



Lennox
BACCHUS HILL BOYS

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Lennox

Prologue...

Lennox was in his office; there was a single malt in his glass, and all was quiet. *That Bacchus family*, he chuckled to himself. He said the name as if he wasn't one of them and he hadn't caused his share of trouble. His mother was a Bacchus, an aunt of Alastair, and she married a Marshall, hence his name. His cousins had become his best friends and closer than brothers, so when one called the other came without hesitation.

That was how close he and Alastair were, in age and in blood. He was an old soldier, and Her Majesty tasked him to go overseas and fight with the Americans. He went to a place in the inhospitable deserts where the sand drank blood as greedily as water. When he came home, Alastair saw him through the worst part of the nightmares, even when he chose the solitude of the hills over people.

Slowly he reclaimed his spot in the world. His inheritance was doubled, then, tripled and he bought property and built the Skymile Hotel that hosted the Wraith Nightclub on the top floor. The view was amazing, it overlooked some of the most amazing scenery in Edinburgh. And, in the morning, watching the sun come up above the castle and the old church always made his breath still in his chest for a moment. He stood there with his coffee every morning, watching the sun, and feeling glad he was alive.

His view was such a commodity, he had offers weekly from hotel chains trying to buy him out. His answer was always no, this was his sanctuary and his hands had helped pour the foundation and placed the bricks. No amount of money would make him sell. A knock on his door heralded his night manager, Kiman, or Kim as she liked to be called. Now this woman was the one who made his heart race. Thirty-two to his fifty-one, he had no right feeling this way about the woman.

But there was something there, a connection they both chose to pretend wasn't happening, but it was, and it was deepening. Her dark skin seemed to take any hint of light and make it bronze, and her wide eyes were a shade darker than amber, giving her an ethereal look. She wore her black hair in long natural braids that hung far below her shoulders sometimes adorned with little charms. She reminded him of one of the goddesses of Orisha's pantheon, maybe the one who bespells with love, because she captivated him without even speaking.

She cleared her throat. "Lennox?"

"Hmmm?" He looked at her. "Sorry, mind wandered."

"All, okay?" Kiman asked.

Lennox chuckled. "As well as can be, the crisis is over and I'm considering a good rest. One of those boys or cousins, or God knows who will get into something again soon and we'll all be into the fray."

Kiman smiled. "Family united is a hell of a thing, but there's always better, than bad."

He nodded. "There is, now what can I do for you?"

"Do you mind, um, if I stay in one of the rooms some days after I work?" Kiman looked away. "I know we have an employee discount, and it would only be if we're not fully booked."

"Of course, you can, isn't the bed and breakfast suitable anymore? I can help you find other accommodations," Lennox suggested. Something was wrong, he knew it, but Kiman never disclosed it. She was a woman that kept her life, and her secrets close to the chest, and it wasn't his business to pry.

Her smile seemed forced. "Nothing is wrong, it gets a bit noisy there with the kids sometimes and I have to study for my CPA certification. And Samara is my cousin, but I don't want to put her out all the time...."

"Say no more," Lennox held up his hand. "Use whatever empty room you like and if you need help finding a place, I have some contacts."

“Thanks, I appreciate it, Lennox, and the friendship,” she added. She had an accent between African and British that always hit right to the core of his arousal.

“Anytime. I’m heading upstairs for a bit, call me if you need me,” Lennox said with a smile. “Hold down the fort.”

“That’s a very American thing to say,” Kiman teased.

“You hang around them long enough you pick up the verbiage,” he replied.

“Sounds like a story is there,” she commented, heading back to the front desk.

“You tell me yours, and I’ll tell you mine.”

She gave a sad smile. “Maybe one day.”

Lennox went upstairs thinking about what she said. he could of course dig into places he shouldn’t and find out everything he wanted to know but somehow that didn’t feel right. Whatever her life brought, it was her story to tell and for Kiman to trust him, he couldn’t know until she wanted him to. It seemed that time came sooner than expected when a call came up to the bar. It was from the bouncer downstairs.

“Tyson,” Lennox said his bouncer’s name in lieu of hello.

“You should come down, sir, and fast,” Tyson said. “There is a woman here, she has two very large men with her, and Kiman has locked herself in your office.”

