyes when she noticed a potential sugar daddy.

My father always said it would be easier to keep distance while running a business. Though I always liked the more hands on, personal approach. Meaning my name is on the wall as the owner to give it a personal touch. I want the people staying in my hotel, spending their money in my casino, to know it belongs to a person not a company who only wants to suck all their money away.

This is also why I travel to Vegas every now and then to show my face and make sure everything runs fluidly. I never cared much about the bright city life, the massive cash flow, and especially not the easy, money hungry women who

want to dig their nails into my skin and never let go. Well, maybe they do let go once the money is gone. Like I said, for once I would like to have a woman see me. Not the nametag, not the money, just me.

This is also one of the reasons why I moved to a small town six months ago when there was a job opening for a firefighter at North Esley Fire Station. The other reason is because of the link with my biological family's background. I wanted to feel connected even though there are no living biological family members of mine left.

You might think my life is boring. And yet it's anything but since I'm always bouncing between being a member of Broken Deeds MC, a business owner with millions to my name, and my job as a firefighter.

Though I relish in the way I've been living my life for the past few months. The long ride on my bike to the clubhouse gives me what I need to clear my head, the small town gives me the low profile I crave in stark contrast to being here in Vegas.

I roll my shoulders and glance at the doors of the conference room. The reason I left Esdonville yesterday and hopped on a private jet to Vegas was to show my face at a

board meeting this morning. Also, since I wanted to attend a convention about hydraulic pumps, which was being held in the conference rooms of my hotel.

Main discussion points? Hydraulics, pumps, and water supply. I'm a firefighter, needless to say it catches my attention. Plus, it was held in my hotel and I needed to be here for the board meeting anyway. I have to say, the convention was pretty well organized too. I make a mental note to compliment the company who set it up.

My stomach rumbles, reminding me I need to grab a late dinner. I don't feel up to eating by myself in the restaurant and decide to head for my room to order some room service instead. I grab my phone and check my messages while heading toward the elevators. I only manage a few steps before someone bumps into me.

"Sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so, so sorry," a modest voice whispers in a chant as she squats down to gather the papers she dropped.

Seeing I was half responsible, I squat down to help. "No need to be sorry. I wasn't paying attention either. Here—"

I hold out the stack of papers for her to take and my words falter as soon as our eyes meet. Damn. I never knew the

color of liquid silver could be captivating. Her delicate features and her dark blonde hair tied in a bun while some strands frame her face give her an innocent appearance.

She swallows hard and those magnificent eyes go down as she releases a tiny chuckle and says, “Good thing you’re not the manager. I accidentally bumped into him yesterday and almost got my head chewed off.”

Anger instantly surges through me. “You’re kidding me, right? Did he really? I’ll be sure to address him about his behavior. What’s your name so I can address this incident accordingly?”

Her eyes go wide and she places her tiny hand on my forearm. “Please don’t. Seriously, it was my fault. I also bumped into you, didn’t I? Oh, talk about embarrassing. You work here? Great. Good thing the convention is over and my plane out of here is bright and early tomorrow morning. I’d better head up to my room, order room service, and stay out of people’s way until then. Shit. Where are my manners? I’m Roise. Can you maybe point me in the direction of someone who can sign some papers for me? Well, other than the manager, obviously. Ugh. Never mind, I’ll just drop the documents off tomorrow morning before I leave. And I’m

rambling. Again, I'm sorry. I'm ... I'm gonna go. It was nice meeting you, bumping into you, whatever." Her cheeks pink up and she fumbles awkwardly with the stack of papers she's holding.

The corner of my mouth twitches. She doesn't have a damn clue who I am and she's utterly adorable. She glances at the papers she's holding and when my eyes hit them, I can clearly read my name on those papers.

"I need to order room service too," I muse and stare at my name.

"Would you like to join me for a late dinner? Seeing we were both heading for our room to order room service we might as well enjoy each other's company along with it." My eyes slide up when her words settle, and I watch how the red blush deepens on her cheeks as she starts to sputter in an effort to take the words she just voiced back.

A sly smile slides across my face and I can't help but tease her. "Now Roise, are you flirting with me? Offering to take me up to your room." Leaning in closer, I add on a husky whisper, "You'd better be prepared to hand feed me, because if so ... I might return the favor."

The hitch in her breath and the shiver running through her is enough to make me painfully hard.

She guides some of her dark blonde hair that's fallen from her messy bun behind her ear and surprises the hell out of me when she says, "I'm sure that can be arranged."

We stare at one another and I swear an electricity bolt of lust and desire crackles between us, heating up the vibe of what's to come. And we will come, the both of us multiple times, I'll make damn sure.

"What's your room number?" I croak and wrap my fingers around her elbow to guide her to the elevator.

She rattles off her room number and I instantly recognize the number as being the honeymoon suite. My steps falter and my voice comes out a bit harsh as I say, "Mind explaining why you're inviting a stranger up into the honeymoon suite? Your husband won't be pleased, and I might as well add the fact that I'm not up for a trio when it comes to adding another dude into the mix."

Her eyes go wide again but they flash to mischief as she releases a chuckle along with it. "No husband. I just wanted the nicest suite but the presidential suite was taken and this one was the only one left."

“Well then.” I feel a smirk sliding across my face.

I want to give a remark but she tilts her head and says, “But you are a complete stranger. A nameless stranger. Mind giving me your name before we take this any further?”

Shit. When I tell her my name she’ll know I’m the owner. Even if I’m extremely attracted to her, I’m not ready for her to know who I am since she’s booked a suite and even wanted an expensive one. Maybe to up expenses or some other money angle.

Without thinking I give her the first name that comes to mind, which happens to be of a friend and colleague of mine. “Link. Link Reef Crusoe.”

A sensual smile tugs her lips. “A stranger no more, Link. Or do you prefer Reef?” she questions as the both of us step inside the elevator.

I let the doors slide closed and hit the button to take us to the correct floor. Leaning into her personal space the moment the elevator starts to move, I tell her, “Whichever you decide to scream during the many orgasms I plan to give you.”

All the papers she was holding slide yet again to the floor as our bodies collide in a frenzy of hands on, mouth

crashing, tongues fighting, as insane lust takes over. The clearing of a throat makes me rip my lips away from her. I see the manager standing in the opening of the doorway, his hand slightly raised to prevent the doors from closing.

I never really liked the guy and hearing Roise mention his outburst when she bumped into him only makes me dislike him even more. Not to mention the judgmental look on his face which is directed at the woman I'm still holding in my arms.

Taking a step away, I let my arm slide to her lower back and guide her out of the elevator. Stopping right next to the manager I snap, "Pick up those papers and leave them on my desk so I can find them tomorrow morning."

"Yes, sir," he says through gritted teeth.

Dismissing him, I stride to the door of the honeymoon suite and practically drag her along with me.

"Open the door, Roi," I tell her, while I can easily grab the card from my slacks and open it myself. I can open any room in this hotel for that matter since I own the damn building but fuck if I want her to know.

This night is between us; two people who burn to take advantage of each other. Well, that's my opinion and the way her hands are all over me once the door slams shut behind us, I'd say she's on the same page.

The buttons that were stitched to the fabric of her blouse go flying and bounce on the floor when I rip it open to expose the sexy as fuck lace bra keeping her breasts in line—not for long they won't, I need to set those puppies free.

First, I need to know something seeing as my dick is itching to get inside her, and the way this feels is different than any woman I've held, I'd like to experience it all without a damn barrier in between.

With both my hands I cup her face and stare into those liquid silver depths. "I'm clean, you?"

"Clean," she breathes.

"Are you on the pill? Do we need protection? I'd rather feel all of you but I'll grab a condom if you want—"

"No, no condom," she cuts me off a little too eager and it makes me pause but when her tongue slides over my bottom lip, biting down slightly before she devours my mouth while her hands tear at my slacks, all sanity evaporates.

I do know one thing for sure as I sink myself bare and deep into her tight, hot body; I'm going to be spending the rest of the night inside this woman. One night might not be enough to get my fill and I already regret not giving her my own name. Come morning I will set her straight and give her my real name along with an explanation. And I'll be sure to ask for her number before I have to head back to Esdonville.

Though, when I open my eyes the next morning, all there's left are cold sheets beside me and memories of the best night in my life.

CHAPTER ONE

Present day

– ROISE –

Tears sting my eyes but I refuse to let them spill. Another flare of stabbing pain shoots through my ankle at the same time a window shatters. I swallow hard as I see thick smoke swirl angrily inside my house while firefighters are shattering the windows to let the smoke out in an effort to save the house. The house Deni, my three-year-old daughter, and I moved into a mere few days ago.

It was more of an escape, an effort to reboot my life. My father died three weeks ago and the walls of my old house started to close in on me. I simply had to do something that would completely rip me out of the state of mind I was dragging myself deeper into. Hence the spur of the moment—pack everything up—and move to Esdonville action.

Why did I pick Esdonville? Because of sentimental reasons as this is where my daughter's biological father lives or lived. Who knows if it's true because he lied to me. I tried

to contact him one single time after our one-night stand. I had to reach out when I knew I was pregnant. That's when I realized he lied to me. Another harsh reminder hits me since her biological father doesn't know of Denise's existence.

It's not that I didn't want him to know, I really did. I knew his name and the fact he was a firefighter in Esdonville. Not as hard to track down, so I called the firefighter's station and asked for Link Reef Crusoe. I was told his wife had an emergency and that he was out for the day.

Great, right? Have a one-night stand with a guy—best night of my life—only to find out he's a cheating asshole. He must have thought the whole cliché about whatever happens in Vegas was a great excuse to get his rocks off without his wife knowing.

Okay, I might have a few secrets of my own, but come on, he cheated on his wife. *A freaking wife*. If I knew he was married I never would have ended up in bed with him. Needless to say, I instantly hung up the phone and didn't bother to try and contact him again. I decided right then and there I would raise Denise on my own.

I'm honest enough to admit it had been my plan all along; to become a single mom. Well, I didn't exactly plan to

land in bed with Link, it was more like a tiny window of opportunity, a spur of the moment, last minute decision. A fifty-fifty shot of getting pregnant. And I did reach out to him to let him know, but yeah ... married. Shocking. Even more shocking than the whole pee on a stick and realizing I was in fact knocked-up thing.

I gasp when another glass window shatters. Denise yelps and hugs me tighter. Why can't I catch a break for once? Between dealing with the grief of losing my father, maintaining the company, and dealing with the creep who thinks he now has the right to run the place. All while I try to be there for Denise. And now this.

A few firemen stalk out of my house and there are some other ones who are currently pumping loads of water into my garage that's attached to the house. At least there aren't any flames anymore. I close my eyes and release a choppy breath.

Terror was flowing through my veins when I woke up from hearing the smoke detector blare when I was dozing on the couch. I could smell the fire and called 911 as I was heading for Denise, grabbing her to get out of the house as

soon as possible. Then she started crying about her stuffed animal, the one she can't live without.

I made sure she was away from danger and since the house wasn't filled with smoke like it is now, I rushed back in to grab her stuffed animal but hurt my ankle as I was getting out.

One of the firefighters is standing before me, his eyes fully focused on Denise instead of me. His lips are moving though his words fly right past me. Instinctively I know he wants to check Denise to make sure she's okay. I place her on her feet as the guy squats down to her level.

I can't believe this is happening. I shift on my feet and another flash of pain shoots through my ankle. What was I thinking running back up those stairs, garage on fire, smoke starting to fill the freaking house? All to get Denise's stuffed pig to make her feel safe and not have her lose everything. All while she could have lost me, dammit, I'm so stupid.

"I should have let the pig burn," I mutter.

"Excuse me?" the firefighter in front of me says in shock.

Laughter comes from the man who has his back to me but is checking over Deni to make sure she's okay.

He shoots a quick glance over his shoulder and yet I can't see his face. "Don't mind Crusoe, pigs are a touchy subject with him."

Crusoe.

Link. Reef. Crusoe.

The Link Reef Crusoe? As in the father of my child Crusoe?

That can't be. The man he refers to doesn't look like the man I had sex with almost four years ago. Though, the voice of the man who just threw those words over his shoulder does sound very familiar.

"You're all oink-kay there, little princess," the firefighter in front of my daughter quips. "Want me to check out the little pig you're holding? Does he, or she, have the same pretty eyes? I've only ever seen such pretty eyes once in all my life."

"My momma gave them to me," Deni beams.

I swallow hard as the firefighter turns, making our gaze collide.

“Roi?” he croaks.

I simply reply with, “Link.”

Though, the firefighter on my left is the one who quips,
“Yeah?”

Link steps closer to me and tells the guy on my left,
“Can you keep an eye on the little girl for a moment? I need to talk to her mother in private.”

He wraps his fingers around my elbow and guides me away but the moment I put weight on my ankle is when I almost faceplant into the grass. If it wasn't for Link catching me and holding me upright that is.

“You're hurt?” he snaps in an angry tone.

“Yeah, well, I had to rush up the stairs to grab her pig. The house wasn't filled with smoke when I ran inside but when I rushed back out the smoke was suddenly so thick, it made me stumble and I think I twisted my ankle. But hey, I saved the pig,” I ramble while more anger is overtaking his face.

I take a step back, careful not to put weight on my ankle.

“It was a damn stuffed animal, Roi. You risked your own life for a toy?” he hisses in my face underneath his breath.

I’m nearing my breaking point with the turmoil of emotions ripping through me. “She can’t sleep without her little piglet. She never even leaves the house if the damn thing isn’t—” I suck in a choppy breath. “I shouldn’t have. I know, okay? But the house wasn’t on fire and the smoke wasn’t ... I couldn’t let her down.”

His gaze swings to Deni and back at me. I can tell by the look on his face he’s counting in his head, wrapping his brain around the fact she might just be his.

“How old is she?” he asks.

Without thinking I blurt, “She’s yours.”

Link keeps staring at me. We’re surrounded by people who are making themselves busy with saving my house and yet we’re wrapped in a moment where there’s just us. We’re locked in a staring contest while our brains are in overdrive. He doesn’t say anything and it creeps me out.

“Link, please say something.” He still doesn’t respond so I snap in a loud tone, “Link!”

The firefighter who was looking after Denise comes rushing toward me. “Yes, ma’am?”

Confusion hits me. “Nothing, I’m just talking to Link, and—”

Now he’s the one who’s confused as he says to Link, “Mind telling me why she’s pointing at you while she’s addressing you with my name?”

My gaze bounces between both men and Link winces.

The man who was looking after Denise shakes his head and holds out his hand for me to take. I accept it and give it a little shake and the moment our hands disconnect he says, “Link Reef Crusoe, ma’am. Nice to meet you. And this here is Kain Lawson. Sorry for the mix up. And I also have to ask if you have someone who you can call to stay with for the night.”

I’m still processing his words, not understanding what’s going on when there’s a hand pressing on my lower back. “She can stay with me; I have a room at the hotel in town.”

I whirl around and take a step away from the man who gets on my nerves each time I have to deal with him; Gordon.

My ankle can't support my weight and it makes me stumble forward. Link ... no, wait, not Link; *Kain Lawson*. He's the one catching me again to steady me on my feet.

"I'm not staying with you, Gordon," I can't help but snap at him, and I know he doesn't deserve it but like I said, he gets on my nerves. "And what are you doing here anyway?"

"Boyfriend?" Kain grunts out his question as he makes sure I'm stable so he can step away from me.

"Employee," I absently reply.

"I wanted to swing by to let you know I arrived today instead of tomorrow. I figured we would need more than a day to talk things over, so I booked a room for two nights. When I drove onto your street I saw what was happening. Like I mentioned, you're welcome to stay with me," Gordon offers again.

"You're staying at a hotel, Gordon. I can obviously get a room for myself and Deni." I place my hand on my thigh and close my eyes for a moment to deal with the pain shooting through my ankle.

“Come on, Roise, I’ll take you to the hotel,” Gordon says.

Kain steps in front of me. “She’s not going to the hotel. She is however going to get her ankle checked out.” He easily scoops me into his arms as he continues, “And Gordo ... she’s not alone, she’s the mother of a toddler in case you forgot to notice.”

Kain swings his head into Link’s direction. Crap. It’s weird calling him that while I have a completely different face and memories connected with that name.

“Can you take care of Deni, and bring her over later, while I get her mother’s ankle checked out?”

“I can’t leave her,” I squeak and try to wiggle out of his grip.

“Stop. I don’t want to drop you and I’m also guessing you don’t want Deni to see her mom in pain when they check out your ankle. Besides, he’s bringing her to you later. And Link here has a pig named Calliope, he’s married and will take good care of your daughter. He also has a brother, Chase. He works with the police and their father used to be the chief. See? Deni couldn’t be in better hands.” Kain doesn’t say

anything else or wait for a reply but stalks to the ambulance—which finally arrived.

“You have a pig? A real one?” Denise gushes and some of my anxiousness fades.

Denise has always been a very social kid who loves people. Even more when she can talk about her love for pigs. Also, the reason why she’s so fond of her stuffed animal since she treats it as if it’s a real life one.

Come on, Roise, they are firefighters. Human heroes who help people. I mentally give myself a pep talk.

“Okay,” I croak and feel tears finally starting to spill due to all of my emotions ripping me apart.

I have never left my daughter in the care of total strangers, and I always make sure she’s taken care of. Hell, I rushed us out of the house at the first smell and sight of smoke but ran back in because she wouldn’t stop crying about her stuffed animal, afraid it would be hurting all alone.

Everything is blurry and I barely process the turmoil of events as I finally arrive at the hospital and end up with the news that I have a sprained ankle. I’m staring at my ankle—wrapped with an elastic bandage—and still can’t wrap my

mind around the fact it will take at least two to six weeks to heal. I'm going to need crutches to keep weight off my injured foot for at least the next three days.

“Mommy!” Denise squeals before she rushes toward me.

I'm about to brace myself for impact. Even if I'm in this wheelchair, it won't stop Denise from jumping onto my lap. You simply can't hold back a dynamite three-year-old who loves the life out of you. And I will never deny her—or myself—for that matter.

Kain squats down and holds out his hand. “Careful there, little rascal. Your mom hurt her ankle. Come on, let me show you the fastest and safest way to give her a hug.”

I have to swallow due to the lump in my throat and I hate all of these emotions ripping me apart. I'm a strong woman, dammit. One who always handles things herself. Though, in this moment, I feel like a complete failure.

The shitty new obstacle of not being able to do a lot of things myself allows emotions to overtake my body, making me a complete mess. Kain lets her climb on his thigh so Denise can throw her tiny arms around my neck and hug me tight. Again, with the damn tears, why won't they stop?

“I’m okay, pumpkin,” I croak.

Her tiny arms disappear and I’m staring at Denise while she’s now sitting on Kain’s hip.

“Don’t look at me like that.” Kain shakes his head and releases an uncomfortable chuckle. “I’m good with kids. Me and Deni bonded while we were waiting on you, isn’t that right?”

Denise nods furiously. “He made someone bring ice cream for me.”

Ice cream? He made someone bring her ice cream?

“We agreed not to tell your mom. Otherwise I’ll get in trouble for trying to bribe you,” Kain fake whispers.

“Bribe?” Denise questions on a giggle.

“That’s when you use stuff to make others do what you want,” Kain easily supplies.

“Very educational,” I mutter and I hear him snort.

He pierces me with his gaze and asks, “Can she sit on your lap?”

Without a second thought I reply, “Of course she can; it’s my ankle that’s hurt, not my whole body.”

He seems satisfied with my reaction and ever so gently places Denise on my lap. He guides me out of the hospital and my mind is already running a hundred miles an hour. I was supposed to have a meeting with Gordon tomorrow to talk through some of the matters at hand with the company since my father died quite suddenly.

I know he traveled three hours and booked a room to have more time here but to be honest, I'm not feeling up to dealing with Gordon, let alone deal with the company. Mainly because I know for sure my grandfather secured the company so it functions flawlessly without any interference.

He hired someone to give him more time to spend with us. It was a recent thing since he was also in the middle of negotiations to hand over the company, either to sell, merge, or hand it over completely to only oversee and interact every now and then.

I started out in this company as an event planner while going through college and worked my way up. I know everything there is to know to run this company. Though, I still kept planning conventions since I love that side of the company. But when Denise came into my life, I made sure she was my one—and only—priority.

“Can you give me a lift to the hotel?” I question, mentally hitting myself on the head for not thinking things through before I got into this wheelchair and let him guide me out.

“All taken care of,” he simply says and heads for a dark blue SUV.

He puts Denise in a car seat that looks brand new and helps me get into the front seat. I have to wait for him to get back from switching the wheelchair with crutches to discuss things further. I seriously dislike not knowing where and what to do next.

When Kain finally takes a seat behind the wheel he simply shakes his head and tells me, “You and I need to talk. Your ankle gives me the opportunity to make some decisions for you and seeing you can’t go back to your house you’re going to stay with me for the time being. Now, we won’t get into this with the little one in the back flapping her pretty little ears, so we are going to settle in at my place, order food, and when she’s sleeping we’re going to have a long-ass talk.”

“Don’t say ass,” I hiss underneath my breath, frustrated at being robbed from cursing his ass out because my daughter is in the backseat.

He shoots me a smirk and says, “It’s a normal word; everybody has one. Though, some are nicer than others, but still.”

Frustrating man. I swing my head to the side window and decide to ignore him. I glance over my shoulder to double check if Denise is okay because she’s awfully quiet in the backseat. To my surprise I see that all of her attention is focused on a handful of tiny books.

Kain backs up the car and mutters, “Like I said, I’m good with kids. I was raised in an MC clubhouse along with many other kids, basically it’s one large family. Even though I’m adopted, I’ve never felt the lack of a blood connection matters. The love, safe haven, respect, friendship, and loyalty is stronger than being squeezed out of a person and not having a connection at all while being raised and living in the same house.”

I swallow hard at his words. Four sentences and yet it highlights what was lacking in my life and how hard I fought for a change. It’s the very reason I wanted to get pregnant; to give my child everything I missed and embrace the love I receive in return.

“You’re adopted,” I muse, more to myself than to him.

“Yes. But my adoptive parents made damn sure I knew exactly who my biological parents were.” The words he gives me are harsh and a sneer to what I kept from both him and our daughter.

We fall silent, and I’m still lost in my own thoughts when the SUV comes to a stop in front of a large house with a double garage. Kain parks and orders me to stay in my seat. I can’t believe this is the same man I had a one-night stand with almost four years ago. Though, I shouldn’t judge since he just found out he’s a father. It irreversibly is going to mess up his life.

Another problem added to the pile I’m already dealing with. I should have known it was coming when I decided to move to Esdonville, but the confrontation still hits hard. I take a deep breath to regain some strength and brace for what’s to come; dealing with having Denise’s biological father in our lives and how we move forward from here on out.

CHAPTER TWO

– KAIN –

I stare at the little three-year-old girl sleeping in my guest bedroom. She's a carbon copy of her mother and the timing fits with our one-night stand in Vegas almost four years ago. Hard to believe I have a daughter, though deep down I know she's mine.

Gently closing the door and leaving it slightly ajar, I make my way down the hallway and into the living room. Roise is on the couch, her leg perched up on cushions and she's wringing her hands.

“I want a DNA test, and if she's mine—”

“She's yours, but please don't take her away from me,” she says in a tiny and pleading voice.

I want to lash out about how she's kept Deni away from me all these years and yet ... I'm the one who gave her a fake name. The name of a dude who's married. Dammit what a major fuck-up.

“I’m going to be in her life, complete shared custody, understood? She’s going to know I’m her father as soon as possible since she’s still young enough to adjust without any weirdness in between.”

“I did try to reach you when I knew I was pregnant. I called, but they said your wife had an emergency and that you were out for the day. I thought ... you cheated ... married. It ... it was never my intention to keep her from you,” she says with a little more snap to her voice.

I rub a hand over my neck as I mutter, “When you have millions linked with your name people tend to want you for different reasons as soon as they know who you are. That shouldn’t be an excuse, I know. And I should have given you my own name, and for that I’m sorry, and I only have myself to blame.”

“And I’m sorry I wanted to get pregnant,” she blurts and I swear my whole body freezes in place as an ice cold shiver runs up and down my spine.

“Say what?” I growl, not believing she might have wanted to set me up by getting pregnant.

“The whole millions linked to your name and people want you for different reasons? That’s the story of my life.

Growing up my father only cared about running the company and left me with a nanny, and later sent me to boarding school. Most of the time I was all by myself without any emotion or affection. My father tried to be there for me in his own way, but there was a hole in my heart I yearned to fill.”

She draws in a shaky breath. “I wanted to change my life and give everything I had to give to make a change. That, and my father wanted me to marry Gordon for the sake of the company. To him we were a good match. A good match like a damn business deal,” she seethes and waves her hands.

She’s caught up in her own rant and isn’t even looking at me. “I did some research and there are websites out there where you can meet up with a man who willingly donates ... you know. But then I ran into you. One look and I wanted you with my whole body. I’ve never had the whole full-blown lust thing, and all I wanted to do was give in. And then you were amazing, the whole night was amazing, and then morning came and I was so ashamed and disgusted with myself ... I ran. I figured it was a fifty-fifty shot. I mean, how can you get knocked-up in one shot? Ugh.”

“It was more like six shots spread out over the whole night.” I can’t help but chuckle at the reminder how the both

of us couldn't get enough of each other and screwed like bunnies until we both crashed into a deep sleep.

I should really be pissed about what she just spilled but this whole situation we're in is fucked-up. Me giving her another guy's name, and for real, I'm just as responsible for not using a condom. Even if she said she was on the pill. *She lied. I lied.* Who of us made the bigger lie is all moot when we have a three-year-old sleeping at the end of the hallway.

“We will get the test done as soon as possible. And until we have the results, I would like to offer you two to stay here. You obviously need help with your ankle and the kid. Your house needs some work before you can stay there overnight. I can help with all of it. And if you say she's my kid, you will give me this time. When we have it in black and white, we will discuss how we're going to continue.” I give her a hard stare, basically letting her know she doesn't have a choice in any of this.

Knocking on the door prevents her from answering. I don't have to check to see who's standing on my porch because I already know. I've asked my president, Archer, to let a prospect swing by with a DNA test. But to my surprise there isn't a prospect, but Archer himself standing on my porch.

“Hey, man. I didn’t expect to see you.” I step back to let Archer enter and close the door behind him.

“I thought it was best to handle this as soon as possible and just between us. Besides, I needed the long ride to clear my head,” Archer says as he hands me a package.

“Your Dad okay?” I question.

Archer’s father, Deeds, former president of Broken Deeds MC, needed to step down and hand everything over to his son because of an investigation. An investigation which was unnecessary and unjustified, but the shift in leadership did allow us to sign a new contract with the government. Though if you ask anyone, they will say the gavel was passed down to Archer because Deeds had too many issues with his hand due to an old injury.

Broken Deeds MC has been active for many decades in solving cases the government can’t seem to close. Though recently the CIA thought it was necessary to run a check, to make sure we still follow our protocols instead of going rogue. Bullshit policies which caused for one of our brothers to die and cause a truckload of issues within our tight family and brotherhood. And yet we came out stronger even with the shift of leadership.

Archer nods and says, “He’s fine and not the reason I needed to clear my head.”

“Trouble in paradise?” I can’t help but chuckle since the dude fell head over heels for the vice president’s daughter of another MC. Talk about complications.

“Same old shit,” Archer grunts. “Hence me needing the long ride.”

I nod in sympathy and give him a few smacks on the back. “Appreciate it.”

“Yeah, yeah, just get me some coffee, will ya?” Archer heads for the living room and I trail in behind him.

Roise’s eyes widen when she sees Archer. It’s a normal reaction since the dude is all muscle and ink these days. Add the leather cut with patches, jeans with chains, rough biker boots, and you have a menacing presence coming at ya.

“Roi, this is Archer, president of Broken Deeds MC, the motorcycle club I’m a part of.” I watch how Roi gives him a genuine smile and holds out her hand for him to take.

The moment their hands break apart, I tell her, “He came by to drop off a DNA kit. We have a lab that handles everything with priority so this won’t take long.”

Archer eyes Roi's bandaged ankle and gives her a tiny smile. "I'm going to make some coffee, you want one?"

She dismisses him and almost wants to get up when I take a step toward the hallway. "Where are you going?"

"I'm not going anywhere. I am however going to gently get a sample of my alleged daughter."

Her eyes go wide at my words but I hold my hand up to silence her and add, "Don't get your panties in a twist. It's an easy swab. I can rub the inside of her cheek while she's sound asleep. She won't even know I'm there."

That's all the explanation I give her as I stalk out to do exactly as I said I'd do. When I'm finished, I stroll into the kitchen and open the other box with a swap and rub the inside of my cheek. When I've wrapped everything up, I hand the package to Archer and take the mug he's holding out for me.

"You taking care of them? With her ankle hurt and all?" Archer questions.

I glance over my shoulder to see if Roi is still on the couch. Her eyes are staring at the TV across from her and yet she seems locked in her mind; miles away.

“I’m ninety-nine-point ninety-nine percent sure the kid is mine. I need the test results to make it an even hundred. So, yeah, they stay here. And I’m not about to let her walk away when her ankle is healed either,” I snap, somewhat agitated with myself and the whole situation.

Archer’s eyes slide to Roi. “Is she old lady material?”

I put the mug down and rub my neck. “I have no clue. She sparks something inside me when I see her, that’s for sure. And the kid sleeping down the hall should prove we have a connection. Man, I haven’t even mentioned half the stuff we did that night, almost four years ago.”

I have to push those hot memories away or I’ll end up with a major hard on with my president standing right in front of me.

“You have a lot to deal with, brother. But take it from me, if it feels right ... you hold on to that shit and fight for it. Look at the mess I’m in. We’ve been sneaking around for a few weeks and it’s killing the both of us. Maybe I should knock her up, sure would simplify things if she’s carrying my kid. No way another MC will interfere then. Brilliant. Thanks, man. You just gave me a way to solve the issue I was having. Okay, I’m heading out and will drop this off at the lab. I’ll

make sure they know to do a thorough rush job and have them text you the results.”

I grab his cut and draw him into a one arm hug as I slap him on the back. “Thanks, man. Appreciate it.”

“Always, brother,” he simply states. “Call if you need anything.”

Archer heads out the door and I make myself another cup of coffee before heading into the living room.

“Short visit.” Roi tries to say it as a statement but the curve of her voice lets me know it’s more of a question as to why he left so soon.

“He has some personal issues. His uncle’s the president of Areion Fury MC. Their VP’s daughter has had his heart since the moment he laid eyes on her. There are matters at hand that prevent them from being together.”

Her shoulders sag a look of sympathy washes over her face. “That’s just sad. Love should always win. I hope he doesn’t give up and finds a way to be with her.”

“Well, he just decided in the kitchen that it would be a good thing to knock her up. It would guarantee a claim, one Areion Fury MC has no other option but to accept if he wants

to do right by her.” I spill these details just to see how she responds to it.

There’s nothing. No agreement, no judgement, no glare, no nothing.

She shifts uncomfortably and says, “I would love a cup of coffee if it’s not too much trouble.”

I have to blink a few times at the change in subject since I was still observing her to see what answer or judgment she would give me. “Yeah, sure.”

Just as I’m about to pass her she says in a very small voice, “I love my daughter, Kain. I wouldn’t change a thing. Well, maybe I should have tried harder to reach you, though it doesn’t matter now since everything is in the past. I can only hope you won’t take her from me. I’ll fight you if you do, but I will never deny Denise her father.”

I can hear my own heartbeat in my ears. Did I hear her correctly? Did she really say my biological mother’s name?

I have to breathe deeply in and out before I have enough oxygen running through me to whisper, “Denise?”

She gives me a tiny smile and points at my chest where underneath my necklace is hidden.

“The angel wings hanging from your necklace. That night in Vegas after the second round of sex, I asked who those names belonged to. You mentioned they were your parents. I wanted to name her Athena, after my mother. But the moment I held her in my arms the name Denise popped into my head so I gave her both. Athena Denise. But when she started talking and could speak her own name it came out as Deni, that’s why I most times address her as Deni. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Mind?” I croak. “Fuck, you have no idea what this means to me.”

“I’m so sorry you missed the first few years of Deni’s life. I’m so—”

I cut her off because repeating excuses doesn’t help shit. “Can we just draw a line here and now, and leave everything that happened in the past? The little girl down the hall is what matters, and if we keep throwing shit back and forth it won’t change the fact where we’re standing now. You’re the mother, I’m the father. When I have it in black and white, we will raise her together.” Her eyes grow wide and I know the both of us aren’t ready for this discussion yet. “We are going to cross that bridge when we get there. First things

first, meaning we're going to spend time together and when we get those results, we will have the whole future plans talk. Deal?"

"Deal," she grumbles and adds, "Can I have that coffee now?"

I can't help but snort a laugh and head for the kitchen but I have to stop mid stride. "Cream? Sugar?"

"Four sugars, please."

I raise an eyebrow and she just shrugs. I shake my head and stroll into the kitchen to make her cavity-inducing coffee. I'll be sure to throw in some extra sugar since this woman strikes me as the type who will hold back some because others always judge. She's not one of those skinny, model looking types who prance around with their perfect figure for all to see.

Nope, she seems the type to be aware of her every curve. Curves she must hate because of society's picture-perfect image. While all I see is the softness of a real woman, a real woman where I won't feel bones when I grab her hips and slam myself deep inside her over and over.

Great. And now I'm staring at the kitchen ceiling in an effort to calm my raging hard on. Releasing a deep breath, I head into the living room and hand her the mug. She wraps her hands around it and the corner of my mouth twitches when I see her smell it first.

Roi finally takes a sip and she releases a sigh of contentment before eagerly taking another sip. Just as I thought, she has a sweet tooth but chooses to diminish it. I make a mental note to take them both to Hattie's Café for breakfast. They have the best pancakes, and coffee for that matter.

"You should add some caramel." Knowing women love it since, "Archer's sister, Esmee, is addicted to that shit."

She leans forward and places the mug on the table.
"No, thank you."

Frustration hits me and it makes me grumble, "You clearly like sugar, every woman is allowed to indulge in sweetness every now and then."

"Right. Indulge. Most women might, but not me. Have you seen my ass?"

I can't help but smirk. "Seen it, felt it, gripped it, kneaded it, ran my tongue all over it. Pretty sure I nipped it with my teeth too. All of it should give you one hell of an impression I enjoyed every inch of your curves."

Her cheeks flush adorably and yet it makes anger flow through me by the way she lets society dictate hints of her life.

"Let's make it a rule. Deny yourself something you clearly enjoy again and I'll spank that ass to remind you society doesn't make the rules. You're the only one in control of your life."

"Says the person who basically gave me no choice and took me with him," she huffs, and then her shoulders slump. "Sorry. It's just that ... a few weeks ago my father died. Now everything falls on my shoulders. And did I mention it's draining to focus on all tasks while raising a three-year-old? My father set everything in place so the company would basically run itself but Gordon keeps showing up, reminding me of stuff I shouldn't have to be bothered with, but for some reason he thinks I'm the one who needs to take care of it. Then there's you, and the whole move here, and I know I basically have myself to blame for relocating here, but—" She's starting to incoherently growl out some more words before she sighs

and says, “I feel like I lost control of my life the day my father gave me the ultimatum almost four years ago.”

“The whole reason you wanted to become a single mother,” I state.

“Not the only reason, but one of them. My father wanted me to marry Gordon for the benefit of the company, leaving me little to no choice. But the main reason I became a single mother had more to do with filling a longing to give love and show my kid a world can be filled with a good balance.”

“Work, love, family, value, and respect to give all. Well, sweetheart, didn’t anybody tell you? Life sucks. There is no balance. Life happens and you have to sail through that shit on your own and take each step as it comes. It’s called living for a reason, and through hardness or loving people around you, you learn to adapt and create your own future. You did that with Denise. You’re struggling now but when you’re done struggling and are able to catch your breath, you will rise above everything all on your own.”

“That’s just it. It’s one thing after another, and I can’t seem to catch my breath.” The way every single word comes out—laced with pain and defeat—hits me straight in the chest.

I squat down in front of her and place my finger underneath her chin to make sure her eyes are on me when I tell her, “Your ass is on my couch, and as soon as you saw me again you told me she was my kid. This means I’m right there next to you and am available to help and for you to lean on, okay? Come to think of it, you don’t have a choice in any of it. Your only focus for now is to let your ankle heal. Denise, do you have a babysitter for her or does she go to preschool?”

“I haven’t had the time to do any of those things. I was still unpacking from moving into the new house.”

“Okay, then we will discuss these things tomorrow. It will be good for the both of you to let her start preschool. But like I said, for now you need to focus on you. We discuss stuff, I’ll handle it.”

“Bossy,” she grumbles, making me smile.

“Woman, I’m a firefighter as well as a biker. I thrive on orders in heated moments. Either me giving them or I follow orders from my superiors. Both the MC and my work is a foundation where you learn to place your life in the hands of others and make sure you have their back too. You were on your own dealing with everything before we ran into each other again, but it ends now.”

The hope shining from her eyes make me lean forward and gently brush my lips against her forehead.

“Lie down and try to relax. I’m going to make a few calls.” I stalk out of the room, because if I don’t, I’ll do what I want to do; take her mouth instead of pressing my damn lips against her forehead.

CHAPTER THREE

– ROISE –

I hate this. I hate it, and it's not fair. Why do I have to sit here in the shade while I can only stare at Kain who is currently teaching our daughter how to plant seeds? This is the reason why I moved to a small town instead of living in an apartment without a garden.

Though I seriously doubt if anything will rise out of the muddy mess, but I guess we'll see. A deep sigh rips from my body at the thought since I hope I'm allowed to see if anything grows due to this being his backyard and all.

It's been three days and he hasn't said a word about the test results. And I know he must have received them, right? He mentioned how they have a special lab and it would be a priority. I don't need a test; I know she's mine, and Kain is her father.

Laughter draws me to the here and now where Denise is watering Kain instead of the dirt. No matter how grumpy I was a moment ago, I can't help but laugh along with them.

Kain's eyes hit mine and my heart skips a beat. Why does this man have such an effect on me?

It was the same the day we met. Once we locked eyes, I was a goner; I wanted nothing more than to be consumed by him. Normally I'm shy and don't seek male attention but he was the first guy I tried like hell to flirt my ass off with. I still can't believe we ended up in bed together that day.

Scorching memories assault my brain and I can feel my cheeks heat. I rip my gaze away and reach for the glass of lemonade on the table next to me. The sweetness assaults my tongue and I can't help but close my eyes and enjoy something else Kain gave me. Dammit, why does everything this man does have to be perfect and addictive?

"I would say 'a penny for your thoughts,' though the way the blush is decorating your cheeks I'd say it's not suitable to be voiced out loud with our daughter standing near."

A gasp leaves my throat and combined with a sip of lemonade it throws me into a coughing fit.

"Are you okay, Mommy?" Denise asks and starts to furiously rub my back.

I try to clear my throat and rub the tears from my eyes with both hands, thankful Kain took the glass from me during my coughing fit.

“I’m okay,” I croak.

“Maybe I should make mommy wet, it’ll make her feel better.” Kain smirks as he holds out his hand, pointing at the watering can Denise is holding.

What’s with the sexual innuendo? My cheeks flush some more and if I keep this up, I’ll turn into a freaking tomato.

Then it hits me ... he said *our daughter*. I swallow a few times and ask on a whisper, “You have the test results?”

“I do,” is all he says and I know he’s going to go back to do some more gardening and end this discussion before it started.

I know I should wait till tonight when Denise is sleeping but I can’t help but whisper hiss, “You could have mentioned something.”

The annoying man raises one of his eyebrows. “What for? I was only making sure of something you already knew.”

Great. He's right and I have no clue what I should say next, and I'm right back to where I was a moment ago; grumpy, hating everything, and nothing is fair in this screwed-up world.

"I think we need to let your mommy join us for those last ones, don't you think?" Kain asks Denise, who in return nods vigorously.

Kain steps toward me and I instantly hold my hands up. "No, no, no, wait. I can't. Even if it's been three days, I'm still not able to stand or kneel for that matter."

Kain completely ignores my words and scoops me up. "Your ass can sit in the dirt, Roi. The washing machine can handle your dirty," he leans in next to my ear and adds on a whisper, "panties."

I squeal and mutter, "What the hell, Kain?" underneath my breath and grab his shirt that's all wet and clinging to his chest because Denise threw that water all over him.

His chuckle vibrates through his chest and all of this is making my emotions create havoc on my body. It's as if I've landed my ass into the twilight zone and I have no clue how to get out.

“Roise? Is everything all right?” Gordon’s voice rings out through the backyard and my whole body grows tight.

Ugh, I don’t want to face Gordon, let alone have him come into my private space while I’m trying to hold it together. My fist is still buried in Kain’s shirt and I pull myself closer against him in an effort to seek support.

I don’t want to deal with him. It’s not as if I don’t want to deal with my company, because I do, and I just checked everything online this morning and all seemed under control. I even sent out some emails, including answering one of his so he doesn’t need to come in person.

“What are you doing here? This is private property,” Kain says in a harsh tone.

“This might be private property, but you’re keeping me away from my employer,” Gordon replies with a firm voice.

Kain carries me toward Denise who is on her knees making tiny holes to place the seeds in.

“Denise, sweetheart, can you show mommy how to plant those seeds?” he asks our daughter.

He always uses her full name now that he knows I named her after his mother.

He places a kiss on the top of my head and murmurs,
“Stay here and let me deal with this.”

“It’s not like I have a choice,” I grumble and point at my ankle.

Kain chuckles but it’s cut short when Gordon asks,
“Why aren’t you at your own home, Roise? I figure it’s completely cleaned by now since I noticed all the windows have been restored. I could help out or arrange for some form of assistance if you would like to return home without any interference from him.”

“Annoying piece of shit,” Kain mutters underneath his breath and heads for Gordon.

“Be nice,” I say in a firm tone and it earns me a glare from Kain in return, which makes me smile.

These last few days he’s been caring, protective, and sweet. He told me he would take care of my house but I didn’t think of going home since Denise clearly enjoys it here—mostly the overload of attention she gets from Kain—and to be honest, so do I.

I know Kain has to go back to work in two days. Maybe it would be easier for all of us if I went home. With the

sexual innuendos in mind, him being near all the time, and reminding me of how much pleasure he gave me all those years ago. It's like waving candy in front of my face while I'm on a diet.

I glance over to where Kain and Gordon were standing but they're gone. My phone starts to ring and I reach inside my pocket to take it out and see it's Paula, a woman my father hired a few months ago to be the person between me and my company. Even if I'm dealing with a lot of stuff nowadays, if it wasn't for her, the pile would be bigger.

"Hey, Paula," I quip while grabbing some dirt with my other hand and cover the seeds Denise placed into the tiny hole she made.

She presses her hands on the dirt to make sure it's covered up good and it makes me praise her, "Good job, Denise."

Yes, I've decided to use Denise now all the time instead of Deni. The smile Denise gives Kain when he uses her full name warms my chest and it's a reminder of a foundation that's obviously settled between all of us.

"Just checking in. I have a few things I need for you to sign, so I'll probably swing by sometime next week if that's

okay.” The tiny sounds in the back indicate she’s glancing through papers and that’s typical Paula, always the multitasker. Handling a phone call while getting ready to deal with the next thing on her agenda.

“Well, you have my address, shoot me a message when you’re headed my way so I’ll have coffee ready for you.” Paula has always been straightforward and maybe a bit pushy since she’s a workaholic and an overachiever. Though she’s easier to deal with than Gordon.