“I’ll be right there,” Lennox handed the bartender the phone and walked out the door. He spoke to the upstairs bouncer as he did. “Alex, come with me please.”

“Yes, sir.”

Lennox’s voice was all too calm, but his anger was simmering. He was already very protective of Kiman, and he took an instant disliking to anyone who could frighten her like that. The elevator ride was endless even though it was done in less than two minutes. When he stepped out, he saw why Tyson had called. The men were the usual—tall, big broad shoulders, the muscle who didn’t smile and tried to stare down Tyson and Alex.

Lennox knew his men wouldn't even quiver, they were ex-military and had seen much more than people realized. It was the woman who gave off the alarm bells; she was danger dressed in couture. Her black hair flowed like tar down her shoulder and when she looked at Lennox, a seductive smile crossed her face. It only served to make his skin crawl.

"May I help you?" Lennox asked.

"I'd like to book a room, but your reservationist left," her voice was supposed to be sensual, but Lennox could hear how too many cigarettes made it a bit hoarse. He placed her accent as Russian, and from looking at her, nothing good would follow her into the Skymile.

"Not here," Lennox said flatly.

"Are you to capacity?" she asked.

"No."

Silence reigned for a moment or two before she laughed and held out her hand. "We've gotten off on the wrong foot I see, my name is Annika Petrov."

Lennox cast a cold glance at her hand. "I don't care who you are, you'll not be staying here. I'll ask you to leave now, before my men escort you out."

"Ah, but I have two to match yours," Annika replied with a cool smile.

Lennox didn't even blink and his lips didn't curve. "I think not and you're on my property. Law enforcement will not only arrest the three of you but find us not culpable when me and my men leave those two on the floor."

"Well, this...is unpleasant," Annika reached into her bag and pulled out a gold cigarette holder.

"You light that thing in here, I'll cover you with fire extinguisher foam," Lennox said in a stiff voice. "Last warning, leave."

"Tell Kiman it was nice seeing her again," Annika said smoothly. "She has a debt to pay, and I will have my payment. No matter where she runs, I will always find her."

“She’ll not be running anymore,” Lennox said bluntly. “To get to her, you’ll have to go through me and there is no way you want what would come from it. Best to turn around now, before hard lessons are learned.”

Annika turned and with a laugh called over her shoulder, “Oh this will be fun.”

He watched them go before inclining his head. “Ty, make sure they’re gone from the property. I want you both down here until I say otherwise. Call in Kurt and Benji for upstairs. Also get Samara on the phone and over here now, get Alastair and the boys as well. We’ve got trouble on the horizon.”

“On it, boss.” Ty replied. “We’ll bury them in the hills before any harm come to Kim.”

“Aye, that we will.”

Lennox went to the door of his office and knocked gently. “Kiman, let me in.”

No answer.

He pulled his keyring from his pocket and unlocked the door. What he saw tore his heart to shreds. His beautiful Kiman lying in the far corner of the room in the fetal position with knees pulled up to her chest. Her hand over her mouth to hold back the screams, but he heard the small whimpering sounds like a frightened animal. This was a trauma response if he ever saw one and he wondered what nightmare Annika Petrov had inflicted on Kiman’s life.

“Hey there, love,” Lennox crooned softly as he sat down close by. “The cunt is gone, she’ll not come back, you’re safe here. You are safe with me.”

Kiman just trembled, and when he caressed her shoulder, she flinched.

“I’ll just keep talking until you feel like you can take a breath, and another one until you can face the trauma,” he promised. “I’ll not hurt you, I swear it. On my ma, my Da’s, my honor and everything I hold dear. But you’ve got to tell me what’s going on so I can protect you, love.”

Kimman was crying, but she uncurled herself and crawled into his lap. She wrapped her arms around his neck, sobbing uncontrollably. Lennox wrapped his arms around her tight and in that moment knew, he would never let her go. This battle he would fight for her, and he would protect her with his life if he had to.

“*Mo chridhe*, what makes you cry so, why are you afraid?” Lennox asked.

Kimman raised her tearstained face and Lennox watched more slip from her eyes, down her cheeks and drip off her chin onto his shirt.