Sometimes I wish I could fire Gordon but the man is good at his job and has never really overstepped boundaries or anything. I do wonder if my father promised him another promotion of some sort to get into a relationship with me, but I’ve never addressed the issue and neither did Gordon.

Not that it would matter or change anything. Gordon still creeps me out, and not liking a guy is never a good reason to fire someone, even more when he is making you money. Business is business and it needs to stay clean and clear.

I should have reminded myself of this when I treated Paula more like a friend rather than an employee. Something my father suggested—like the way he suggested I should

marry Gordon. Another big mistake since Paula felt more superior to me seeing my position within the company.

Her true colors showed even more when I shared how my father wanted me and Gordon to hook up, and how he still showed interest. Paula told me I should be thankful since Gordon wasn't picky when it came to women, and how most men wouldn't want to raise other people's kids.

“Are you staying at your place? Is it safe again?” Paula questions and this surprises me a bit.

“Why shouldn't it be safe? I'm sure it's all checked out and cleaned.”

“I thought they said it was arson? Didn't anyone tell you? Gordon mentioned it to me the other day before we went into a meeting.” Her tone is matter-of-fact.

I'm completely stunned and have no clue what to say. Arson? Someone deliberately set fire to my house? One I just barely moved into? Cold water pouring over my hand makes me gasp while Denise giggles. I give her a smile—trying like hell to shove back the fear and shock running through me.

I clear my throat and tell Paula, “I've been busy with Denise and my ankle doesn't give me much option other than

to rest and let it heal. Kain is dealing with all of the other stuff for me.”

“Kain? The firefighter who is also a part of an outlaw motorcycle club? Those types only care for their own benefit, and I’m sure he’s set his eyes on your company and all the money he can take from you. A company your father worked hard for. One Gordon has invested his hard work in for years. And so have I for the last few months.” For the first time I hear distaste and a hint of anger flowing through her voice with complete silence in the background.

Why is she mentioning my father and Gordon? As if I’m an ungrateful bitch who needs to prioritize the company over everything. I have been a part of said company for years and worked just as hard as any other.

Only I choose to prioritize in a different way and combine it with other parts of life along with it. And who is she to judge? Kain might be a part of an MC, but he’s also a hardworking man, a firefighter no less.

He also mentioned something about having millions linked with your name and people tend to want you for different reasons as soon as they know who you are. I didn’t question it back then but does Kain have money? His house

and lifestyle don't show he has an overload of money, and I never asked.

In the end, it doesn't matter. "Kain. The biological father of my daughter, yes, *that* Kain. Text me when you bring me the documents that need to be signed. Have a good day, Paula." I hit the end call button and tuck my phone away.

I mindlessly grab a handful of dirt and throw it in another hole Denise made.

"Mommy, I didn't put the seeds in yet." Denise giggles.

My eyes meet hers and this is when every single hint of worry slides away. The look on her face with her precious smile and twinkle in her eyes is the kind of love that's unconditional.

"Sorry, sweetie, I wasn't paying attention," I simply say.

"Where did your mind go?" Kain quips from my left, scaring the bejesus out of me.

His hands shoot out and one is cupping the back of my neck while the other is caressing my cheek. "Calm down, Roi.

Everything is okay. Tell me what has you spooked. Who was on the phone just now?"

My eyes slide to Denise. She's not focused on us but on her hands, playing with the dirt. I whisper out my words in a rush. "Paula. She needs me to sign some papers. She also mentioned the fire at my house was arson."

"It was, but I'm handling it. I told you the day I brought you here your first priority was to get that ankle healed. It's not something I can do for you; your ankle can only heal if you let it by taking the time to rest. Everything else? Yeah, I'll handle the rest. And I deliberately didn't tell you any of it because you need time to breathe, not stress out about this shit. And again, I'm handling it."

"I don't like to be blindsided. I need to know." I take a deep breath and add, "You might think it's necessary to keep me in the dark, but I know firsthand how information coming straight from the source makes all the difference. Besides, not saying anything in some cases can be interpreted as lying. I don't want anything to stand between us again."

"Understood." The corner of his mouth twitches and his face inches closer. "Nothing will stand between us again."

Wait. What? I'm still processing the way he gave me those husky words when his lips touch mine. Soft. Gentle. Tingling with the promise for more. My eyes close involuntarily and I surrender to the hint of pleasure he lights up inside my body.

His sexy chuckle makes me flash my eyes open. Dammit, was I swooning like an idiot while the kiss was already over? Ugh, why, and how does he do this?

I can feel my cheeks heat as Kain says, "No need to mention I like mommy, huh?"

Shit. Why does this man suck up all my attention? How can we kiss in front of her? This must be confusing for Denise, and yes, for me too.

"You're a boy and if a boy kisses a girl, they get married. I saw it on TV. Are you going to marry my mommy?"

"Holy shit, talk about movie time giving a twisted sense of education here," Kain grumbles, and when his eyes hit mine, I can clearly see a glint of mischief and determination in his eyes.

I know exactly what he wants to say but it's too soon. We need to think about things and come up with a plan how to

tell her instead of—

“I just might, because I not only like your mommy, I also happen to be your daddy,” Kain easily supplies.

“Crap on a cracker, why did you do that?” I hiss underneath my breath.

Denise’s eyes ping pong between me and Kain. I hold my breath while Kain just gives her an easy smile.

She suddenly shrugs and says, “Okay, you can be my daddy. But I’m going to need more water.” Denise holds out the watering can for Kain.

“Come on, you can fill it yourself, and I’ll help you. But first I need to get your mommy out of the sun, she’s looking all flushed.” Kain scoops me up and brings me into the kitchen. He puts me on my feet near the sink and I balance on one leg while I wash my hands.

Kain grabs one of the chairs from the kitchen table and guides me to it. He grabs another one and places it in front of the sink, lifting and placing Denise on it to allow her to refill the watering can herself.

When she’s done, he lifts her off the chair and she heads out back into the yard yelling, “Thanks, Daddy!”

Kain is frozen to the floor as he keeps staring at our daughter who skips back to the dirt and starts to play.

“Yeah, don’t get all sentimental and shocked. If you’d told her you’re the king and she’s going to be a princess, she would have believed you too. She’s three, Kain. You can make her believe anything you want. But do you know what the biggest catch is? Making it reality. So, you’d better stick to it because this is something you started. And if you think it’s all fun and games now and can ditch when things get hard? Remember that I’m the one who needs to pick up the pieces. I will always be the one who will be there for her. *Always.*” My chest is heaving and my voice trembles.

For the first time I’m facing the biker Kain. There’s no doubt about it. The menace and anger radiating from him is an overwhelming presence. But this concerns my daughter and I’m going to stand my ground, no matter who I need to face or what I have to overcome; she’ll always be my number one priority.

She won’t ever endure the emptiness I felt when there was no one there to hug you when things got hard or when you simply needed one of your parents. I balance myself on one leg and put my hands on my hips to make a stand.

All it does is make the menacing biker fade and the damn man's mouth twitches. Is he internally laughing at me? Does he think this is all a joke? I'm about to give him hell but he slowly shakes his head, making my anger spike even more.

“She's mine, Roi. I'm not going anywhere and neither is she. You're not the only one who is going to be there for her; *always no matter what*. Because I'm going to be standing right next to you through all of it. And in case you didn't realize it yet, you being the mother of my kid also makes you mine. Mine to—”

“What?” I snap, the words Paula mentioned earlier hitting me hard. “I can't believe you just said that.” All anger fades and the only thing hitting me is defeat. “Paula was right.”

“Now just hang on, what the fuck did Paula say? Because I was going to say ‘mine to protect’ before you cut me off,” he says, while he plows a hand through his short hair.

I narrow my eyes, skeptical of his reply. “You're not the slightest bit interested in my company? My money?”

His head falls back and laughter rips out. And yet humor is lacking when he pins me with a hard stare.

“Woman, the whole fucking reason I gave you a fake name before you screwed my brains out was so you weren’t after *my* damn money. Hell, I could buy your company from the spare change in my back pocket.” He shakes his head.

“This Paula bitch needs to shut her piehole about things she doesn’t know or understand.”

“You’re rich?” I squeak.

No wonder he made the comment about having millions linked with your name. Dammit, I should have asked sooner.

“That’s something I never flaunt around since it doesn’t define a person and some people you run into change when they become aware of your bank account. Am I a fair and honest guy? Hell yeah. A firefighter? You bet your damn life on it. A biker, through and through. Rich? That’s the term people use to point and label. I have investments and like to see things from a business side, enhance and prevail only in small doses and behind closed doors. My business isn’t anyone’s business. Except for when I show my face at the companies I own. The personnel and clients need to see the boss every now and then. A face to the company, personal, but also to let them know I have my eyes on everything. But first

and foremost, I am the guy you see in front of you, not the amount of cash linked with my name.”

“Well, excuse me, mister know-it-all. I’m glad you set the record straight and allow me to do the same. I am not yours. I might be the mother of your child but that’s where our connection ends.”

With my next breath he’s in my personal space, hovering over me as he growls, “That’s where you’re wrong. You’re mine, Roi,” and crashes his mouth against mine.

CHAPTER FOUR

– KAIN –

My eyes are fixed on the woman who drives me crazy and fills my body with the longing to possess every damn inch of her. She doesn't get it. Maybe I don't get it either, but that woman and our little girl—hell, all of us—are bound together and should be one family. It's something you have to work for, understand the dynamics and communicate. And yet I feel like we've lost too much time already.

“I've agreed to let Gordon come by tomorrow morning to talk things through. Up to you if you want or need to. I told him you'd send him a text bright and early tomorrow with the time.” She doesn't respond to my words and just keeps staring at the TV.

She's been giving me the silent treatment ever since I slammed my mouth over hers right after I voiced my claim over her in the kitchen this afternoon. I know I'm moving too fast but those results stating in black and white I'm the father aren't some words on a piece of paper. It's a responsibility. *My responsibility.*

Ever since I discovered Denise existed it's as if a piece of my soul has been ripped off and is prancing around out in the open. Walking this fucked-up world without any protection. Well, she's got me, and her mother. But goddamned, she's tiny, innocent, and just the thought of someone hurting her is eating me up.

And I'm not freaking out being a newfound father. Okay, maybe I am. But someone set fire to their house. It seemed like someone wanted to give them a little scare since the fire started in the garage. But the idiot who placed the steel bucket with burning wood in there didn't think of all the smoke filling up the space.

You might think fire is dangerous but smoke is the real killer. The whole garage was filled with smoke and so was the house. Smoke is a mixture of gas and heat, one damn spark can become a sea of flames.

Fire is a lot like water, it seeks the path of least resistance. It's always hungry and looking for food. Half of her garage was filled with boxes she still needed to unpack, talk about fuel for the fire. She could have lost everything including our daughter and her own damn life.

Placing the beer I just grabbed from the kitchen on the table, I lean back and watch Roi snatch it up and take a long swig and keep it in her hands for safekeeping.

“That’s my beer,” I state.

She gives me a glare and snaps, “You take what you want and claim it as yours without asking. So, now it’s my turn. This beer is mine.”

The corner of my mouth twitches and I try like hell to keep my laughter at bay. “If you feel like making some kind of statement by claiming my beer, all you’re doing is hurting my damn feelings. I claimed you. The mother of my kid, my woman. You claimed a damn beer over claiming me. Liquid bottled up over flesh and blood you can spend the rest of your life with. I did mention you’re stomping on my feelings, right?”

My own words flow out and hit hard. What I said was meant as a joke but it’s more like a punch to the gut. Here I am trying to give a shot at becoming a family—with the woman who I’ve thought about countless times over the years—all while she’s pissed I’m opening up to commitment.

“The bottle of beer isn’t complaining. It’s a damn thing. And don’t make me feel like I’m a bad person here,

Kain. I'm not the one who acts without thinking, just taking what you think is yours. Like you said, we're flesh and blood, asshole. Yes, my daughter is yours too, but that doesn't automatically make me yours along with it." She slams the bottle back on the table.

By the look on her face she's ready to ignore me again. Fat chance. "You're her mother, I'm her father; she needs the both of us."

Her eyes narrow. "I agree. But again, this doesn't automatically mean we have to live together and be together."

"She's getting a normal family with two parents who love her," I tell her between clenched teeth.

"Great," she sneers. "Buy a blowup doll and tie it to a chair and tell her it's her stepmom. Because from what you're demanding? It doesn't matter who the mother of your kid is or the wife warming your sheets. It's the need to fit the label, a kid needs a family so that's what I'll give her. You're just as much a selfish prick as any other man I've encountered. And let me tell you something, asshole. We were doing fine all those years without you."

"And what if she goes to preschool and grows up with other kids having a family? And they have a daddy day and

shit. Or family stuff they question her about? Ever thought about that? She's three, all that stuff will be thrown at her feet. And it would be unnecessary since we can give her everything." I try like hell not to bark out my words but this is a touchy subject for the both of us. "And you're not just some blowup doll or any chick I'm going to put up with. You're the one woman who I was instantly attracted to. Who left my fucking bed cold early that morning and kicked my damn ego with leaving a simple note saying 'you were amazing, thanks.' *Thanks?* Motherfucker," I roar.

"Keep your freaking voice down," Roi hisses. "I've never done the whole one-night stand thing before or since, okay? What was I supposed to do, not leave a note? Leave my phone number instead?"

I lean in close and growl, "How about not leaving my bed and waking up together and talking? Maybe have some morning sex before parting ways."

"Glad to hear you're an expert with these things," she bites out her words.

A string of curses fly through my head and I realize I walked right into that one. With effort I try to calm down and

inhale a deep breath. I take a seat next to her and place my forearms on my knees.

“I wanted to tell you exactly who I was when I woke up that morning. The whole night was one I have replayed over and over in my head many times over the years. The name you used was a dead lead since I did run a check which was easy to do when you own the damn hotel we were in.”

“An intern made the reservation and screwed up. I was lucky everything was paid for and connected with twelve other rooms since we were responsible for the convention and the speakers,” she states calmly.

“I don’t want anyone else, Roi. I’m not settling or want the picture-perfect status for our kid. I want this, all of this, because it’s with you. We had one night together all those years ago, and like I said ... you’ve been on my mind ever since. I compared every woman to you and none of them spiked my attention. Why the hell do you think I’m pushing so damn hard? I want you more than my next damn breath and being around you every second of these last few days only makes me crave you more.” I’m growling again and I hate the lack of control I seem to have when it comes to her.

I take a slow breath through my nose in an effort to calm down and even my tone when I tell her, “Besides being a firefighter and a biker, I’m also a businessman. And you know as well as I do how in the business world there’s only a small window when opportunity strikes. Well, this is my fucking opportunity, and I refuse to wake up with another note on my damn bed leaving me with just a cold thank you.”

Dammit. Why does she make anger flow through my veins when at the same time I want to kiss and fuck the shit out of her?

Her shoulders sag. “Do you really think we can go from total strangers to one big happy family? These past few days have been nice but awkward. I can’t do anything or be myself because of my ankle. Denise considers this a sleepover with the fireman who came to rescue us and it’s all too confusing and weird, don’t you think?”

I should make a call to the clubhouse and invite all the old ladies over. They could talk her through all of this and help me along with it. Shit. I never thought having an old lady would be so damn complicated.

Hell, my father’s best friend and colleague, Depay, also knocked up a woman during one hot encounter. She came to

find him as soon as she found out she was pregnant.

Something Roi did too but it was my own damn fault she couldn't reach me since I gave her a fake name.

“We lost so many years because of confusion and weirdness, Roi. Is it too much to ask for a chance to see if we can move forward as one? We owe it to ourselves, to our daughter. And you owe it to me, ‘cause dammit, when we kiss you know damn well how good it feels and how you melt underneath my touch. So, you’re going to give yourself this fucking chance too.”

Yeah, screw reasoning or clear thinking; every working brain cell goes out the window when she’s involved.

“Bossy,” she murmurs. “Does anyone ever stand up to you and not do as you say?”

I can't help but chuckle. Depay always has a standard reply if someone says something similar, so I give her those very words too. “Sweetheart, I’m a fucking fireman ... I run into burning buildings. When I say something, people better fucking listen.”

Roi snorts and simply replies, “Well in this case the fire is in your pants, with all your demands to start one happy family together, sexual innuendos, and scorching kisses.”

“Scorching kisses, huh?”

She rolls her eyes. “Head in the gutter while we’re having a fight over your demands to play house.”

“Woman, if I want to play house you’d be wearing a skimpy maid costume and my handprint would be marking your skin red when I bend you over this couch as I take you from behind.”

Our eyes meet and hold. I can tell she’s remembering our night in Vegas since I put her in that position and she came damn hard around my cock when I buried my thumb into her ass. I bring my thumb up and rub it slowly across my beard. Her eyes dilate and my dick hardens in response. Yeah, she sure as hell remembers everything we did that night.

She swallows hard and croaks, “We’re not going to do the sex thing. If you want to do this,” she bounces her hand between us, “then we will take it slow and let Denise adjust to it without forcing the whole mom and dad thing like you did today. We have to think about her first. We already know we get along great between the sheets; Denise is a walking and talking example.”

“No backing out, no denying. We will go slow but we won’t be hiding our feelings or seeing others,” I add to make

sure she might get her demand, but I won't let her back out.

Not ever.

“No backing out, no denying,” she repeats on a whisper.

“Good. Now, do you want to share another beer or do you want one of your own?”

There's a hint of a smile on her face when she says, “Mind sharing with me? I'm a slow drinker and I hate warm beer. If we share one, we will drink it faster and it'll be cold.”

I give her a nod and make my way toward the kitchen with a bounce in my step. Even if this was a harsh confrontation, I feel we needed it to move forward. Though I still think it might be a good idea to get some of the old ladies to come around. It'll be good for her too, even if they are older than she is since none of the younger generation have an old lady yet.

The rest of the night flows without arguments. It seems the both of us enjoy action movies and sharing beer. She eventually falls asleep next to me on the couch and doesn't so much as stir when I carry her into her bedroom. I take a moment to watch her sleep after I cover her with a blanket.

Such a turmoil of events and feelings. Yes, when the thought strikes me of having a future with this woman, all insecurities evaporate and a sense of belonging settles. She might not be aware of it, though I did warn her, but I am dead set to make this work between us. Not just for our little girl in the next room, but for the woman in front of me as well as for myself.

The next morning comes way too quickly when my phone rips me out of a peaceful sleep. I snatch it up and grunt something close to, “What?” and fall back onto the mattress.

“Sorry, man. I know you have a few days left but two people called in sick today and we need you,” Lars rushes out and coughs his lungs out right after.

“Sounds to me like you need to be in bed yourself.” I glance to my left and check the time. “Give me thirty minutes and I’ll be there.”

I end the call and scroll through my phone. I send Archer a text to request a prospect to keep an eye on my place when I’m not there. I instantly get a reply and it soothes some of my concern. The next call I make is to my mom, adopted or not, they are my mom and dad in every way and that’s why I always address them as my parents.

“Hey, Ma. I have to head into work. Can you swing by to keep an eye on my old lady and my daughter?”

There’s utter silence until I hear my father’s concerned voice in the background. I’m still waiting for my mother to reply but it’s my father’s voice flowing through instead.

“Who is this?” he growls.

I can’t help but chuckle. “Hey, dad, it’s me.”

“Kain? What did you say to your mother? Her mouth is hanging open and she’s in complete shock.”

“I might have asked her to come over to my house so she can keep an eye on my old lady and daughter,” I easily supply again.

It takes a bit more to shock my dad so his reply is instant. “Is that an official claim?”

“It is, though she’s fighting me,” I sigh and think about the heated discussion we had last night.

“How old is the kid? She truly yours?”

“Archer came by a few days ago, the results only confirmed what I already knew. She’s mine. And I think someone is lurking around them with bad intentions, and I have no clue what’s going on. The only thing I’m sure of is the

fact that someone set fire to their house. Roi injured herself the night of the fire, she has a sprained ankle. Roise has been walking with crutches and in another day or two she can slowly start to put some weight on it again. Hence the reason I asked ma to come by to help out. Also, because maybe it would be good for Roise to talk with an old lady. They just called me and I have to work, and I don't want to leave them alone."

"Request a prospect to keep an eye out," he orders.

"All ready taken care of. Archer is sending one over."

"Your ma was going to go shopping with Lynn today —" My father's words stop abruptly.

I hear my mother mumble something to my dad before she clearly takes the phone and says, "Kain, is it okay if I bring your aunt with me? Or do you want me to come by myself?"

"I have a twenty-four-hour shift, if you could stay the night I'd appreciate it. Maybe not a smart thing to bring Lynn, she can be a bit overwhelming." I wince slightly because my aunt, Lynn, is a complete straightforward, not holding back, badass.

Lynn is a former tattoo artist and a piercer, but she only takes out her equipment if someone from the club needs to be inked. But the mouth on her is why I would rather wait for Roi to meet her. My uncle calls her Lips, or Hotlips, for a reason. But then again, maybe it's just what Roi needs ... to have a woman visit who tells it like it is.

And like I said, she's a total badass and if something did happen, she would be an extra layer of protection. "On second thought, maybe it would be a good thing to bring her along."

My mother chuckles. "Okay, Kain. What are you up to? And why do we only hear about the fact you have an old lady and a daughter today? How old is your daughter? What's her name?"

"She's three, and I only found out a few days ago. It's a long story and I promise I'll explain everything, but I need to get ready for work. Oh, and Roise named her Denise."

My mother gasps, her voice is filled with emotion when she says, "She named her after your mother?"

"Yeah," I croak.

I can tell she's crying the way her voice cracks. "That's so special. I can't wait to meet both of them."

"I'm coming along too," my father shouts over the phone before we say our goodbyes.

It takes a few minutes to grab a quick shower and get ready. I'm in the kitchen when Denise rushes in with a big smile on her face.

"Cereal?" she questions, shooting me a toothy grin along with it.

"You bet ya! Why don't you pick one and also grab the milk? I'll grab us a bowl. But I also have to leave within five minutes."

She stops and the grin slides off her face. "You're leaving?"

"I have to work." I place the bowl on the table and squat down in front of her. "Your daddy is a firefighter, remember? I have to go but I'll be back tomorrow morning."

She tilts her head as if to think things through and I actually hold my breath and wait for her to question me mentioning the daddy factor again.

Instead she says, “If there’s a fire, you have to remember to save the stuffed animals too, like mommy did for me.”

The corner of my mouth twitches and I ruffle her hair as I stand up. I give her my easy reply once more, “You bet ya, sweetheart.”

Denise dashes off to grab her unicorn cereal, placing it on the table before she grabs the milk.

“Mind grabbing me a bowl too?” Roi’s voice flows through the kitchen and when our gazes collide I can tell she caught some of the conversation I had with Denise.

My suspicion is confirmed when she says, “You have to head out to work?”

“Yeah,” I answer and pull out a chair for her. “I’ve called my parents and they will be here soon along with my aunt. Fair warning, though. My aunt can be a little overwhelming.”

“Oookay.” She drags out the word and gives Denise a smile when she hands her the cereal.

I grab it and stalk over to the cabinet, grabbing the chocolate flavored cereal for Roi instead.

Her cheeks pink as she mutters a quick, “Thank you.”

Only a few days living together and I’ve noticed a lot about her. She tries to hide it well but I’m trained to be observant. And it’s the little things that matter. Like how she would eat the unicorn cereal because Denise gives it to her. But if Roi grabs cereal for herself, she likes the sweet chocolate version. So, yes, I traded the cereal just now because I want her to enjoy her breakfast the way she likes it.

“I have a twenty-four-hour shift. I hope you don’t mind meeting my folks and being stuck with them, but I need to be sure you’re taken care of so I can concentrate fully on my job.” I grab the sugar and place it on the table. “There will also be a prospect outside to keep an eye on things.”

“Is all of this really necessary? I have crutches and can manage perfectly fine. I think it’s sweet how you arranged for your parents to swing by but like I said, we can manage until you’re back.” She mindlessly grabs the sugar and adds two scoops to the cereal.

Yep, sweet tooth for sure.

“Just humor me,” I tell her and kiss the top of her head before I lean in and whisper, “The fire at your house was

arson, remember? I'm not leaving the two of you unprotected."

"You're right." Her shoulders sag. "I forgot."

"Like I said, I'm handling it." A quick glance over my shoulder and the sound of a bike approaching lets me know the prospect arrived. "Okay, I'm late as it is and need to go. Call me or text if you need me."

She gives me a nod and I kiss the top of Denise's head before I'm out the door.

CHAPTER FIVE

– ROISE –

Soot along with lavender and lemons fills my nose as I wake up. Dammit, I want to sleep for another hour. Kain's parents just left and I freshened up to say goodbye and give Denise a quick kiss since she went with them to have breakfast together. I have to blink a few times and feel fingertips slide across my cheek. Kain's face fills my vision.

“Hey,” I croak. “What time is it?”

“Almost ten. I heard you girls had fun yesterday. My parents took Denise out for pancakes and Lynn went home early.” His fingers slide over my cheek again and I can't help but close my eyes for a moment to relish in his touch.

“She loves your parents,” I murmur. “They brought gifts and gave her so much attention, I'm sure she felt like a princess all day. I hope it's not too confusing for her. And I also hope they won't stay away because she almost became hoarse calling them grandma and grandpa.”

His head falls back and laughter rips out. I can't help but stare at him. His short, wet hair along with a fresh scent indicates he just came out of the shower and yet the hint of soot reminds me where he's been all those hours he was away.

It's strange how you miss someone you've only known for a handful of days and are annoyed and frustrated with too. Well, maybe not really annoyed and frustrated, more like confused. All of this is absolutely complicated. But the way his muscles flex and his throat bobs as he's staring at me makes me clench my thighs.

Maybe I shouldn't complicate things; uncomplicate them by stop thinking. Yes, maybe that's it. His chest rises and falls as does mine. It's as if there's an electric vibe crackling through the air, igniting a fire that once sparked between us a few years ago and it's dead set to flame up any second.

He leans forward and I can't help myself when I close the distance and press my lips to his. Thank goodness I brushed my teeth and by the minty taste on his tongue he did too. His fingers slide around my wrists and he guides my hands above my head while he cages me in with his body.

I try to fight his grip—wanting to touch him—but all it does is earn me a growl rumbling into my mouth as it vibrates

through his chest. It's as if a lion is fighting his prey, indicating it's useless to fight and all there's left is surrender.

The way he overpowers me makes me feel anything but helpless. Each swirl of his tongue heightens a promise of the pleasure I know he's good for. I've experienced it all before. He showed me over the course of one very long night in Vegas how capable he is of bringing my body to the brink and throwing me into a sea of ecstasy.

He carefully maneuvers his body over mine, making sure to avoid touching my ankle. And when he starts to grind his hardness against my belly, I'm completely lost. There are no longer complications, struggles, annoyance, frustration, nothing other than the simple need to detonate the pleasure building between us.

"Please," I pant as I rip my mouth from his. "I need you inside me. Now."

Soft curses flow through the air and he slightly shifts his hands, holding both my wrists in one hand while his other reaches in between us. The sound of a zipper rings out and I can feel his fingers hook into my panties to slide them to the side. The broad head of his dick is hot against the lips of my

pussy. I'm drenched with anticipation as I feel him slide up and down, bouncing slightly on my clit, making me gasp.

He presses his thick, hard length inside me. It's been years since I've had sex. The last time was with him and I fight the slight burn in an effort to accommodate him until realization sets in.

I start to struggle and he releases my wrists as I suddenly realize, "You need to use protection. I'm not on the pill. Please. Oh, shit."

A moan slips over my lips when he surges up with one hard stroke. "Pre-cum was leaking out when I was sliding through the lips of your pussy, Roi. My swimmers are already inside you. I'm clean or I wouldn't be touching you. I won't ever put you at risk. I welcome everything between us, just like the warm welcome your pussy is giving me."

"But," I try to say something but he's right and this feels so damn good.

The words fall away as he starts to slide in and out of me.

"That's it, Roi. Fuck, you feel so damn good, just how I remembered." His head falls against the crook of my neck,

his lips latch on as he nibbles and sucks my sensitive skin.

He knows exactly what my weakness is and it makes me dig my nails into his back, edging him on to continue to ravish me. The only slightly frustrating part is the fact I can't use one of my legs. Keeping the injured one between his legs, he places the other one over his thigh, allowing him an angle to slide deeper.

The grunts rip from him, sweat pouring off the both of us while we move in sync to complete a sensual dance for ultimate pleasure. My whole body ignites, ecstasy flowing freely and explodes between us. A shared orgasm intensifies our moment and it's something I've only experienced with Kain.

The both of us struggle for our next breath as we try to come down from our mutual high. He shifts slightly and rolls to his back, taking me with him. His hand is on my ass to steady me and his head raises slightly to check if my leg is okay before he lets it drop to the pillow.

A deep sigh rips from his lips.

“Fan-fucking-tastic. I missed this. Missed you,” he says and his lips linger at my temple.

“Ditto,” I simply say and snuggle against his chest.
“Now shush, I want to sleep some more before Denise gets back.”

I feel his warm body shake underneath me with a hint of laughter, but I’m already drifting off to sleep. Warm. Comfortable. Safe. It’s how I drift off and also how I slowly awake. I clearly hear the sound of a door closing and I swing my head to make sure Denise isn’t standing in the doorway. To my surprise the door is closed and I might have dreamed the sound of a door closing.

“My mother. They’re back from breakfast,” Kain mumbles and pulls me closer against his body. “Give me a few more minutes. Feeling your curves against me makes the images of last night fade.”

“Hard day at work?” I question as I give in to his request which is also something I benefit from too as I love the feel of his hard, muscled body embracing me.

“Head on collision, one DOA. The car was on fire when we arrived at the scene. The other car involved ... we had to cut a woman from the wreckage but she died on her way to the hospital. She had a son in the backseat, nine years old, he’s still fighting for his life.” His voice sounds strained

and it surprises the hell out of me how he pours out these details.

Details I now realize are something he carries with him due to his job and responsibilities. Being a firefighter is so much more than putting out fires and I can't even begin to imagine what he experiences every shift he takes. And to think this man doesn't even has to work with all the money and companies he owns.

"I'm so sorry," I whisper and rub my cheek along his chest.

He releases a deep breath and places a kiss on the top of my head. In this moment I want to live and relish. The serenity, warmth, comfort, and do I dare say adoration? It sure feels as if I'm in the arms of a loving, caring man.

The father of my child, and along with it, I would love to have a home along with a family with him. A real one. A true family as it should be. One with parents who love each other, because let's face it, no one wants to be alone.

I was brought up with a father who treated his company like a child needing constant attention, all while giving his own flesh and blood the hard and cold hand to keep structure. Like it was a world turned upside-down.

It didn't mean he didn't love me; he only had a whole different state of mind. One I surely don't have and follow when it comes to my company or my daughter. The last few months of his life—when he spent more time with Denise—he wanted to retire. Mainly since he saw the flaws of the past, but also because of a medical condition he became aware of during a routine checkup.

He wanted to spend more time with me and Denise, but then he suddenly died of an allergic reaction. If only he put everything into motion for his retirement sooner, then we would have had more time together. It sure does put things in perspective for me; never stall on spending time with those who spark your life. Grab the moment before your time is up and the chance is lost forever.

Kain's fingers slide into my hair, fisting it before tilting my head back. Our eyes connect and it's as if he's daring me to defy him as he slowly leans forward. If he thinks I'll back down after our discussion last night, the sex we had this morning, and the thoughts that just went through my head ... then he's absolutely wrong. I'm now fully invested to embrace the chance for us to become a real family.

I don't wait for him to close the distance but instead close the distance to connect our lips myself. I instantly open up to welcome his tongue as he slides inside and plunders my mouth. I push him back and straddle him. His hands slide to my hips, gripping me tightly before they land on my ass.

His rough grip makes memories of the past flow through me, reminding me Kain is a true ass-man, always hands on, kneading, touching, smacking. I hate my limitations due to my ankle but I'm grateful to be able to balance on my knee. Kain reaches between us and helps me to slide down his length, filling me completely.

My head tips back and I release a moan of contentment at the same time Kain rumbles, "So. Fucking. Good."

He surges up and wraps his arms tightly around me to guide us to the right, flipping us around with ease, and yet he's careful not to hurt my ankle.

"I want you riding my cock the second your ankle is fully healed. Bouncing tits in my face, your ass in my hands. But good things come to those who fuck uncountable ways to come until the wait is over. It gives us the time to add a few different angles to enjoy." He shoots me a wink and throws his hips forward.

My hands go to his chest, feeling his warm skin and flexing muscles underneath my touch. His eyes are gazing into mine with so many emotions. This is not about chasing an orgasm or using the other person to fill a void; this is about reconnecting what we once started a few years ago.

Back in Vegas our attraction was instantaneous. The way our bodies fit and flawlessly connect makes it easy to give in and ride the waves life offers. The pleasure edged on Kain's face makes my belly flop, along with the delicious friction his dick is giving me as he slides in and out of my body. Each time he shifts his angle to make sure he creates friction on my clit, making me gasp for my next breath.

He places his forehead against mine and grunts, "You're mine, Roi. Say it."

"Kain," I gasp as he slams deep inside me, hitting another spot that has my body shaking with need.

The pleasure is almost too much. I want to give in and surrender but Kain rumbles another growl, making my eyes flash open.

"Say it." His movements stop and all I can do is squirm underneath him to get the little friction I need to gain my

personal pleasure explosion, but he's preventing me from any kind of movement.

“You're mine, Roi. The orgasm you seek is mine to give, now say it, dammit.” There's a determined look on his face and yet his eyes hold insecurity, as if everything in this moment between us depends on my answer.

I reach out and place my hand on his cheek. He leans into my touch, warming my heart with this tiny movement.

“I'm yours, Kain,” I whisper.

The insecurity in his gaze flashes to relief, joy, and settles with lust and desire when his hips start to move in a punishing rhythm.

“Fuck, yeah, you are, sweetheart. You're gonna come for me. Squeeze my cock hard, make me demand to fill you up. Fuck. Yes. Fuuuuuuck,” he groans at the same time he buries himself deep.

Hot jets of cum explode inside me as my pussy convulses around him. Pleasure consumes the both of us until we're struggling to breathe. Kain collapses on top of me, giving me his full weight.

“I’m just gonna—” He doesn’t finish his sentence but it flows over in a soft snore instead.

I can’t help but giggle, and even my movements nor my laughter wakes him. I’m trapped underneath his body and it takes some wiggling and slight shoving until I’m finally able to slip away.

I grab the crutches and head for the bathroom. I feel his cum slide down my legs. Dammit. I warned him I wasn’t on birth control. He almost deliberately ignored me and I have to say, it slipped right out of my mind when he started to fill me up. And to be completely honest, I would welcome any chance to give Denise a little brother or sister.

But the situation I’m in now is completely different than the one I was in a few years ago. Now it’s not only me but Denise along with Kain. And this time Kain was the one who took the decision in his hands when he didn’t pull out to grab a condom. I glance at myself in the mirror and notice the huge smile on my face despite the messy “I just woke up and had mind blowing sex and might become pregnant again,” appearance.

I grab a washcloth and hold it underneath the warm water and start to freshen up. Kain needs his sleep and I’m

excited to spend some more time with his parents. Over the last few days I've managed to maneuver around with the crutches, making me more of an expert to balance on one leg along with it.

I've been trying to put a little weight on it here and there and it does seem to be less painful. Tiny steps forward to let it heal slowly. I find Roan, Kain's mother, on the couch reading a book while Broke, Kain's father, is outside playing with Denise.

Roan's head turns toward me and she gives me a sweet smile. Placing the book on the table in front of her, she pats the couch. "Come sit. Do you need me to make you some breakfast? Or just some coffee?"

She stands and I take a seat, lifting my leg on the pillow.

"Coffee would be nice," I tell her and offer a grateful smile as my gaze drifts off to the garden where Broke is running with his arms up, Denise hot on his tail with the garden hose.

I can't help but laugh and Roan chuckles along with me. "I swear that man is crazy and a little kid himself. He was grumpy when some of the members back at the clubhouse

called him grandpa, but when Denise says it I swear I see him melt.”

“I’m thankful she now has so many people ... *family* surrounding her,” I croak and watch how Broke catches Denise and whirls her around, allowing her giggles to fill the air.

“The both of you are a part of our family now, Roise. All of us might have lost a few years but that’s all in the past.” She clears her throat. “Okay, I’m going to get you some coffee or I’m going to start crying.”

We each give one another a tearful look before she dashes off toward the kitchen. Time passes with small talk and watching Broke and Denise play in the garden. Roan’s eyes go over my head and I don’t have to glance behind me to know Kain strolled into the living room. It’s as if my body is triggered and aware he’s near.

“Hey, Ma,” he rumbles, leans in close and nuzzles my neck to place a sweet kiss on my skin and says, “Hey, baby.”

Kain walks over to the window and watches how Broke and Denise are both on their knees with their hands in the dirt.

“What are they doing?” he questions and glances back at his mother.

She gives a little snicker. “I have no clue. Either planting something or searching for a treasure. Or placing seeds and digging them right back up but they have been at it for hours. Oh, and Archer dropped off a file for you early this morning.”

Now that piques my interest and I wonder what the file is about. Though it’s not my business, but I guess I’m just curious by nature like anyone else.

“Thanks,” Kain mutters and heads for the kitchen, grabbing the file along the way.

I grab my crutches and follow him into the kitchen. The file is lying open on the counter and it’s hard not to feed my curiosity, but I manage to ignore it anyway and focus on Kain instead.

“Want me to make you a cup?” I ask, seeing he has his eyes on the file and an empty cup in his hand.

His eyes slide to mine. “Nah, I got this. Did you want one too?”

“Yes.” I give him a grateful smile, the coffee addict inside me instantly adoring him a fragment more.

He shoves the file slightly my way and asks, “Did you know Gordon has been living in Esdonville the same amount of time as you? He’s been driving back and forth for hours when he needs to be at the company.”

Stunned I keep staring at Kain and ignore the file on the counter.

“The night someone set fire to your house, he was there, asking you to go with him to stay at the hotel, right?” Kain takes a step closer to me and places the two mugs he was holding on the counter.

“Yes,” I whisper and swallow hard, afraid of what he’s going to say next.

“So, you didn’t know he bought a house near you one day after you bought yours?”

Fear runs through me and it’s as if someone threw a bucket of ice-cold water over me.

“No,” I gasp, while I try to wrap my brain around this weird and creepy information.

CHAPTER SIX

– KAIN –

“Yeah, and there’s something else I want to talk to you about, it concerns your father. Well, to be more specific, it concerns his death. Can you tell me—”

“Mommy! Look what I found.” Denise jumps up and down in front of Roi.

I watch how she shoves her feelings and emotion to the background, pinning our discussion on hold as she focuses on our daughter. She hides it well for Denise but I can tell Roi’s head is spinning, trying to comprehend what’s going on and where I’m going with all of this.

I squat down beside them and ask, “What did you find, Denise?”

She shoves a rock into my face. “Isn’t it pretty?”

I take a moment to admire the rock I would normally step over since there are countless others just like it scattered over the backyard.

“It’s very pretty,” I agree, earning me a huge grin from my daughter.

“Maybe you can make it even more prettier using crayons or something, what do you think?” I question, making her eyes light up.

“Ma?” I yell and instead of my mother, my father strolls into the kitchen.

“What do you need, son?” he questions and ruffles Denise’s hair.

“Maybe you can help Denise with the pretty rock? Find some crayons to add some color to it? I have to discuss something with my old lady.”

He eyes the file on the counter and gives me a tight nod. Next to one hell of a fucked-up shift where we were called to assist with a head on collision, casualties, a kid injured. Then there was an arson case where a teenager thought it was fun to play with matches. He wanted to watch flames eat away some newspapers while the fire was hungry for more and the idiot kid almost burned down his parents’ pool house.

Archer called me when my shift was over and I was heading for my bike. He mentioned dropping off the file and gave me a short recap of what they found out. It's a pile of strange twists, not at all what I was expecting.

I requested a background check on Gordon and also asked for the details of the death of Roi's father. This because I've only heard the man died recently and this was the reason why Roi packed up her stuff and moved to Esdonville.

Roi gives Denise a kiss and watches how she skips out of the kitchen along with my dad.

Roi's head swings toward me and she asks, "Mind telling me what all of this is about? I get the feeling you're building up to something by giving me tiny details."

I grab a chair and pull it out. I place the two mugs with fresh coffee in front of us and sit down next to her.

"I have reason to believe someone wants your company and isn't afraid to step over a few bodies to get what they want." I give her my suspicions and watch closely how she takes it all in.

"Someone? As in one person? Because you also mentioned they." Even if she still has her emotions simmering

behind those stormy light gray eyes, she also radiates calm and determination.

All of this gives me the knowledge this woman is strong enough to handle every single detail we discovered.

“I’ve mentioned how I would handle everything, right?” I wait for her to nod before I continue. “Trust me when I say it’s not going to be simple and it’s going to get worse before everything gets better and handled. Okay?”

“Why don’t you just spill the details instead of building it up? I feel as if a bomb is about to go off and all you’re doing is dancing around it, waving your hands,” she mutters and grabs her mug, taking a sip from her sugary sweet coffee.

“I am going to explain about three things we stumbled across and each one apart from one another might be weird or just a coincidence, but this shit is piling up and raising the hairs on the back of our necks. I mentioned Gordon before Denise walked into the kitchen. And please remember what I told you about Broken Deeds MC, how we handle cases and solve them for the government. Some of what we’ve discovered isn’t on the record and we have our ways of obtaining information.”

I rub the back of my neck and think of a way to explain without freaking her the fuck out, and yet it's unavoidable.

“Due to all the information piling up we have reason to believe this has been coming for quite some time. Meaning someone, perhaps with help from others, is trying to obtain the company. Your father's death—”

“Anaphylaxis. Peanut allergy. There was a late meeting at the office and they ordered food but my father took some into his office after the meeting. They think there was some kind of mix-up because he doesn't touch anything peanut related. His throat closes up at the mere scent of it and I didn't understand how it could happen but someone explained how peanuts might have been used as a tiny ingredient without anyone realizing it.” She releases a deep sigh. “Everything was a haze, a shock. He never should have died, not from something like that. I just ... I don't know, what are you saying? Someone deliberately put peanut powder or oil, whatever, in his food to kill him? But the company would go to me ... wait, someone set fire to my house, they wanted to kill me too? How would they get their hands on the company if I died too? I don't understand.”

“I have a gut feeling Gordon wanted to scare you, get you to come live with him. Hell, maybe he’d marry you to gain all your belongings and then kill you too.” I’m thinking out loud here because I haven’t thought things over yet. “But I think it all started long before your father’s death. Were you aware he was in the process of selling the company?”

She nods absently. “He talked to me about it. He knew I had no ambitions to run the company because I really enjoy only a small part of the business.”

“Organizing conventions,” I confirm because this is actually how we met and when you ask her about it, she raves and raves as if it’s her greatest passion.

“Yes, and he was going to make sure most of the employees would keep their job in case of a merger, sale, or whatever he had in mind. I’m not sure of the details because nothing was in the final stages, he was just thinking of ways to make it easier for all of us in the future. That’s the reason why he hired Paula. She functions in between us and the company since my father wanted to step back and also wanted less pressure.”

“Due to recent hospital checks?” I question, knowing very well the old man had some heart issues they were trying

to map out.