“She is in my every nightmare, every scream that I wake up trying to stifle,” Kimman whispered brokenly. “Annika Petrov is death, and she found me, so soon I’ll be in the ground.”

“I’ll not have that,” Lennox cupped her cheeks and kissed away her tears. “I promise you; you will be safe.”

I’ll kill death herself if I have to, so you are.



Chapter One

They all sat quietly, waiting for Kiman or Samara to speak. Her arms were wrapped around Kiman, who was stiff so afraid, her hands shook, and her cousin had to help her take a sip of tea from the mug she held. The meeting was in his penthouse apartment, Lennox took Kiman there himself, lifted in her arms and with a fire of vengeance burning within him.

The impatience to have something to put his hands on and destroy made him clench his hands into fists on his lap. Lennox met Alistair's gaze and he looked down quickly to Lennox's hands and give an almost indiscernible shake of his head. Lennox took a deep breath before unclenching his hands.

"Anika Petrov," Samara began, and Kiman's hands shook again. "She is a human trafficker that has a worldwide network. Kiman didn't know about who or what she was until it was too late. I was—working, and when I found my cousin, she was a shell of who she is now."

"How—when did this take place?" Lennox asked gently belying the emotions that swirled through him.

Samara took the mug from Kiman and squeezed her hands. "Can you tell them, or should I?"

Kiman took a deep shuddering breath. "I was eighteen, living in Ghana with all these wild dream and strict mother. I wanted to leave, but because my parents wouldn't let me, I had no passport or visa. But one evening while me and my friends were at a local hangout spot, this beautiful woman walked in and offered us a dream. She called us beautiful, told me I could be a model, and with stars in my eyes, I ran away from home to a life I thought would be filled with glitz and glamor. It was all lies."

"Anika smuggled them into the United States and told them they would be trained to be hostesses for these clubs that were for the elite of the modelling industry," Samara continued. "They were elite, rich businessmen with

perversions and Kiman slowly understood she would not be able to leave until she paid off a debt for being brought into the US. A debt with no amount, they planned to use these girls up and then let them go.”

Kiman continued. “My friend Tamara got hooked on heroin to escape what we faced, she overdosed and died. I used my wit, watched self-defense video on you tube without them knowing and learned to fight, I would fight until they saw I was too much trouble and tossed me out.”

Rohan handed Lennox a glass of single malt, he took a deep drink and felt the familiar burn down to his gut. The drink did nothing to douse the fire of pure rage within him.

“Did they toss you out?” Callum asked.

“No, I was beaten instead and even then, I was defiant,” Kiman replied and hesitated. “I was drugged, and I woke up and new immediately the part of me I had protected was lost.” Tears slipped down her cheeks. “This was the only way.... and some like that so...they kept drugging me and....”

Lennox stood quickly, and everything he held in overflowed, not thinking he threw the glass against the wall, shattering the crystal and the amber liquid ran down the gray toned paint. Kiman shrank away, closer to Samara at the violence that exploded from him.”

“I am going to wring her bloody neck and then find everyone who touched her and kill them,” Lennox raged.

Alastair stood and pushed him out of the room into his office. “You’ve got to bloody well calm down!”

Lennox whirled on him. “Would you if Eden was sitting there telling you this story?”

“No, I would react the same way,” his best friend told him. “But you’d bring me back from the edge as well.”

“They—hurt her,” Lennox implored, he could feel the grief take over. “I’m going to make them pay.”

“Aye, that WE will,” Alistair put his hand on Lennox’s shoulder. “But right now, she is deathly afraid, plus reliving a

trauma she thought she was free from. She needs to see your gentleness not your wrath.”

Lennox took a deep breath. “Alright—yes, I can do that.”

“Are you sure, because I shan’t let you back in there if you can’t control yourself,” Alistair warned.

“I can,” Lennox promised.

Alastair went to the desk and poured him another whiskey. “Drink that down to make sure. I know you had feelings for her, so now you’re her protector. Gentleness for her and for this Anika and anyone who touched her, we’ll destroy.”

“Good man, because this was my plan,” he answered.

Taking a few more beats to calm down, Lennox reentered the living space with his friend on his heels.