“He had a routine checkup and they discovered the muscles of his heart were unusually thick along with his blood pressure being off. They wanted to do more testing but it was as if he received a wake-up call. He wanted to step back and focus on other things he enjoyed like spending more time with Denise, me, golf, whatever.” Her finger traces the rim of the mug. “The last few weeks before he died were both scary and amazing with the extra time he made for us to spend together.”

I take her hand and place a kiss on top of it. “I’m so sorry, sweetheart.”

I hate turning this discussion again but I need for her to focus on the danger she’s in. “I’m not sure you’re aware of this but did you know the person who your father wanted to hire instead of Paula died under suspicious circumstances?”

Her eyes go wide. “I ... I ... it skipped my mind but my father did mention it. He hired the one Gordon suggested out of the five who were qualified since he was dealing with some other things at the time. It turned out to be Paula.”

I didn’t know this little detail but it surely spikes my attention. “Do those two have a history?”

“Not that I’m aware of. Gordon and my father were both present during the interviews. My father and Gordon each had their own preference when it came to picking the right person for the job. When the candidate that my father had in mind for the job suddenly died, the other person got the job.” She swallows hard. “Do you think Gordon killed him so Paula could get the job? Or somehow Paula knew and she killed the other one?”

I give our joined hands a little squeeze. “I don’t want you worrying about any of this but I also don’t want you to be left in the dark either. I keep repeating myself, but I’m handling it, okay?”

“Okay,” she softly replies.

“Come on, let’s go check if Denise found the crayons I bought her a few days ago and is in fact making art of the rock instead of the walls, since I have reason to believe my parents would allow her to do anything she wants.” I can’t help but chuckle, remembering what I did when I was her age.

Roi snickers and says, “She might have your DNA but she’d never color the curtains, Kain.”

“Ah, I hear you’ve been talking to my mom, huh? Don’t believe everything she tells you.”

Roi gives me a loving smile. “I think it’s adorable how the both of them love you unconditionally. Not to mention they’re your adoptive parents and how either of you never mention it and it’s as if they are your real parents. Though the both of them shared stories with me from your biological father. What I’m trying to say is ... They’re good people. Denise is lucky—” Her throat clogs up and she can’t finish her sentence.

“I’m the one lucky enough to expand the family I was honored to be embraced by. Now, away with all that mushiness and negativity and let’s enjoy ourselves for the rest of the day. I’m tired enough as it is and have another shift tomorrow morning. I’ve asked my mother if she could pick up a few things for me and I saw the kitchen was indeed stocked, so I’m going to cook for my two favorite women.” I stand and lean in close.

Without hesitation she leans her head to the side and closes the distance to connect our lips. Her tongue goes in search of mine and it makes me groan. With all the stuff we just discussed and how easy we seek comfort and affection from one another, it makes our connection feel even more solid. As if everything falls into place for the two of us,

embracing the second chance we're getting and to do right by our daughter.

I regretfully pull back and murmur, "We have to stop or I'll ravish you on the kitchen table."

Her cheeks flush and to my surprise she boldly says, "We should because I'm tempted to let you, and I have a feeling you're on a personal mission to knock me up so I have no other choice but to stay with you."

The corner of my mouth twitches. "Knocked up or not, you never had a choice, Roi. You were meant to be mine the first time I laid eyes on you."

She reaches out and cups the side of my face with her hand before she feathers her lips against mine for a breath or two. "I think it's the other way around, Kain. I was the first one to notice—"

I don't let her finish her sentence and slam my mouth over hers, because none of it matters, it's all in the past. Kissing and moving forward leaves one less thing to worry about; we're solid.

My parents decide to stay for dinner and with all the info in the thick file I discussed with Roi, I ask for them to

stay another night because I have a twenty-four hour shift the next day. I hate leaving Roi and Denise alone with just a prospect to keep an eye on them.

Even more when I know Gordon is coming over when I'm not there. I should have asked her to reschedule but I've kept the dude at arm's length since the day she was injured. They have to meet since there is some paperwork for her to sign.

Besides, I need for him to be oblivious to our suspicions since he's my number one suspect for killing her father and setting fire to her garage. Hence the reason I want more than one prospect keeping an eye on Denise and Roi. I give another glance over my shoulder at the house and grab my phone to call Archer. He picks up on the second ring.

"Hey, Pres, it's me, Kain. Any updates since yesterday?" I question and straddle my bike.

The loud music is cut off by the slamming of a door.

"Party still going on or did the fun start early?" I wonder out loud.

"Baton is an asshole who thinks getting his dick stepped on means he needs an all-nighter to prove it still

works,” Archer grumbles. “Some of the guys kept him company to make sure he doesn’t leave the clubhouse.”

“Damn,” I mutter. “He tried to approach the girl again? The dude has balls, you gotta give ’em that.”

“Why do you think I kept him at the clubhouse? Ganza poured enough liquor in him to knock two dudes out but he’s still slurring how he’s gonna claim her and drag her off to the clubhouse. I’m gonna lock his ass up in the basement as soon as his lights are out.”

Ever since Baton rescued the mayor’s daughter, he’s been trying to see her but she’s being protected and Baton was placed on a no contact list. No matter the contacts we have or the fact we’re basically above the law, Baton doesn’t stand a chance with getting anywhere near this chick.

“Might be the smartest thing to do if you can’t think of a way to let the girl contact him to let him know she isn’t interested. But knowing Baton, even that won’t stop him from claiming her. He has this theory how she’s the other half of his soul because they connected instantly.”

“They didn’t connect instantly,” Archer growls. “It was an instant reaction. He needed to silence her in an effort to save her, his hands were occupied by two guns he needed to

shoot those idiot kidnappers so he kissed her and she kissed him back and grabbed on, allowing him to walk right out with her. Come to think about it, it's fucking insane but brilliant at the same time."

"Meh." I release a short chuckle. "He got creative and saved the day, it's the after effect that sucks ass."

"Yeah," Archer sighs. "Well, to get back to your question, I don't have any other information yet, though Ganza was working on something and I hope he has new info for you in a few hours."

"Okay, Pres. I'm going on a twenty-four-hour shift. With everything going on maybe we need to put either another prospect inside the house or one of our brothers. I have a gut feeling about this shit surrounding my old lady and I'm not liking it."

"Understood. I'll swing by tomorrow afternoon and bring a brother along with me. Your folks will stay there until your shift is over?"

"Yeah, no need to force their hand to stay," I reply with a big smile on my face.

“I can imagine. Those two are thrilled to be grandparents. And to be honest, you sound happy too, brother,” Archer says and adds, “All of us are happy for you. I hope you’ll bring them to the clubhouse soon.”

“Will do, Pres. I’ll let you know when since I would need your mother to be there too,” I tell him and I don’t need to add the actual words since he knows exactly what I mean by this.

“Do I have to warn you about the two weeks’ timeframe, brother?” There’s a little warning in his voice.

“I’m going to explain it to her tomorrow. I’m hoping she will get inked on the same day.”

“Here’s to hoping.” Archer chuckles. “See you tomorrow, Kain.”

“Tomorrow,” I grunt and disconnect.

I might not have thought all of this through. I claimed Roi as mine and she’s aware she’s my old lady, but she’s not aware of what it all entails when a biker of Broken Deeds MC claims his old lady. The moment the claim is set the biker in question gets inked. The old lady also needs to get the

property patch inked. If she doesn't, she has two weeks where her loyalty is tested.

Loyalty toward her old man and toward the club. If she passes, she needs to get inked within those two weeks, if she doesn't—and the two weeks are up—she will get inked and loses the right to pick the spot; it will become a club decision. Needless to say, we take our claiming seriously. This said, up till now all property patches have been inked voluntarily.

I have no clue how Roi will react when I explain all of it to her, though I do know she loves the ink on my back. But I am very much aware of the fact she doesn't have any ink herself. My mind has been a whirlwind of thoughts on the ride to work and when I park my bike, I try to clear my head. Time to focus on work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

– ROISE –

“No, Gordon,” I sigh. “There’s no need to be worried, I’m fine. And honestly, it’s none of your business.”

Gordon glares at the prospect who is leaning against the wall with his arms crossed in front of his chest. It’s as if Kain ordered him to be in plain sight and keep an eye on Gordon while he’s here. This because in all the days this prospect has been here, I’ve hardly seen him. I don’t blame Kain, though. With everything he’s mentioned, I don’t feel at ease around Gordon.

And that says a lot because I didn’t really like him to start with but he’s good at his job. Though everything makes me doubt his every move since Kain shared the information he found out. Like the papers in front of me Gordon wants me to sign. Each time I want to go through them he points at the dotted line, telling me he glanced through everything and all there’s left is for me to sign.

See? Doubt. Normally I would trust him to make these decisions and the major things would be handled by my father or go through Paula first. And that's the other tricky thing, I don't trust her either.

"You're basically held prisoner, Roise," Gordon whispers as if he believes his own words.

I sigh and shake my head, shoving the papers away from me. "Look, Gordon. I'm not being held prisoner by anyone." I point at the prospect and raise my voice a little. "That prospect's name is Jabba, he is here for me. Like some sort of a bodyguard. If I would ask him to help me into the car and drive me to wherever I want, he'd do so without blinking."

Gordon is giving me a skeptical look and the prospect looks bored but at the same time intrigued. I feel the need to rattle Gordon because I don't like his misplaced concerns and to be honest, he freaks me out since he's shoving the papers he's demanding I sign back in front of me.

I glare at Gordon and snap, "And if I would ask him to kick your ass he would do so with a big smile on his face and throw you out the door without breaking a sweat."

Gordon throws a glance at the prospect, who is pushing himself off the wall and is wearing a huge smirk.

“This isn’t like you, Roise,” Gordon says in dismay.

“How would you know?” I hiss and instantly regret the way I’m allowing myself to react. I take another deep breath and control my voice when I tell him, “I would like for you to leave. I will go over all these papers and will get them back to you either later today or tomorrow.”

“There is no need for you to go over them, they have been drawn up by our lawyers. I’ve gone through them and so did Paula. All that’s left for you is to sign,” Gordon says with a smooth as silk voice as he slides the papers back in front of me.

The hairs on the back of my neck stand on end and it makes my gut twist. I grab the papers and stand up, putting most of my weight on my good leg.

“I would like for you to leave,” I tell him again and he glances at the papers as if he will rip them from my hands at any second.

“You’re going to sell the company, going through with what your father started, aren’t you?” The tone of his voice makes me swallow hard and take a step back.

Pain shoots through my ankle and it makes me wince.

Gordon grabs my forearm. “Think about the company, Roise. Your father built it up from nothing and only wanted to sell because he couldn’t run it himself anymore. You don’t have to worry about anything, you have me. I’m here for you, and for the company. Together we can—”

“Get your fucking hands off of her,” the prospect growls and doesn’t wait for Gordon to react but grips his wrist into a painful hold.

Or I assume it’s painful due to the expression on Gordon’s face.

“Take your briefcase and leave. She’s Kain’s old lady. They have a fucking daughter, asshole. He’s going to flip his shit when I tell him each word you just voiced. And for your information, when a woman tells you to leave, you fucking leave. You don’t grab hold or shove your demands in her face; you respect her by following through on her request.” The prospect doesn’t give him a second to grab his stuff but snags Gordon’s briefcase along with Gordon himself and pushes him out the door, shoving the briefcase into his stomach before slamming the door in his face.

Jabba takes out his phone and by the looks of his thumbs flying over the screen, he’s typing a message. The next

instant my phone starts to ring and I see it's Kain calling me. I release a deep breath and answer on the second ring.

“Are you okay?” Concern is lacing his voice.

I plunk down on the chair and place my leg on another chair. “I’m fine.”

“I can hear you’re not. Where’s Denise?” It always amazes me how his first concern is always the both of us.

Out of all the men surrounding me, they always forget to ask about Denise. Well, maybe not forget ... not care, or simply assume she doesn’t need mentioning. And maybe it’s because Denise is his daughter, making it logical for him to be concerned about her. Yet I remember very vividly how Kain spoke up against Gordon the day of the fire, making him aware I wasn’t alone.

“Your parents took her to the zoo. I don’t expect them back until after dinner since Broke mentioned he wanted to swing by the club on the way back.” I answer with a smile in my voice, already feeling relaxed by the sound of Kain’s voice and his concerns. “I’m sure she’s having a great time and I’m okay, Kain. Jabba helped him out the door.” I bite my bottom lip and think of the question running through my head as I glance down at the papers in front of me.

“What are you not telling me, Roi?” Kain sighs. “I can’t leave since a few of my colleagues are sick. Jabba could bring you here if there’s something—”

I cut him off because he doesn’t need the worry, he has to focus on his job. “I’m fine, Kain. There’s just this gut feeling I have about how Gordon reacted. Maybe it’s nothing and I’m just seeing things because you told me about Gordon and Paula but it feels weird.”

“What feels weird? Tell me. A gut feeling should never be ignored.” As soon as he says those words, I know he’s right.

“The papers Gordon wants me to sign. Normally I don’t pay much attention and give it a quick glance through to check if it’s the correct contract for me to sign, but you mentioning about him and Paula made me want to double check everything and read every word but it was as if he wouldn’t let me. He kept pushing it in front of me, telling me I didn’t need to check and how it was drawn up by our lawyers and he double checked everything.”

“Did he take the contract with him?” Kain says through clenched teeth.

“I snagged it up and Jabba didn’t give him a second longer to be here. He grabbed his briefcase and shoved him out the door.”

“Put the papers away. Don’t read them until I’m there with you. I don’t want you upset while I can’t be there, understood?” The words flow out as an order and yet the underlying tone is concern.

I reach for the drawer of the desk on my right and place the papers in there. “I put them away. Top drawer of the desk in the living room.”

“That’s my girl,” he says with a smile in his voice and it makes me feel so much lighter as if he took the worry from my shoulders.

Kain also has different companies and handles everything through connections and staff. I now realize he’s the one person I should be asking for help. Even if we’ve been together for a short period of time, I have absolute trust in this man.

“Can I ask you something?” There’s a smile in my voice because I’ve come to understand this man won’t deny me anything.

“Yes, I will marry you. But we can’t hop on my private jet and head to Vegas, meet Elvis, make vows, and exchange rings. So, we’d have to wait, me being at work and all.” He releases some curses and yells to someone in the background that he’ll be right there.

I give a little snort. “We’re getting sidetracked here, so I’m going to let you go.”

“Like hell you are,” Kain growls. “Link brought food. Now give me the question you were going to ask me.”

Staring at the drawer where the contract is stashed, I start to relay my thoughts. “My father wanted to sell the company before he died. Gordon threw it in my face too just now, asking if I was planning the same thing. I honestly don’t know. You’re a biker, a firefighter, and a businessman. How do you handle all of it? I’m trying to balance all and failing. I want to do right by my father but I know I don’t want to run the company on my own and deal with Gordon on a regular basis. I just ... I don’t know.”

“Sweetheart,” Kain’s gentle voice flows into my ear like a sweet caress. “This is something you don’t need to worry about. Why don’t I ask my lawyers to set up a meeting? They can explain options and glance through everything. I

have some other people I'd like you to meet too. They helped me set up some of the things that make my investments run smoothly without much interference. You have so many options, Roi. And remember, they are your options. Never let anyone else dictate to you. Not Gordon, not Paula, not your father from the grave. It's all you, and whatever you decide it's going to work out. Okay?"

"Okay," I whisper.

"Can you put Jabba on the phone for me?" he questions.

"See you soon," I tell him as he gives me the same words in return.

I hand my phone to Jabba and he listens for a moment before he disconnects and gives me my phone back. He stalks into the hall and grabs one of my sneakers and hands it to me.

"I have orders to take you out for a cup of some over the top sweet caramel coffee or something. He was specific but I forgot. I imagine you know what he meant?" Jabba shoots me a grin while I can't help but chuckle and put on the one shoe.

“Yeah, I do.” I grab my crutches and follow Jabba out the door, feeling better already.

The feeling doesn't last long when Jabba drives into Kain's street a little over an hour later. There are multiple vehicles blocking the road. Red and blue flashes surround the area. My heart starts to race and Jabba curses beside me.

“Oh, no,” I whisper and swallow hard when I realize the firefighters are trying to save Kain's house. “Is he in there?”

“Yeah,” Jabba grunts. “I think so, but you're going to stay in the car, you hear me? We can't have him distracted by anything.”

“You don't have to tell me that,” I snap, annoyed he would think I'd rush into the house or the crowd of people who are giving orders and trying to save what's left of Kain's house.

Just because he annoys me, I get out of the car but balance myself against the hood to take the weight off my ankle. I wrap my arms around myself as a shiver runs through me.

“Thank God we were out of the house, and I’m more thankful Denise isn’t here either,” I croak.

Jabba throws his arm around me and squeezes my shoulder. “I just texted Broke, they are going to stay at the clubhouse. Archer is on his way over along with Ganza. But, Roise? I think it’s a good thing Kain made us go for coffee. That house wouldn’t be on fire otherwise or hell, maybe it would be with us along in it because I get the fucking feeling that contract you took from Gordon, preventing him from taking it with him, might have had some shady shit in there.”

My blood runs cold, becoming very much aware Jabba’s words hold truth.

“It’s all my fault,” I state and watch the flames eat away at Kain’s house.

My home was filled with smoke and Kain said he’d handled it by having his MC brothers help out. Cleaning up along with fresh paint, new windows, curtains, and such. But this? I don’t think there will be anything left to clean or paint.

“Okay, lady, I’m going to be nice here and suggest you don’t repeat what you just mentioned. If you agree, I promise not to mention it to Kain because he’s going to flip and redden your ass if he catches you say some bullshit about taking the

blame for what someone else did. You hear me? You didn't spark a flame or throw lighter fluid or some shit. Watch. Watch those flames, the color and the way they lash out. That's no accident or anything. Kain always talks about the way you can tell what's feeding a fire and how it enhances. The monster is always hungry, alive, searching for food. This one is way too intense for electrical wire issues or a kid playing with matches. So, shove that guilt away and think about the three of you. The safest place is with each other and if I can make a suggestion, I would let him take you to the clubhouse tonight to regroup and think of a way to nail the sonofabitch who did this," Jabba growls out that last part and it actually makes me swallow hard. I haven't seen him this angry before and I'm glad it's not aimed at me.

A firefighter jogs our way and I recognize him as soon as he's closer, it's Link, Kain's colleague and the guy whose name he used the first time we met.

"Ma'am," he says to me but addresses Jabba right after. "Can you take her to the clubhouse? Kain went nuts when the call came in. It's why he texted you to ask if you were at the diner. I don't think it's a good idea to let her stay here and watch wouldn't you agree? He needs to focus on his job. Hard

enough to do when it's his own damn house but we're short a few people. My point is, he would have said something if he wanted her to know. Kain mentioned his suspicions to me about what's going on. Get her out of here and some place safe. I could call my brother, get you some police protection, whatever."

Jabba shakes his head. "Appreciate it, but no need. I'll take her to the clubhouse. Let him know we're headed there and I'll text when we've arrived safely."

Link nods and gives Jabba's shoulder a slight pat. "Ma'am," he says to me before he jogs back to the other firefighters who are working the scene.

"Come on, Roise. Let's head to the clubhouse. Denise is there and I'm sure Kain will be there as soon as he can."

I nod warily at his words and get into the car. There are no words exchanged and I'm actually relieved when Roan is standing in the parking lot of the Broken Deeds MC clubhouse along with Lynn. As soon as I step out of the car, they are both rushing toward me and hug me close.

Tears are now freely falling down my cheeks. I'm utterly confused by everything going on in my life. Emotions are ripping through me and I'm thankful to have these two

strong women in my life to lean on. And it's then I realize without Kain I would be by myself without anyone having my back.

It would be just me and Denise while now I'm able to let everything go and seek strength from others before I can face my little girl. A safety net they provide without judgement or demanding something in return.

“Come on, let's get you inside,” Roan says.

Lynn rubs my back. “Denise is staying with Lochlan and Xena. She was intrigued by their pet iguana. You should also know Xena is amazing with kids. They don't have any themselves but she teaches dance classes and well, Denise danced her heart out, she's all pooped out and snoring in bed. You can check on her if you want or stay with them too, but if something's up they will come to get you or bring her over, okay?”

“Thank you.” I swallow hard and wipe my tears away.

“Sorry, I'm a bit of a mess.”

“You're not a mess, babe,” Lynn says and gives a slight chuckle. “Nothing a shot of tequila can't fix. Hey, I could get my kit and give you some ink. I heard Kain wanted his

property patch inked, we could do yours now. Probably should do the tequila first, right?”

“Property patch?” Confusion hits me. I have no idea what they’re talking about.

“Tequila it is,” Lynn simply states.

The way she gives me a kind and warm smile, and wraps her arm around my shoulder as she guides me into the clubhouse, I have to agree ... tequila does sound like a good plan, knowing my daughter is looked after. I could use a little warmth in my body and something to dull my senses.

CHAPTER EIGHT

– KAIN –

“Are you seeing this?” Link says and I can only give him a tight nod.

Point of origin; this is the room with the most damage from the heat. My living room, or what’s left of it. My eyes travel to where the drawer once was that Roi told me she put the contract in Gordon wanted her to sign. I know that fucker did this.

If it wasn’t to hide what that contract was about, it was to prevent me from providing for my family. The last time Gordon dropped by unannounced he mentioned I wouldn’t be able to give Roise what she needed. Did that fucker really think he could force her to be with him?

“You need to get out of here, Kain. Let us handle this,” Link says and I know he’s right but I can’t get my body to cooperate.

Link grabs my shoulder, giving me a rough shake.
“Your girl, she was here, she saw what happened.”

I release a string of curses, hating the fact she saw my house go up in flames since she's been through enough already. Seeing a house burn down or hearing about the fact are two very different things. I didn't want that visual stuck in her head. It was the very reason I texted Jabba, asking if they were still at the diner so I knew they weren't in the house.

Fuck. Those few seconds of not knowing if she was in a burning house or not had my heart ready to be ripped apart.

"Is she still here? I have to ... I gotta." I swallow hard and try to think what I should do first.

"My brothers are a pain in the ass but they are always there for me if I need them. I know it's the same with you and your brothers, even if they aren't by blood. It's why I asked Jabba to take her to the clubhouse. He said he would text you when they arrived safely. Like I said, you need to go. If there's anything I can do to help, let me know. And if I need you or have something, I'll contact you, okay?"

"Thanks, man," I mutter and head out.

It doesn't come as a surprise to see Archer and Ganza standing outside waiting for me. They always have my back. They give me a lift to the station where I quickly change my clothes and get on my bike and follow them to the clubhouse.

The long ride always lets me blow off some steam and get my mind in order, except now. There's a heated anger simmering inside my veins.

The kind that can only be extinguished by solving a case. And right now, the case involves the lives of my old lady and my daughter. The two people who have taken over my whole existence while only a handful of days ago I had no idea about our solid connection.

Being a firefighter always gives you a shot of adrenaline when you jump into action. You want to save the people involved. And when there are kids involved you push yourself a little harder. We always push ourselves to the max but with kids? Yeah, it just adds to the level of protectiveness coursing through you.

Yet now the kid involved is my own flesh and blood, one I only started to get to know and instantly knew I wouldn't be able to ever walk away from. And now there's someone starting fires, burning down homes where they should be safe to sleep inside without a care in the world. Fuck.

I'm all pumped up when we finally arrive at the clubhouse. Parking my bike, I stomp inside, Archer and Ganza following behind me, and to my surprise the main room of the

clubhouse is silent with only a handful of my brothers lounging around.

“Hey, bro,” Wyatt, my brother, says as he gives me a tight nod.

Wyatt is not only a brother to me through the connection of Broken Deeds MC, but he’s the biological son of Broke and Roan, making him my brother in all ways. He’s a pain in the ass at times, two years younger than I am, and the vice president of Broken Deeds MC.

“Everyone besides us turned in early, they’re all aware about the mandatory church meeting tomorrow morning.” He turns his attention to me. “Your old lady is in your room. Doubt there will be any action for you tonight since the old ladies of the older generation pulled the tequila from the storage room and locked themselves up. Something about needing girl time. And your kid is staying at Lochlan and Xena’s house. Pretty and sweet, perfect little niece you gave me there, brother.” He grabs my leather cut and draws me close. “We will get this shit cleared up; you hear me?”

“Thanks, brother,” I grunt and smack his back.

I give my other brothers a chin lift and head for my room. Once inside I take a moment to glance at the woman

draped all over my sheets. This room only holds a large bed, a cabinet, fridge, TV, and a bathroom. Basic necessities for when I crash here instead of taking the long ride home.

Home.

Reality comes crashing down about the fact my house was just burned to the ground. I have no home to return to in Esdonville. Roi stirs and mumbles my name, her hand reaches out to the empty sheets as she lifts her leg, exposing her naked ass. Her very naked *tattooed* ass.

What the actual fuck? Stepping closer I lean in and hover my fingertips over her freshly inked skin, feeling the heat of the property patch of Broken Deeds MC along with my name on the top part of the circle.

I haven't even told her about the technicalities and the dynamics of the club. And yet here I stand, with the woman who found her way back to me branded with my name to give me her loyalty and heart. Proving she's all in and trusting me to be there for her, and our daughter, always and in every way.

Bitter fucking sweet with my house just burned to the ground and yet being swept off my damn feet while she steals my heart is not what I was expecting when I walked into the clubhouse, and yet it's all I needed. My head tips back and

laughter rips out. She surprises me at every turn and I damn well relish in the way she's able to do so.

“Sssssshh,” she groans and waves her hand up and down. “I’m sleeping.”

My fingers slide over her ass, avoiding her new ink.

“Mine,” I croak.

“Yeah, yeah, in the morning when I wake up, Mr. Ass-man,” she mutters and bats my hand away.

I can't help but chuckle. Reaching down I place a kiss on the heated skin and turn on my heels as I head for the bathroom. I undress and take a quick shower before I'm finally able to slide into bed along with her.

Roi instantly snuggles close and drapes herself over me, releasing a deep sigh in her sleep as if she was waiting for me to come to her to finally be able to sleep peacefully.

The feel of my woman against me makes a surge of invincibility run through my veins. Fuck everything going on in her life and mine; we will face everything together head on. I close my eyes and let sleep claim me.

“Oh. My. Gosh.” Roi's voice thunders through the room and wakes me from my sleep. “What did I do? What did

I do?”

I rub my eyes and blink a few times. Perching myself up on one elbow I see Roi standing next to the bed looking at her ass.

A smirk slides on my face.

“Your ass is mine,” I simply state.

This earns me a glare and she winces right after. Her hands reach up and she rubs her temples. “I’m not going to blame the tequila, but dammit ... I feel like waking up in that movie with a huge hangover after an intense night with a tattoo. I guess I should be lucky it’s on my ass instead of my face.”

“Have you met Depay yet? He has the property patch inked on his face.” Her eyes bulge at the little piece of information I just handed her and I feel the need to explain some more. “Though I bet it was the only part left where he could get it since the man is inked all over.”

Her hand hovers over the ink, I bet she can feel the heat radiating off it. She glares as if it’s my fault until her shoulders sag. “I clearly didn’t think this through. At the moment I thought it was a great idea, but now? I have to sit on

it. Like, really sit. Do you know how much time a person spends on their ass?”

I fall back on the mattress and let the laughter rip from my body. A grunt leaves my body when she throws herself at me.

“You can’t laugh at me,” she says with a stern voice.

“Baby, I’m not laughing at you, I fucking love the fact your ass is mine. Really mine, with my name branded on it to prove you belong to me.”

She groans overdramatically and lets herself fall onto the mattress next to me, and covers her eyes with her arm.

“I’m never going to live this one down, am I?”

“Nope.” I make sure to let the P pop and it earns me a smack on the chest. Grabbing her hand, I hold it in place. “Just as long as you don’t expect me to pick the same spot because I kinda wanted it on my upper left arm.”

Roi scoots closer. “You did?”

“Yeah. First I thought maybe on my chest but I kinda like having it in sight when I’m wearing a shirt since I want it to cover the upper arm.”

“Lynn has the patch on her neck. She has more tattoos but when all the other old ladies started to explain everything it made sense she picked that spot. She used to be the president’s old lady before her son took over the gavel from her husband. Lynn is strong and fierce and it shows by the way she boldly makes a statement by having the ink on her neck. I guess for each of us—besides getting the patch—the place itself holds a different meaning along with it.”

“Uh huh.” It takes everything inside me not to burst out laughing.

She gives me another glare but all jokes aside, it’s the meaning behind the ink.

I cup her face and brush my lips against hers. “For all to see or placed on a spot on your body that’s only visible for me doesn’t matter one damn bit. But I do appreciate picking the very part of your body I fucking adore seeing. I am very much the ass-man you think I am. And I’m yours as you are mine, you know it, and I know it. The club knows since we’re bound and protected through the MC along with it. Do I want others to know you’re mine? Hell, yes, and we’ll get married so you’ll have a ring on your finger and documents stating you’re mine. But even if we didn’t, I would know deep down

we're in this together. You getting the ink before me is a seal stating our commitment to one another. I can't start to explain how much that means to me."

"I'm sorry about your house," she suddenly croaks.

I place another kiss on her lips and wrap my arms around her. "It's just a piece of property, Roi. It doesn't matter. My home is where the three of us are together."

"Denise," she squeaks and tries to struggle out of my embrace but settles back down just as fast. "No, wait, she's with Lochlan and Xena. And I think your parents wanted to pick her up bright and early. I think they are a little obsessed with her." Roi has a smile in her voice when she adds that last part.

"You know I was adopted, right?" I wait for her to nod before I add, "Their biological son was kinda like a miracle. They never thought they would be able to have kids of their own since Broke suffered injuries when he was younger. I can't share all the details but let's just say those two adore kids and now they're grandparents, so rest assured she's going to be spoiled rotten with attention."

"I know it's a little late for this discussion, but ... did you want kids?"

I let the question roam around in my head. “To be completely honest, the thought never entered my mind. I guess it took the right woman to fill a void in my life I didn’t realize I had. I can’t wait to explore many other things in our future.”

“Like?” she questions and holds my gaze.

“Like trying really hard to give Denise a brother or sister, or both for that matter.” She pinches my nipple and it makes me grunt. “Vacation. Disney World. Buying a house together. Whatever. Like I said, many other things.”

The light chuckle flowing through her body is making my cock hard.

“We don’t need to buy a house together. You could move in with me and Denise.” The words are a mere whisper, as if she’s afraid I would decline her offer. The added words, “Only if you want to,” affirms my suspicions.

“You bet that hot ass I want to. It’ll be perfect, closer to work for me too.” I shoot her a grin and I watch her whole face light up.

I hate to put a damper on it but I have no other choice. “We do have to wait until this is settled. Someone, or they for that matter, have tried to set fire to your house and they

succeeded with mine. I won't risk bringing you and Denise back, not until we've caught the ones responsible."

"What are we going to do? Stay here? I've seen some barely dressed women prance around the main room in this clubhouse, I can't let Denise witness those things." She gives me a stern look but there's no need; we're on the same wavelength.

"Agreed. But I was thinking more in the lines of letting Denise spend a few days with my parents. You could stay there as well; it will give me a chance to handle things. I can ask Archer about the chicks coming over, but those living in the clubhouse are mainly the second generation. They don't have an old lady. The older generation live in their own homes on the property, well a handful of the older generation don't have an old lady and still think they're God's gift to women and screw whatever stray pussy is available." I shrug and see her wince.

"Sorry. Probably shouldn't have mentioned the last part, right? I'm not a virgin but I also wasn't one who jumped from pussy to pussy."

She holds her hands up. "Okay, can we maybe not discuss the whole pussy to pussy part? Wait, why do you live

in Esdonville and not here in the clubhouse where your parents live nearby?”

I get up and head for the bathroom, needing a little space between us and a breath or two to clear my head before I give her an answer. It might be easy to give her the words, but it's not as simple as it sounds.

Strolling back, I grab my jeans and pull them on. Her eyes follow my every move and yet she doesn't say or do anything else. A sigh rips from my chest as I lean back against the wall and cross my arms in front of my chest.

“I've told you about my biological parents, and the fact my adoptive parents made sure I knew who they were. Well, both my parents came from foster care. When I was old enough to prospect for Broken Deeds MC, I promised myself I would start the search for any of my living biological relatives as soon as I was a patched in member and could use all the resources we have to find information.” I rub a hand on the back of my neck. “I knew I could have asked my adoptive parents. Hell, any member of Broken Deeds MC would have helped me find more about my roots, except—”

She steps closer and places a hand on my chest.

“Except you didn't want to hurt their feelings even if deep

down you knew you wouldn't, and that they would be there for you no matter what.”

“Yeah,” I croak.

I sneak my arm around her naked waist and pull her flush against my body so I can bury my head into the crook of her neck.

I breathe her in and let her know, “My father started out as a firefighter in Esdonville before he moved. I wanted a place for myself, somewhere where I could feel connected and still be a part of everything my life is filled with. My adoptive family, the MC, my job, the businesses I have to deal with from time to time. Everything is a balance, pressure ... in no way stressing me out or dragging me down, it's just that ... I simply needed something for me. And I know how selfish and ungrateful I sound.”

She pulls back and cups my face with both hands.

“Stop. Just stop. You don't sound ungrateful or disconnected; you're living your life the way you want to. And I think it's very touching how you wanted to find out more about your biological parents and feel connected and closer to them somehow and you found your way. Not to mention you have a strong connection with the MC family you grew up in and

your adoptive parents. They are good people. I can't start to tell you how much of a difference it is from the way I was raised. We each come from different backgrounds, parents, and upbringing. Each of us chooses to live our lives the way we want to. As it should be, and you know deep down you have the full support of everyone around you."

"I've always felt like I was waiting on something more," I tell her and have to swallow at the emotions clogging my throat. "I believe I've finally found what my heart desired and what my soul instinctively was searching for."

We stare at each other and there's an underlying connection flowing to understanding. Telling this woman she's managed to set my heart on fire is something I can't voice because it will be too soon, and yet the emotions are there and staring right back at me.

Leaning in I take her lips and let her feel the words I'm saving for when she will embrace them fully.

I groan and reluctantly pull back when I hear my phone indicate I have an incoming message. Connecting our foreheads, I let her know, "That's probably one of my brothers since we have church in ten minutes. We're discussing your case."

“Okay,” she breathes. “I have to check on Denise anyway. Come find me later?”

“Will do.” I brush my lips against hers and go in search for my boots and a fresh shirt.

CHAPTER NINE

– ROISE –

The last few weeks have been both bliss and confusing. Bliss due to Kain being absolutely attentive and sweet when it comes to me and Denise, confusing since he's been keeping us basically locked away. Whenever I ask when we can go home, he always finds a way to distract me. Mainly with his mouth or his hands.

I have a feeling he's been keeping things from me and the weird text Paula sent me adds to my suspicions. She requested a secret meeting about certain things she found out about Gordon. It was in mine—and my company's—best interest if we met as soon as possible. The last sentence in her text, though? It had the whole alarm bells ringing loud factor.

“Your ankle is all healed?” Archer questions as he takes a seat next to me on the bench I'm sitting on.

I tear my eyes away from Denise who is playing in the backyard of the clubhouse. They've made a playhouse for her

along with some new swings, and she enjoys the attention everyone is giving her.

“As good as new.” I give him a smile and might as well ask him for some advice seeing he’s the president of this MC and knows what’s going on.

Kain left for a twenty-four-hour shift and I can hardly shoot him a message about the text Paula sent; he needs to focus on his job.

“Kain left for work,” I hesitantly say.

His eyes narrow. “He won’t be back till tomorrow. Something he needs to know?”

I release a sigh and grab my phone to pull up Paula’s message and hold it out to Archer.

“I see,” he murmurs and his eyes land back on mine. “What do you want to do?”

I release a tiny snort. “Here I was asking you for advice.”

Archer chuckles. “Let’s just say I was raised by a very independent woman, one who no one should ever underestimate. From what I’ve heard and seen you’re a tough one too. You raised that sweet little girl perfectly on your own

and even if you reached out to the idiot who didn't give you the right name from the start, you also didn't keep it from him the second you faced him. I value honesty. Loyalty along with it, another thing you showed when you went all in and inked the patch." The corner of his mouth twitches and I know he's laughing on the inside because of the spot I picked.

"And now you're showing me a message. I don't know if you did it because I was easy to reach with me sitting next to you, and it doesn't really matter; the fact is you did. But me being his Pres and Kain not able to do anything at the moment ... you did right by all of us, including your old man and your daughter. Because this Paula bitch? I'm sorry to give it to you straight but I don't believe in pussyfooting around anything. Paula killed your father. And I have enough reason to believe she wants you dead too. She might be working with Gordon but we're not quite clear what the connection is."

Denise squeals and rushes toward me. "Mommy, mommy, Grandma wants to bake cookies, can I? Can I? Please?"

"What? Sure. I guess so," I tell her while my voice wavers.

“Can she have a cozy sleepover along with it?” Archer directs the question at Roan who is standing behind Denise.

“Absolutely. If it’s okay with your mommy of course.”
Roan gives me a sweet smile.

“Of course,” I reply, my voice sounding a little stronger than a moment before.

“Yay!” Denise starts to cheer and pull at Roan’s hand as she waves goodbye to me and Archer.

Archer stands and glances down on me. “Come on, I need to show you something.”

I follow Archer inside the clubhouse and into a large room they call church. I’ve spent enough time with Archer’s mother, Lynn, and the other older generation old ladies to know church isn’t for women and prospects. It’s where they have their meetings and where club business is discussed.

“I thought I wasn’t allowed to be in here?”

Archer smirks and points at a chair. “You thought right. But you’re the center of a case we’re working on so that makes you club business. Have a seat.”

“Boy, you sure know how to make a girl feel special,” I grumble and plant my ass where he wants me to sit.

Archer chuckles and grabs a file from a safe. He closes the safe and takes a seat next to me, holding the file in front of him.

“The police of Esdonville received a video a few days ago. It shows that Gordon placed a metal bucket inside your garage right before the fire started. The boxes you had stashed there caught fire and it filled the garage, along with the house with smoke.” The words Archer gives me hit hard and yet I keep quiet since somehow I think there’s more.

Archer keeps staring at me for a few breaths, pulls an old article from the file in front of him and slides it in front of me.

“Paula killed her late husband exactly the same way as your father died. And if I’m correct your father had a meeting scheduled with Gordon that night, correct?” he questions.

My head slowly moves up and down. “That’s correct. Except Gordon called me last minute. He had some kind of emergency and couldn’t reach my father. I couldn’t either and Gordon left town so I headed over to my father. I ... there was ... he was dead when I got there.” I slide my eyes down where I pick my thumbnail. “I still can’t believe someone killed him.

Why would Paula do that? She has nothing to gain with killing my father.”

“Revenge,” Archer simply says.

He pulls a picture from the file and it’s a copy from a yearbook.

“What am I looking at?” I whisper and let my gaze wander over the faces. My heart jumps and I gasp, my hand covers my mouth as I shake my head. “How can this be? They never said anything. We did a background check.”

“Paula changed her name. That is the reason their connection of high school sweethearts didn’t come up during the background check. We have other, more thorough ways to screen people. Though it took some time to follow up on a few things but we recently discovered those two had a rather hateful ending to their relationship. Gordon cheated on Paula and she broke it off. Gordon moved right after and accepted the job your father offered him. Our guess is Paula took her time and finally saw a chance to get some revenge. She ultimately tried to frame him for the murder of your father. We checked. Gordon was supposed to have a meeting with your father but something happened, he wasn’t in town that day. He had to rush to the hospital in another state because his mother

was admitted, she died later that night. With Gordon's phone records and him being out of town this eliminated Paula's intentions to frame him, forcing her to deviate. The video of Gordon starting the fire at your house turned up only a few days ago. Wyatt came with the twisted scenario that maybe Gordon caught onto Paula's intentions and tried to confront her, or hell, bribe her with a part of the company or hard cash through the company. Whatever was needed to get her out of the way since Gordon has some ulterior motives himself since he needs to marry you to obtain your business. And to make sure he can get close to you, he needs Kain out of the picture."

My eyes feel all dried up by the way I'm unable to blink as I keep staring at Archer. The truckload of information is crazy enough to rip my head right open to check if I have any brain cells left to process this insanity. Archer keeps placing forms in front of me and I have no words to voice my thoughts.

Archer points at one piece of paper. "Gordon contacted a boarding school which had a pre-prep department that takes younger pupils."

"Stop," I croak. "Please, stop."

“We believe it was Paula who set fire to Kain’s house and anonymously gave the video of Gordon to the police in an effort to pin both these arson cases on Gordon. We also have a hunch the papers Gordon wanted you to sign were the first step to fire Paula. He needed to get rid of her to succeed in his plans, which were to tie you to him completely.”

Tears are suddenly sliding down my cheeks. I can’t believe what I’m hearing. People I’ve trusted—people my father trusted—want me dead or dealt with and my daughter out of the way along with it.

“We suspect Paula is keeping an eye on you and yet both Paula and Gordon are nowhere to be found. It’s as if they know we’re onto them and it’s only a matter of time before they’re caught. That is also the reason I ordered Kain to go to work since we need to keep up the routine. I had a hunch Paula would reach out when she knew Kain wasn’t near you, and I was right. First day back after the few weeks of leave Kain took, and she reaches out to you.”

“What’s going to happen now? Do I need to text her back so the police can arrest her?” I ask and move the papers in front of me, horrified Gordon would go as far as making sure my daughter is shoved away.

Archer releases a frustrating sigh. “Some of the information we obtained wasn’t through legal actions which makes it hard to make them stick in court. Lucky for you we handle cases our own way. But this does add a risk.”

“I won’t risk Denise nor Kain,” I tell him with a fierce tone.

A creepy smile spreads his face and he gives me a nod. “I respect that. But you know as well as I we won’t be able to keep Kain out of it. It took a direct order to send him back to work. He was ready to quit a few weeks ago since he refused to leave your side. They didn’t want to lose him so he received a few weeks off. What we could do is have you go to your house and let Paula come to you. After what happened with Kain’s home he let a few of our brothers install a top of the line security system. This way everything would be captured on camera. We need to keep this under wraps since I’m damn sure this woman has eyes on you. Add the fact we don’t know where Gordon is, it all becomes fairly tricky.”

I give him a skeptical look. “You want me to get in my car and drive home all by myself? To me it sounds like you want to give her every opportunity to kill me, or whatever she

has in mind for me. Are you sure you're working with me and not teaming up with her?"

"We want to give Paula a window of opportunity but make no mistake, we will be there with you every step of the way."

There isn't a yes or no in this situation. It's been dragging on for weeks and the fact Denise is mixed up in everything makes my stomach turn. This needs to end sooner rather than later.

"Okay," I agree in a fierce tone. "Let's do this."

The creepy smile is back as Archer grabs his phone, punches the screen and holds it to his ear before his words flow. "Link, plan is a go. Tell your brothers what's going down and make sure Kain is kept in line. Thanks." He doesn't wait for a reply but ends the call instead.

Kain did mention Link's brother, Chase works for the police, so I guess Archer is making sure Esdonville is aware of what's about to go down. Although I have no clue myself what's going to happen.

"What's the first part of the plan?" I question.

Archer stands and stalks to a large closet, pulling it open. I can feel my eyes widen by the sight of all different kinds of weapons he just revealed.

He takes a small handgun and places it in front of me. “The first part is making sure you’re able to kill Paula if necessary.”