“My apologies, everyone,” Lennox said and met Kiman’s gaze. “There’s just somethings a man can’t bear to hear about someone they...” he stopped himself. “I apologize.”

“You could’ve finished the sentence, we all know what you meant,” Rohan said amused.

Lennox gave him a dark look. “I’ve boxed your ears before whelp, I don’t mind doing it again.”

Rohan had the common sense to sit back and to shut his mouth.

Lennox sat where he was before, and this time it was Kiman who reached out to take his hand and squeeze it. Relief flooded through him that he didn’t scare her away. He didn’t want to be placed in the category of the ugly things she faced.

Samara was the one who continued the story. “Kiman’s parents were the one who contacted me to help after they hadn’t heard from her in months. Because of my past—employment I was able to track her and when we took down the mansion where she was being kept.”

“Good on you,” Callum gave her a smile and Samara returned the gesture. There was more than just friendship

between the two and if they think they were hiding it from everyone, they were fooling themselves.

“We along with law enforcement took the place down, the men who were caught there managed to buy their way out. Anika and the major players weren’t on the property at the time, so they got away.” Samara wrapped her arms around her cousin. “Kiman was a wisp of a thing when I found her, barely any food, listless, drugged. She wasn’t coping well back in Ghana. I bought her here with me because her parents couldn’t... they were unaccepting and harsh. She went to school in Inverness, before finally moving here three years ago.”

“To my father, my worth was lost, I ran away and got myself into the situation and I had brought shame to the family,” Kiman’s face was haggard from exhaustion, but she held strong. “I speak to them very rarely. But with Samara over the last three years, I got my life back, healed. Until the phone calls started coming, then a text that said a debt is always paid.”

“This is why you wanted to stay at the hotel?” Lennox confirmed. “You knew they’d found you.”

“I didn’t expect it would be so soon, and that they’d come to the hill,” Kiman admitted. “I was going to take the time to figure out where I could run to and hide again.”

“You were going to leave?” Samara looked shocked.

Lennox’s felt like someone took his heart and crushed it between a heavy fist. “We’ll not have that, will we?”

She looked from her cousin to him. “I wanted to protect you all, there’s been a lot going on and I didn’t want to be an added burden.”

“You’d be doing no such thing,” Lennox said again firmly.

Alastair nodded. “We protect our own, Bacchus Hill will raise the ramparts and fight for those we care for.”

“They want a war, then they bloody well don’t know who they’ve decided to declare one against,” Lennox said his tone

clipped. “We were raised running these bloody streets and hiding in the hills, I will lose them there myself if I have to.”

“Lose them?” Kiman questioned.

His intent was clear, Lennox didn’t blink an eye when he met her gaze. “Just lose them indefinitely.”

“How do we proceed?” Rohan asked. “They’re a threat and their intent are on her or money... maybe?”

“It’s me, I’m the one that got away and testified bringing their operation to light,” Kiman explained. “There are warrants out across the world for her, and her income and value to her clients are compromised. I was told I would need to testify again if she and the others were caught.”

“I suspect, to get rid of Kiman their lawyers could claim they were innocent,” Samara surmised. “We’ll let Baz know at Interpol, my people will be in on the loop as well. Two international criminals back-to-back, they may start thinking we have some kind of reputation here on the hill.”

“Let’s not have that shall we?” Alastair said with a frown.

“We’ll try our best to keep this off the higher ups radar,” Samara promised. “But Kiman can come back to the bed and breakfast with me.”

“Its best she stays here with me,” Lennox announced. “Then men she showed up with weren’t on the small side, and now we know what they’re capable of. Putting the children and mothers who are there for safety in jeopardy.”

“He’s right,” Kiman looked at her cousin. “It’s another reason why chose the hotel before I planned to leave.”

“Ok a hotel room here with armed guards...”

“She’ll stay in this penthouse, it has a private elevator with only key code access,” Lennox said. “The boys will be always downstairs, but we can’t secure every room even with one armed guard. It will take them hell to reach my penthouse and then they’d have to go through me. The devil himself.”

“Wow,” Callum looked away. “That was a lot.”

“I can shake your bones too, youngling,” Lennox pointed out.