“What?” I squeak. “Are you kidding me?”

Archer places a knife on the table right next to the gun. “Nope, I’m dead fucking serious.”

I swallow hard and reach for the gun with a shaky hand, knowing deep down there isn’t much of a choice; I have to do this to protect those I love. Listening closely to his instructions I somehow find the strength to stay focused. Hopefully by the end of this day I’ll be able to put everything behind me.

After the instructions he takes me out back to show me how to really use it and it’s actually relaxing to do some target practice with Archer. His dirty jokes and small talk are a welcome distraction for what’s to come.

I’m mentally going over the things Archer said as I pull out onto the road. I glance in the rearview mirror and

notice Wyatt and Ganza on their bikes behind me. They left two cars in between and I'm sure if Paula is following me, she would know they are there too.

My phone rings and I accept the call with one button, making Paula's voice flow through the speakers of the car. "Roise, did you mention it to anyone? I can't explain and show you if there are others with you. I don't trust anyone, and neither should you."

This is the part Archer drilled into my head and the words flow easy as I tell her, "Kain is very protective, with his house burning down he's not let me out of his sight and he only left for work knowing there would be two of his brothers watching over me. You don't need to worry; they won't come inside the house. You can park around back before I get there so they won't know you're there."

"It won't work, Roise. We have to be alone. I'm at Finnican's Bar, meet me there and we'll go somewhere together."

I don't like the sound of this but there's hardly anything I can do.

"Okay," I hesitantly reply. "But like I said, those two are following me and I can't tell them to go away."

“They won’t have to, just meet me there,” is all she says before the call disconnects.

I tighten my hands on the steering wheel and force myself to press a few buttons to call Archer.

“Did she reach out?” he immediately rumbles.

“Yes. She wants me to meet at Finnican’s Bar.” My eyes glance into the rearview mirror and it might sound strange, but just a glimpse of those two bikers wearing the same leather cut as Kain soothes some of my nerves.

“Head over to Finnican’s Bar.” Archer’s voice is soothing and yet tinged with authority. “I will make sure everything is set so no other civilians are at risk. Don’t get out of the car when you get there, she needs to come out of hiding. We can’t end this if we don’t catch her. I have eyes on you, don’t worry, we’re not going to let anything happen to you. Kain would have my balls.”

A nervous giggle slips past my lips.

“That’s it, try to see the bright side of things. But all jokes aside, I like my balls where they are and you have a cute little girl to rush home to,” Archer says and there’s a lot of background noise. “Gotta go now but, Roise? I’m in the air

glancing down on you so I can oversee everything. If she would make you shake off the two bikes following you, I would still see where you're going to make sure others can come get you, understood? Esdonville's police force is working with us as well, we're all here for you."

"Thank you," I sigh in relief to hear this little detail.

I slowly hit the brakes and come to a stop at a traffic light.

"We end this today, okay?" Archer's voice leaves no room for arguments.

"Yes," I reply in a fierce tone.

The connection breaks at the same moment the passenger side opens. Gordon jumps in and snaps, "Drive Roise."

He's holding a set of keys and I have to wonder why he has a key to my car since I'm fairly sure I locked all the doors.

"Drive," Gordon hisses again through his teeth.

I hit the gas and let my brain work overtime trying to figure out what to do. Did Archer see Gordon get into my car? Did Wyatt and Ganza? Am I safe? Talk. I need to get him to

talk. He isn't aware I know all the things Broken Deeds MC found out about him and Paula.

“What are you doing, Gordon? Did your car break down? Is that why you jumped into mine? I'm meeting Paula at Finnican's Bar, were you headed there too?” Oops, maybe I'm rambling questions but it's better than keeping quiet.

“Cut the bullshit, Roise.” His voice holds anger when he snaps, “You couldn't give me a chance, could you?”

Give him a chance? I risk a glance his way but have to focus on the road in front of me. “What chance? I don't know what you're talking about.”

“The one your father suggested to the both of us when I accepted the promotion. He wanted us to be together and you know it. Then you suddenly turn up pregnant and we had to postpone until that child was old enough to—”

“Okay, asshole, you can stop talking any second.” Probably not the smartest idea to pitch a fight while I'm driving, but I'll be damned if I let him talk about Denise as if she's a dog that needs to be relocated or something. “She's my daughter, and as far as I know I am my own person. Meaning it's my choice to be with whomever I choose. And I never had any intentions to be with you. My father made a suggestion,

thought we would be good together for the sake of the company. Not my choice and it never will be either. I have also never led you on or so much as accepted to go on a date with you for that matter.”

“Seems to me like you’re incapable of making the right choices,” Gordon sneers. “Not when it comes to the company, and not when it comes to men. Seeing you wound up with an outlaw as the father of your child. Your father would turn over in his grave if he knew.”

Gordon shifts in his seat, drawing my attention. My eyes slide to the right and I’m met with the barrel of a gun. “Now, shut your mouth and keep driving.”

CHAPTER TEN

– KAIN –

“He’s in the fucking car with her and I can’t do shit,” I growl and tighten my hands into fists.

Chase, Link’s brother, glances my way for a brief second before his eyes go back to the road in front of him. “There’s nothing we can do now, but we’re right behind her. Two of your buddies are on their bikes, one car is in between us with an officer behind the wheel. And my brother, along with Archer, is keeping an eye out from the air; we have them surrounded. Speaking about Clayton, are you sure nothing will backfire with my brother taking the helicopter after Archer basically forced him to? He had an issue in the past where he was suspended from flying, all because he wanted to save an accident victim.”

I shake my head. “Don’t worry about Clayton. His boss will receive a nice fat donation for his cooperation. Broken Deeds MC has a contract in place with the government and has the authority to use all means necessary to close cases we’re working on. Our ways might be drastic but we get the job

done. We don't fuss with paperwork but we have our contacts with the government who will make sure all paperwork is done after we close our case. So, like I said, Clayton is in the clear and so are you for that matter. If only I could say the same damn thing about my old lady."

"We have a lot of police officers standing by and you guys also have all your guys in place. We will have those two in custody soon enough," Chase says.

What I really want to reply is, "Neither one will do time; they will be dead soon. Preferably by my hands." But I can't voice those words to someone wearing a badge, and who is all for doing everything by the book. So, I merely nod in agreement.

There is no way I can have those two idiots who risk the lives of Roi and Denise breathe the same air as my daughter. They want her out of the way for Christ's sake. Not to mention the fact Paula already killed once before. I can't leave a killer roam these streets.

And yes, Gordon is the arsonist who started the fire at Roi's house, but we managed to obtain security footage from a neighbor who placed Paula at the day and time when my house

burned down. For me it's solid proof she's the one who burned down my house.

We have all the evidence, except none that will hold up in court. Lucky for them Broken Deeds MC doesn't need that shit; we're allowed to catch those who are guilty and bring them to justice using any means possible. Hence the reason we damn well use any means possible with a helo and asking the local police for assistance to increase manpower along with a flawless cooperation of local authorities.

My phone rings and I see it's my mother calling. "Hey, Ma. I'm kinda in the middle of something. Everything okay?"

"Don't freak out, Kain, but—"

My heart freezes and jumps into my throat, clogging it up, making me force out the words, "What's wrong?"

"Denise was on the swing and I swear we were paying attention but she fell and hurt her chin. I knew Chopper's old lady, Ivy, was at the clubhouse. She said it was a tiny cut and it would probably only leave a tiny scar. She put butterfly bandages on her chin. Denise is such a tough little girl." My mother snuffles and croaks, "I'm so sorry this happened."

Relief washes over me. I'm thankful Ivy, an ER doctor, was there to help out.

"Mom, it's okay. Accidents happen. Remember the same thing happened to Wyatt when we were on the swing together? I felt so damn guilty too while none of us were to blame back then either. Though he cried and screamed like a baby," I snicker and my mom chokes on a laugh. "Is she there? Can I talk to her?"

"Yes, hold on. Your father is trying to make chocolate chip cookies with her but those two are eating all the dough. I'm afraid they won't have any left to make the actual cookies."

I hear a door open in the background until I faintly hear my dad and Denise chatting. My mother's voice is clear when she tells Denise someone is on the phone for her.

"Mommy?" my daughter's voice wobbles.

"No, sweetheart, it's me. I heard you were a big, tough girl today," I tell her with a proud voice.

"Daddy!" she squeals, and it hits me straight in the chest.

Damn, hearing her call me daddy never gets old and I'm thankful each day she accepted me into her life as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

“Are you eating all the dough before you can turn it into actual cookies?” I chuckle and she giggles right along with me.

“It's okay, Daddy. Grandpa and I made extra. I will save you some cookies. Is mommy there too?”

Her question makes my eyes lock on the car in front of me and I notice Gordon's arm raising, pointing a fucking gun in the face of the woman I damn well adore. The mother of my child. Our little girl who is asking me about her mom. Fuck.

“She's a little busy right now, sweetie. Can you put grandma on the phone again? And be sure to save lots of cookies for me and mommy. Promise?”

“I promise, Daddy,” she says before there's rustling and my mom's voice coming through.

“No more swing time, I promise,” my mother says with a stern voice.

The corner of my mouth twitches. “Then she'll trip over the threshold. Accidents happen. You gotta live a little,

earn a few scars, and create memories. It makes you feel alive and really lets you feel as if you participate in life. Give her a hug from me and make sure she saves the damn cookies she promised to make me.”

My mother sighs in relief and promises to do just that. We say our goodbyes and disconnect.

“Everything okay?” Chase asks.

“Yeah, my little one hurt herself, fell off the swing. Nothing a few butterfly bandages on her chin won’t fix.”

“Ouch,” Chase mutters but raises his voice and snaps, “Here we go, we’re at Finnican’s Bar. Your guys in place?”

“There are no customers in there, only MC brothers and some of their old ladies. Everyone is trained to take a person out.”

“Nice. So, this should go smoothly, right?” Chase asks as we watch Roi park her SUV but stays seated.

Chase parks the car at a safe distance while I grab my gun.

“What the hell is he doing?” Chase says, more to himself than to me.

Gordon is holding out papers and waving his gun.

“The fucker thinks he can make my woman sign over stuff at gunpoint,” I growl. “As if that shit ever works or will hold up in court.”

Frustration and despair fills me. I’m unable to do anything because if I interfere, I risk Gordon going nuts and using the gun he has aimed at Roi. Roi’s door suddenly swings open and she jumps out.

Gordon scrambles out of the SUV on the other side and tries to go around. Both Chase and I get out and there are a few of my brothers stepping out of their hiding spot, surrounding Gordon while having multiple guns aimed at his head.

“Your time is up, asshole,” I growl, making Gordon’s eyes land on mine.

His gun is aimed at Roi and even if we have him surrounded—there are a lot of guns aimed at his head and we could easily turn him into a human colander with a rain of bullets—though it wouldn’t stop him from pulling the trigger; risking the life of the woman I love.

Fucking hell, I love her and I haven’t been able to tell her exactly how I feel about her. There hasn’t been an opportunity to give her the actual words and yet we do have

treasured moments with the three of us as well as heated ones with just me and Roi, showing how good we are together. If only he would aim the gun at me. I'd give my life in return for Roi to be safe.

“Point your gun at me, I'm the biggest threat to you right now,” I growl out my words.

Chase slowly moves to the side and is facing Gordon's back. I'm sure he's inching closer in an effort to take him down when opportunity strikes.

A shot rings out and Roi cries out in pain, falling to the ground the next instant. Blood is soaking her leg, dripping on the ground underneath her.

“Nobody move,” Gordon snaps. “Or Paula will shoot her in the head.”

“Motherfucker,” I growl underneath my breath. “You okay, baby?”

“Just dandy, Kain,” Roi sarcastically says, almost biting my head off with those words.

Paula steps out from behind Finnican's and aims her gun at Roi but addresses Gordon. “Why did you have to screw

it up? As always, you don't care about anything other than yourself.”

I grind my teeth. If there's anything worse about a situation where people are being held at gunpoint, it's having the crazy ones pitch a damn fight in the heat of the moment. This turns a situation into a ticking time-bomb ready to detonate at damn second.

Chase inches closer to Gordon and is now within reach to jump the fucker. I move to the left to draw attention to myself while my brothers stay in place, some of them have their gun aimed at Gordon, others at Paula. My gun is solely aimed at Paula, in my opinion she's the biggest threat.

My eyes connect with Chase for a mere second and understanding flows between us. I've worked alongside his brother for years. Trusted him without a second thought. Over the years I've met with his brothers on several occasions, having drinks, barbecues, whatever ... point is, these Crusoe brothers are stand up guys who have your back in any situation. Chase isn't a rookie, he's skilled, trained, knows what to do and when to act.

I stride closer. Holding Paula at gunpoint I bellow, “This ends now you murderous bitch.”

“You’re not going to shoot me, Kain. Roise will be dead if you do and you will never see your daughter again. You see, I kidnapped her and am holding her hostage in a place I only know the location of. This bitch here is going to sign those papers, give me the key to the safe where the bonds and money are and then I’ll be out of your way. No interference from any of you. I will give you the location of your daughter when I have what I want.” Paula acts if she’s in full control but I know the bitch is lying.

Roi whimpers on the ground and I can’t spare her a glance or I’ll break.

“Kain,” Archer says as he steps out of Finnican’s. The fucker must have landed the helicopter somewhere and entered through the back.

The moment is broken and the window of opportunity is rapidly closing.

“Paula,” I snap. Her eyes land on mine and I growl out the words, “No one shoots my woman, threatens my kid, and lives to tell about it.”

I fire the gun at the same time Chase jumps Gordon, taking him down to the ground and quickly overpowering him. I rush forward to place my boot on Gordon’s hand, making

sure he can't fire any bullets as Chase shoves his other hand behind the fucker's back, snapping cuffs on the idiot.

"Thanks," I grunt.

Chase nods and gets to his feet, dragging Gordon up to place him on his knees in front of him.

"Kain!" Roi screams my name in pure agony as I rush toward her.

Clayton appears out of nowhere and drops to his knees next to Roi and puts a large bandage on her leg to put pressure on her injury.

"Denise?" Roi croaks. "She didn't say where she took her. We need to find her, Kain."

I stroke her cheek and place a kiss on her forehead.
"Sssshhh, sweetheart, it's okay, don't worry. Denise is fine. Well, I do have to tell you something but other than that she's fine."

"But Paula took her. Where is she?" Roi wants to say more but closes her eyes and hisses at the pain shooting through her leg. EMTs rush to the scene and demand for me to move but I can't leave her alone.

“She was lying. Paula was lying her ass off in an effort to buy her way out of here. She was desperate and knew her time was up. So was Gordon for that matter, he knew there were no other options left but land his ass in jail. My mother called me mere moments ago and told me Denise fell off the swing and hurt her chin. Ivy, Chopper’s old lady, tended to her wound and placed butterfly strips on her chin. She was baking cookies with my father when I ended the call.”

“She was lying?” Roi croaks, tears running freely over her cheeks.

“Absolutely,” I say in all fierceness. “Our little girl is eating cookie dough at this very moment and I don’t think I’ll be getting the cookies she promised to bake me.”

Roi chuckles on a sob and I can see the relief mixed with pain painting her face.

I have to step away to allow the EMTs to get her on the stretcher and into the ambulance. Without words I get inside as they rush us to the hospital. After a few hours the injury Roi sustained is treated, she’s conscious, and we finally have a room to ourselves. She’s still groggy and disappointed she has to stay in the hospital, but at least she’s alive and on her way to recovery.

“I spent weeks letting my ankle heal and now this,” she grumbles adorably.

I give her hand a little squeeze. “Look at it this way, I’m now able to pamper you for a few more weeks.”

I’m met with a full-on glare and she rips her hand away from underneath mine.

“What time do your parents get here?” Her eyes go to the clock on the wall.

I don’t have to check the time. “They will be here any minute. Are you sure you’re up to it?”

“There’s nothing wrong with me. Gordon and Paula have been dealt with and I want to go home. Why they are keeping me here is beyond me,” she huffs and crosses her arms in front of her chest.

I lean back into the chair I’m sitting in. “You lost a lot of blood and needed a transfusion along with a truckload of other meds and shit, the doctor explained it all and you know it. I’m sorry I couldn’t stop the bitch from shooting you,” I sigh and anger flares inside of me.

She reaches out and covers her hand with mine. “It’s not your fault. If there’s anyone to blame it’s me. They both

wanted ... I don't even know what they wanted. Paula wanted money? Revenge? Gordon wanted the company? Me? They wanted Denise gone, that's for sure. If I didn't move here, I can't even begin to imagine what would have happened if we wouldn't have ran in to each other again. We owe you our lives."

"In the past, Roi. The shit we put behind us might have given us a rocky start but it means we are able to handle the future ahead of us. Because we know how to survive the bad and mellow it all out with the good, right? You're okay, I'm okay, our little girl is okay."

She snickers and shakes her head. "Stop talking with the overload of 'okay' you put in there. It's a little too much and it makes it unbelievable. Though I get the idea ... we have learned so much in life already and will learn a little more every day. But I could seriously use some smooth sailing for a while."

I can't help but snicker and lean forward to place a kiss on her forehead.

The door swings open and Denise rushes in with a big box in her tiny hands. She comes to an abrupt stop and gasps,

“Mommy, how can you hurt the same leg all over again? And look, I had an owie too.”

Denise tries to point at her chin and almost drops the huge box she’s holding. My mother steadies her and helps her get on the bed. Denise carefully maneuvers herself to get close to Roi and hands her the box. With both her hands free she points at her chin where a bandage with dinosaurs is covering most of her skin.

“Look at my owie, Momma. Ivy made it all better and I was a tough little girl. She said so, and I got a lollipop too.” Her shoulders sag. “I fell off the swing.”

“It’s okay, sweetie. Mommy tripped and fell. I guess the both of us were a little unlucky today, huh?” Roi says and wraps Denise in her arms to give her a hug.

“That’s why grandpa and I made chocolate chip cookies. We made them in the shape of four-leaf clovers. Grandpa said it helps if you eat those, they will fill your belly with luck.” She shoots Roi a grin and I could fucking cry right here and now.

Fuck. How damn lucky am I with these two in my life? No need to fill my belly with those cookies, all I need are these two close, surrounded by the support of my family.

Denise gives Roi a cookie and I swear she mutters, “Mommy is gonna have a huge ass soon because I’m going to need all the luck in the world.”

Leaning in next to her ear I whisper, “I love your ass, especially with my name on there.”

She flushes adorably and shoves the rest of her cookie in my mouth. Groaning loud at the sweetness hitting my tongue, the both of us reach inside the large box for another cookie.

“Damn, those are amazing,” I grunt.

“Language, son,” my father says.

He’s standing next to my mother who is leaning against him as she watches us. Love openly displaying in her eyes and it’s all aimed at us. I swallow hard and feel tears burning my eyes. One never realizes the love parents and those who surround you hold until you stop and see what’s right in front of you. It’s so easy to take things for granted and yet one breath at a time gives you the chance to slow your roll and relish in the love you’re engulfed with.

“I fucking love all of you,” I croak.

My father snickers and shakes his head. “Right back at ya, son. But you still need to watch your language.”

All of us laugh and I release a deep sigh right after. Hopefully we get to experience more happy moments together, though I would prefer them out of the hospital and with everyone unhurt and healthy.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

– ROISE –

“Why can’t we keep going the way it’s been going the past few weeks?” I question and place the lasagna on the table.

It’s been almost six weeks since I was shot and today is the day Kain started the conversation about my father’s company. Well, it’s my company but with both Gordon and Paula gone—me spending time in the hospital and recovering—Kain and his father have stepped in to make sure the company kept moving forward.

I still can’t believe everything is behind us. I’m thankful Kain is a part of the MC which allowed him to step up and make sure I was safe. Even more lucky there were no consequences since Kain shot Paula. Though it was self-defense with her shooting me and holding us at gunpoint, but still.

“Because it’s time. No excuses,” he simply says and starts to put some lasagna on Denise’s plate.

“In my opinion it’s been going perfect the way it is,” I mutter and it earns me a glare in return.

I know I’m fussing but not having to deal with the company is fine by me. I wasn’t used to dealing with it before my father died and avoided handling it after he died. I kept finding excuses to let Paula and Gordon handle most of it.

“You do realize the choice isn’t very hard to make, do you?” Kain says and spears a green pea on his fork. “And why are there peas in my lasagna?”

Denise giggles and I try to hide my laughter.

Kain raises his eyebrow at me but it’s Denise who answers. “I love green peas and mommy once said any recipe you make is personal and you can perfect it to your own taste. So, peas, Daddy. You don’t like my peas?”

Kain chuckles and reaches out to stroke his finger along Denise’s cheek. “I like the peas, sweetie.”

Denise beams and starts to eat her lasagna.

“You might think the choice is easy for me, but I really don’t know what to do,” I sigh.

Kain tilts his head slightly, chews slowly and places his fork on his plate. “What have you been doing all these weeks?”

Besides recovering. I mean the time you focused on the company that once belonged to your father. Have you shown interest? Asked me or my father for updates? My dad is retired and don't get me wrong, he likes doing this for you but I think it's time you looked forward and make decisions for you and the company. Future stuff."

Future stuff. I should probably tell him I peed on a stick this morning and found out I'm pregnant and would like nothing more than to focus on our children, family, friends, and organizing conventions from time to time like I've been doing.

Kain reaches behind him and grabs a file to place it on the table and slides it toward me. "My father has been dealing with everything and has glanced over the contracts your father asked the lawyers to draw up before he died. The company he reached out to who were interested in a merger are a good fit. It's all here in the file. You can either follow through what your father had planned, or you can sell it, or hire new people to run it for you and then you'd still have to oversee everything every now and then."

I release a deep sigh and mindlessly stab at my lasagna, knowing very well Kain is right and I've been avoiding it for a

long time.

“Thank you.” I eye the file and would like to stab it with my fork instead of dealing with it. “Did you ask your father what he thought was best?”

“It has to be your decision, Roi.” He points at the file. “But my dad put the papers of the merge your father wanted at the top of the pile. That should say something. But again, your company, your decisions. And that reminds me, I have to go to Vegas in a few weeks to handle my company; the usual personal check in I always do from time to time. Want to make it a family vacation thing? I hate leaving you guys for a couple of days.”

A fork clatters on the table and Denise is staring at me, waiting for my answer.

I point my fork at her. “Finish eating, Denise.” I glance back at Kain. “We will all go.”

“Yay!” Denise squeals and jumps off her chair to head for the kitchen.

I’m about to tell her to get back to the table but Kain slowly shakes his head. “Leave her be, she needs to get something she and I planned.”

My eyebrows scrunch up. *They planned something?*
Denise runs back into the room with a large box he always puts the cookies in she loves to bake with her grandpa and grandma.

“Cookies are for after dinner, sweetie,” I tell her but she shakes her head and places the box on my lap.

It reminds me of the box I put the two pregnancy tests in to give Kain later. Yes, I took two to make sure the first one was correct. And even if the last few months together have been amazing, and we both have our eyes set on the future; *on our family*, I’m still nervous how he will react when I tell him I’m pregnant. Though it shouldn’t be such a surprise since the man has refused to use a condom ever since we reconnected.

“Open it, Mommy,” Denise says and is bouncing on her feet, clapping her hands while staring at the box.

My gaze finds Kain to see if he can give me a hint as to why this is so important. He doesn’t give anything away and just stares right back.

I grab the lid. “Did you make some special clover, good luck cookies again?” I question and open the box to find a tiny black jewelry box inside. I gasp and put the lid back on.

Standing abruptly, I place the box on the table and wipe my sweaty hands on my summer dress. Holy shit, he's going to ask me to marry him. He can't. I can't. I have to tell him I'm pregnant first. What if he freaks out and doesn't want to get married? *He needs to know.* I spin on my heels and open the drawer of the tiny desk in the corner. I grab the box and stalk back to the dinner table where two confused people are staring at me.

I swallow hard and place the box on the table, sliding it in front of Kain. "You have to open mine first."

I take a seat and pick up Denise to place her on my lap.

Kain takes the box in his hands, opens it and glances inside. His eyes go wide when he sees what's inside. He quickly closes the box and puts it back on the table. His eyes hold mine in place. Seconds go by where no words are exchanged.

"You peed on a stick?" he finally croaks. "You're sure?"

"I'm sure. That's why I took two tests instead of just one," I tell him as Denise glances up at me and then at Kain. "Mommy peed on a stick? Why did she pee on a stick? Dogs pee on a stick. Why did she—"

Kain chuckles and I can't help but laugh too, though mine comes out as a nervous one.

Kain points at the box in front of me, the one Denise gave me. "Open and give me an answer."

I roll my eyes and mutter, "If it is what I think it is you should ask me the question first."

Opening the tiny black box, I'm absolutely stunned at the beauty of the antique ring inside. I carefully take it out and hold it closer to my face.

"It's gorgeous," I whisper.

"Daddy says it's special," Denise beams. "We went to the store yesterday where they cleaned it. The lady who made it all shiny and pretty said it was very special too."

I glance at Kain who is staring proudly at Denise. His eyes find mine and he tells me, "The ring belonged to my mother. Roan and Broke kept it locked away to be able to give it to me when I needed it. When my father was killed, they boxed up all his stuff and found the ring in a tiny safe along with other personal stuff from my mother. As a kid I remembered my adoptive mother taking it out and putting me

on her lap to tell me about my birth mother. Showing pictures, bracelets, reminding me who my parents were.”

“I was named after my ... my ... bio granny.” Denise nods with a proud grin and shrugs, knowing she understands and yet can’t find the right words.

It seems Kain explained it all to her and planned all of this together to make it a special moment.

“Yes, you were,” I croak and place a kiss on her forehead.

I slide the ring on my finger and focus on Kain. “It’s absolutely gorgeous and I’m honored. Thank you.”

“Gimme the right words, Roi,” he says and raises one of his eyebrows.

I roll my eyes but a smile tugs my lips when I tell him, “Yes, Kain. I will marry you.”

Kain stands and strolls around the table to place a sweet kiss on my mouth. When he pulls back he says, “I expect you to pee on some more sticks in the future.”

A laugh escapes me and I shake my head. “Let’s handle one at a time, okay? The last time was hard enough, and I have to do it all over again in a few months. I’m just

happy I don't have any morning sickness like I had the last time.”

“Maybe it's a boy?” Kain whispers.

“Or a little hellion of a girl,” I whisper back.

“Can I pee on a stick too?” Denise's voice jerks both our gazes to land on her. She looks at us expectantly and I'm trying not to laugh while Kain actually looks horrified as he says, “Not any time soon. Fuck. Not ever.”

I smack him on the chest and explain to Denise, “What we mean by peeing on a stick is to do a test. Here, let me show you the stick because it's not a normal one where dogs pee on, sweetie.” I reach over and grab one of the two pregnancy tests inside the box. “Mommy took this test to see if I was right, and I was. This stick will show lines if you pee on it and have a baby in your belly. And Mommy has a baby in her belly. A little brother or sister is growing inside. Do you understand what I'm explaining to you?”

Denise's eyes go wide and slide to my belly. Her tiny finger gently presses against me. “There's a whole baby tucked in there?”

“The new baby needs to grow. He or she is tiny right now and it will take a few months to grow. You will see your mommy’s belly get bigger and bigger until your brother or sister is ready to come out and meet you,” Kain easily supplies.

“Mary had a little sister last week and now she’s a big sister. I’m going to be a big sister too?” she asks, her face filled with adoration mixed with excitement.

Denise has been going to preschool and really enjoys making new friends. Mary is amongst her new friends and like Denise said, Mary’s mother gave birth to a little girl last week.

“Yes, you are.”

She launches herself at me and hugs me tight after I give her the confirmation.

“Careful,” Kain grumbles. “We need to watch out for mommy’s belly from now on. And we have to help her a little more around the house. We can do that, can’t we?”

Denise nods and pats my stomach. “It’s okay, baby. I got you,” she says with determination and nods furiously.

“I think dinner has gotten cold,” I croak, filled with emotions and thankful for this moment where I’m allowed to

feel happy being surrounded by those I love and the new life growing inside me.

Kain picks up Denise and places her on the chair.

“Come on, big sis, you need to eat and grow strong too. The lasagna was hot when we started so I’m sure it’s the perfect temperature to eat.”

He takes his place across from me and picks up his fork. I give the file with the documents a little shove his way.

“Do you think your father will go with me when I arrange a meeting with the company who my father approached for a merger?”

Kain chews, nods, and shoots a quick smile to affirm what I already knew.

“Good. Then I will set things up when we’ve finished dinner. No need to delay anything,” I decide and pick up my fork.

I feel lighter making this decision and will handle it right away. Another step toward a future we set ourselves by the choices we make. After dinner and doing the dishes, we tuck Denise into bed together and agree to watch an action

movie. Kain hands me a mug filled with hot cocoa and marshmallows and sits down beside me.

“We’re getting married at the hotel, the one where we first met. It has a little chapel. Did I ever tell you my parents got married there?” He’s wearing a big smile and I don’t have to mention the fact he told me where we’re getting married and not asking or talking it through first.

I’ve come to understand this man takes the lead with everything he encounters. Something I love and welcome.

“Roan and Broke?” I question, though it seems logical seeing he did tell me the hotel was previously owned by Broke.

“Didn’t my mother show you their wedding pictures yet? I’m surprised she didn’t.” He chuckles.

I give him a smile. “I’m sure she will as soon as we tell them, don’t you think?”

“I just might think she’s going to move in with us when we tell her about the pregnancy and the upcoming wedding.” Kain cringes. “She wouldn’t want to miss any damn second of it.”

I take a sip of my cocoa and release a sigh of contentment. “I don’t mind. Well, maybe the moving in part would be a little awkward,” I snicker. “But they mean well and Denise loves having them around.”

“Yeah,” Kain whispers and places a hand on my belly. “You guys make me so fucking happy.”

“Language,” I scold, laughter tinges my voice as I receive a glare in return.

“I’m going to enjoy every second of this pregnancy and make sure to pamper you,” he vows. “I hate I missed out on so much with Denise.”

I lean in and kiss him in an effort to silence the discussion. I refuse to glance back at our past. The things we have overcome and what brought us to this point are a part of our foundation but what matters now is the love and strength we have while we live our life as one big family.

“I effin’ love you so effin’ much,” he growls against my lips, making my heart smile big.

“As I effin’ love the effin’ loving heck out of you,” I reply with the same affection he offers me.

Sometimes life is as simple as reaching for your dreams and making them reality; and giving yourself a chance of happiness. Even if it takes a few bumps in the road ... in the end it's all worth it.

CHAPTER TWELVE

– KAIN –

“Getting cold feet or are they warm and comfy? Sweaty even?” Link chuckles.

Wyatt smacks him on the chest. “Warm, cold, and sweaty, don’t you think?”

They both snicker while I shoot them a glare. “I’m absolutely fine, you idiots. I’m getting married in a few minutes. Making that amazing woman mine in the eyes of the law. She’s already mine in every other way so there is no getting cold feet; I’m perfectly happy with my old lady, my kid, and the baby growing inside the woman I love. Life doesn’t get any more damn complete if you ask me.”

“And to think you had to use my name to go incognito in an effort to get to this point,” Link winks.

A sigh rips from me and I rub my neck. “Yeah, you can only obtain perfection when you’ve endured a few bumps and bruises along the way. Believe me, I’ve regretted it for a long time since I could have had all of this sooner. And, dammit, I

had to face the wrath of your wife. Something about almost ruining a perfect relationship if that call would have gone completely different. Did I ever mention Mabel addressed every possible angle? From you answering to her answering and then Roi calling back and everyone in Esdonville talking about how you went to Vegas and got a girl pregnant. Man, I still don't know why you felt the need to share my whole fuck-up with your woman. We could have kept it quiet and saved me the new asshole she ripped me.”

Link gives me a hard stare. “Don't point fingers my way, this was all you. And for your information, I refuse to lie or withhold things from Mabel. Think about it, what if one of you idiots ran your mouth during a barbecue or something and she found out anyway. Because things as weird as this always find a way to bubble to the surface. Nothing is worth getting my girl upset.”

“Agreed,” I simply say because he's absolutely right.

“Though this whole getting married in Vegas thing and giving us a long weekend away with an all-expenses paid magnificent wedding suite and everything we could wish for does make up for some of it. My girl's words, not mine. Now,” Link says and rubs his hands. “Are you ready to get married or

do Wyatt and I have to hold your hand to drag your ugly ass down the aisle?”

“Funny,” Wyatt snickers.

Link shoots him a grin as I shake my head and stalk past them to head for the chapel that’s connected to the casino I own. It’s Vegas, we’re obviously not going to marry the normal way. We’re going to do it exactly the way my adoptive parents did many years ago and in the same place.

There’s a different Elvis standing before us, though. The chapel looks like a throwback to the fifties with black and white tiles on the floor and a pink Cadillac in the corner along with a jukebox. Fresh flowers are spread all over the place.

At the time my parents were dressed in the fifties style, but this is where I changed it up a bit to make sure it was a mixture of both my biological and my adoptive parents since I had Roi’s wedding dress custom made from a photograph I had from my mother’s wedding pictures. It was actually Roi’s idea when Denise and Roi were visiting my parents and Roan showed her all the old photographs.

I come to an abrupt stop when I capture the beauty of my old lady and in front of her is Denise, holding a tiny pillow with the rings on it. She’s dressed in a fluffy slightly pink tutu

dress. On this tiny spot in this world, at the altar, is where my heart is standing out in the open. Filled with love and thumping for the beauty of it.

If I knew all those years ago a hot one-night stand would lead me to the love of my life and the future I wouldn't dare to dream envisioned, I would have never given her any other name but mine. And for damned sure I would have never let her leave my bed the next morning.

Yet life has a funny way of leading paths to open roads along with a few crossroads. Because in the end it doesn't matter if you take shortcuts or take the long ride home ... It's the fact you get home and have the people you love—heart and soul—waiting for you.

I shoot a wink at Roi and squat down at eye level with my little girl. “Hey, sweetie.”

“I have the rings,” she beams and hold them up for me to see.

“Such a big girl,” I praise.

“A big sister,” she corrects me.

I nod and give her a beaming smile, letting my knuckles slide over her cheek. “I'm so proud of you.”

She stands a little taller when I give her the compliment. With everyone waiting, I rise and take my place to get things going. Every second that passes is one I treasure and lock into my memories. The exchange of our vows, a scorching kiss to seal the deal—no matter who is in the room or where we stand; I will always make sure she knows just how much she means to me.

The ceremony is short and perfect in every way. We've planned dinner and invited everyone to join us in the ballroom where we continue to celebrate life, love, and commitment. The fact we are now connected, another step branded on our hearts. A promise to live and cherish one another to last a lifetime.

A lifetime I intend to exploit to the fullest, and is only possible due to the people who complete me. Glancing around the ballroom filled with friends, family, loved ones ... it fills my chest with warmth and my heart smiles.

EPILOGUE

Ten years later

– ROISE –

I hear the key in the lock, making my body hum with anticipation. The door closes and Kain strolls into the room. He steps closer and pulls me into his hard body. The familiar scent of soot, spice, citrus, and all Kain envelopes me.

“Did my parents swing by to pick up the kids?” he questions.

Tomorrow it’s exactly fourteen years ago we met for the very first time. *Our anniversary*. Our day we had a one-night stand. *Our time to celebrate*. Every year we arrange a sitter and spend a full weekend together.

Sure, we have date nights on a regular basis and also celebrate our wedding anniversary, but this is something between us; a reminder of our starting point. Even if we parted ways and found each other again. It’s one single moment in our lives where we were linked for life.

“Yes.” I smile while thinking back how happy the kids were two hours ago when Broke and Roan came to pick them up. “Denise was excited to spend the night, something about extra dance lessons with Xena while she was there. And Kai and Ethan could only rave about the new bicycles your father bought them.”

Kai and Ethan, our twin boys. I remember very vividly when we found out we were expecting twins. Mainly because Denise said it was all my fault since I peed on two sticks instead of one. We didn’t bother to explain but agreed with her instead.

Having twin boys is hectic and yet with the help of everyone around us, and Denise being such a sweetheart and completely committed to being a good big sister, it’s truly been a rocky but gratifying ride.

And speaking about rides, Broke has been teaching them to ride their bicycle all while we take loads of pictures as we cheer them on. Now that they can ride, he promised them new ones with blinking lights in their wheels and a flag and whatever else he could add. Such a proud grandfather who loves to spend every second with those kids.

We can count on them for whatever we need, and they always love to pick up the kids to spend time with them. Though the time is limited ever since school started for everyone. But we make it work, like with all things in life; if you want something, you'll do everything to obtain the goals you set within reach.

“I need a shower after this long shift, care to join me?” Kain's voice flows over my skin as he nuzzles my neck.

Groaning, I tilt my head to the side to give him more access. “I don't think you'll get clean if I do. Why don't you take a quick shower and I'll heat up dinner?”

I swear he says something that sounds like, “I'd rather have you for dinner,” before he stalks into the direction of the bathroom.

Normally with his twenty-four hour shifts he would have grabbed something to eat with the guys but he texted earlier to save some of the lasagna Denise made. She's grown into a smart teenager and a huge help around the house when she's not busy with school things or meeting her friends. I bend down to grab something from the cabinet and a short yelp escapes me when I feel hands grabbing my hips.

“Don’t move,” Kain’s voice is guttural. “Do you know how long it’s been since I took this sweet pussy in the kitchen?”

I hum at the sound of the promise in his voice. He’s right, it’s been too long but with kids it’s not like we can ravish each other at every turn.

Heating up his dinner is long forgotten when he slides my dress up and kneads my ass. His fingers wrap around my thong and with a hard pull he snaps it and throws the shredded lace on the floor.

Kain pulls my naked flesh against the growing bulge in his jeans. “All I could think about today was having you in my arms, all to myself without any interference. Did you know I arranged for the private jet to take us to Hawaii? Spoil you rotten with some cocktails, palm trees, flowers and shit? But I’ve changed my mind.”

A smile spreads across my face as a moan slips out. The feel of his erection, hard, thick, is a promise anything this man will arrange for me is special as long as he’s right there with me; no matter the place or time.

“I think we’re going to lock ourselves inside this house and only make contact with the outside world to check on the

kids and order food.” His fingers go around my body and slip between my legs. “So wet and hot. Damn, woman, you sure know how to make your husband feel welcome.”

He growls, lifts me up and places my bare ass on the counter. Stepping between my legs he places a hand on each side of my hips and leans in close.

“How much?” he murmurs while holding my gaze.

“Priceless,” I breathe.

The corner of his mouth twitches. “I own millions, little minx. Name your price.”

I let my arms trail over his chest until I can wrap them around his neck to pull him close and whisper in his ear, “I have all the money in the world and yet my love for you holds no price tag. It’s reserved for one man, and one man alone. But the underlying question is, what will you give me in return there, fireman? Will you keep the fire burning? Flame up the old spark we once had or—”

“Our fire is eternal, love,” he croaks and slams his mouth over mine.

I tighten my arms and engage in a sensual dance with our tongues. Wrapping my legs around his waist I shamelessly

grind myself against him, searching for friction to ease the growing burn low in my belly.

He pulls back and places his forehead against mine. His breathing is harsh and there is no need to exchange words. Long shifts, busy and hectic lives add to everything, and it's in these small moments like this you want it all and it grants you an overload of emotions.

“I love you,” I whisper, earning me a sweet smile.

He buries his face into the crook of my neck, his fingers fumbling between us and I hear the zipper slide down, knowing he can't wait to bury himself deep inside me. Though I need to let him savor the moment since we have all the time in the world.

Pushing him back I ignore his confused gaze as I hop off the counter. I grab the hem of my dress and slide it up and over my head. Snapping the front clasp of my bra I let it fall on the floor along with it.

Kain's gaze is set on my breasts and I can feel the heat of his appreciation licking my skin. No matter how many years are behind us or how many years we have ahead of us; our connection is solid and set to grow stronger with each day passing.

I slowly drop to my knees and reach for his jeans, tugging the fabric down so it's pooling at his ankles. His long and thick erection is bobbing in front of my face. I let my hands trail over his muscled thighs and slowly zero in on the prize I'm aiming for. Gently cupping his balls my ears are treated with a guttural groan.

Kain fists my hair and makes my head tip back so he can stare in my eyes. "You're perfect, you know that?" His other hand wraps around his cock, squeezing it as he gives his dick a gentle pull. "You want me in your mouth, do you? I'll allow you a taste but don't you dare suck me off. I need my cum hitting deep inside your pussy and not down your throat."

I will never get tired of hearing dirty words falling from his mouth. He lets the thick, hot head of his erection slide over my bottom lip. My tongue sneaks out and I lick his slit, letting the salty taste of his pre cum hit my taste buds.

"Fuck," he grunts in a guttural tone and pushes his dick inside my mouth.

Our eyes stay locked and the way he's staring down at me as I let my head bob up and down is making my pussy tingle. Though it's short-lived because he steps back and drags me up, kicks his jeans off and throws me over his shoulder—

fireman style—to stalk out of the kitchen and into our bedroom.

He throws me on the bed, making me bounce but covers his body with mine before I can so much as take my next breath. His dick is at my entrance and with one hard push he enters and fills me up completely. I gasp his name and let my nails sink into his back, relishing in the need and domination we're consumed with.

I raise my knees, shifting the angle to let him slide in deeper, earning me appreciative grunts. One of his arms sneaks around me and grabs my shoulder to keep me in place and allowing him to roughen his thrusts.

Tingles spark into a hot fire and an inferno overtakes my entire body as my orgasm erupts inside me. “Kainnnnnn,” I scream.

A growl rips from his body as he stills above me. Hot jets of cum burst free and fill me with the warmth of his love. His head is buried in the crook of my neck, my name is whispered feather light against my skin as I close my eyes to relish in our closeness.

Kain collapses on top of me and doesn't make an effort to keep his weight off me; he just gives me everything. A

giggle escapes me as I try to take my next breath. I should complain and push him off but I hate to break the moment.

Our moment.

“Happy anniversary,” Kain grumbles and shifts to the side. “Though I don’t think we can do the whole ‘sex all night long’ thing we did fourteen years ago. Fuck, I’m getting old.”

A burst of laughter rips from my body and it earns me a glare.

“It’s not fucking funny,” Kain grumbles and it only makes me laugh harder.

He growls low in his throat and before I can blink, he’s straddling me, his face inches away from mine. My laughter stops and my breath catches. My man is gorgeous. On the outside and on the inside. Problems occur in any relationship. You work through them and value opinions and character trades; find a way to work together and respect one another.

We’ve found our balance, along with the will to work for a shared future one set with mutual goals. Every now and then you get to reap the benefits like now. Treasured moments without interruptions to relive where it all started. A raw connection driven by fire and controlled by ourselves to keep the flame burning for a lifetime.

A lifetime we will make damn sure to fulfill and
cherish.

Thank you for reading Kain's story. Gaining exposure as an independent author relies mostly on word-of-mouth, so if you have the time and inclination, please consider leaving a short review wherever you can. Even a short message on social media would be greatly appreciated.

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Special Thanks:

Lynne, Wendy, Shani, and you, as my reader...

Thanks so much! You guys rock!

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Addy Archer is the pseudonym of a contemporary and romantic suspense writing team (*USA Today* bestselling author *Esther E. Schmidt and her husband*) who love to write about rough bikers twisted with a hint of romance and sassy women. When they aren't working on their next book, they enjoy long walks with their two hairless dogs.

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