“Sorry,” Callum apologized while a smile pulled at his lips.

“I’ll be pulling in my contacts to track down this bitch and her people,” Lennox said. “She should’ve left you alone, now I’m going to topple everything to the ground.”

“And with that we shall reconvene for brunch, shall we?” Alastair stood. “We’ll come to you, the less they see of Kiman the better.”

“Perfect see you then,” Lennox stood.

“Are you sure,” Samara looked at Kiman with concern. “I can stay.”

Kiman nodded. “I trust Lennox and I know he’ll protect me.”

Samara nodded and hugged her cousin. “See you tomorrow, I’ll bring your things.”

At the door she stopped Lennox with a hand on his arm. “You hurt her or cause her an ounce of distress; I will gut you from groin to throat.”

“Understood,” Lennox could appreciate the protective nature of a cousin as formidable as Samara.

After the door was closed, the silence was deafening, and Lennox turned to face Kiman. “I’ll get towels and other things you need into the guest bedroom; you finish your tea.”

Kiman smiled. “Thank you, Lennox for everything.”

“For you, anything,” he said and meant it.

She would get all his care and more if she wanted it. To protect Kiman would soothe the beast within him. But when it came to Anika Petrov and anyone involved in hurting Kiman, they did not know what was unleashed when they entered his hotel.



KIMAN SAT ON THE EDGE of the bed and looked around the guest room of Lennox's penthouse home. She'd been working for him over a year and a half now and she'd never seen a guest go up to his place unless it was one of Bacchus family. Even his business associates met him in the club or in his office, but he kept the penthouse as his sanctuary, except now...for her. The room was painted in a rich beige that reminded her of toffee and the accents were lighter browns and yellows.

The thick down comforter beneath her fingers were soft and in the corner was one of those ambient heaters that showed a picture of simulated flames while warming the room. There was no doubt he decorated the room or his home, Lennox had good taste and while he kept silent about most things, Kiman knew still waters ran deep within him. He had no problem standing back and letting this play out, but this time she saw the rage that could be unleashed when she told her story. It would be directed at Anika and her cohorts.

Lennox brought her items she would need for the night until Samara could return with her own things. He cleared his throat after knocking on the door and stepped inside carrying a stack of towels in one hand a mug in the other.

"I have some towels and other things, toothbrush and in this hand a hot toddy to warm you up," he gave her a smile.

Kiman couldn't help but smile in return. "Thank you, you're amazing Lennox for doing this for me."

"I am no such thing," Lennox handed her the mug that she placed on the bedside table before he put the towels on the bed. "I'll not have the woman I—I consider a friend, harmed in any way."

"Thank you," Kiman knew he amended his words but said nothing.

There was a connection between them, and he never made any attempt to ask her—her heart broke a little, knowing that now he knew the truth Lennox probably would not try to ask her out. She had dreams of his kiss, the feel of his beard against her skin. It took years to build herself back from bone

and in an instant, Anika took it all away, once again. Wherever that woman stepped she left darkness and evil in her wake.

She took a sip of the toddy and gave a small cough. “Is this more whiskey than tea?”

He looked embarrassed. “Sorry, I might’ve been too heavy handed. “I can make another.”

“No, it’s fine, maybe I need it.” She gave a short laugh. “I’d like to forget tonight even happened.”

“Kiman, how I wish you would’ve told me sooner,” the comfort of his voice pulled her in.

“You can see why it’s hard to talk about and why I wouldn’t want people to know,” she replied.

“I understand, but still...” Lennox stopped himself. “Are you alright?”

She nodded. “I am, but my foundation seems rocky right now.”

“This will be over soon, until then, I would prefer you not work until this is over,” Lennox told her.

“I need the pay, I have bills and I send money to my parents,” she said.

“You send money to your parents even though they essentially ostracized you for something that wasn’t your own doing?” Lennox frowned. “That doesn’t seem right.”

Kiman shrugged. “It’s how it’s done in my culture; I may be the black sheep, but I am the oldest with more financial means to help. I send money so they can put it towards the home and my siblings.”

“Ah, still it’s not fair,” Lennox said bluntly. “I cannot tell you what to do, but I can assure you, your pay will still be deposited so you won’t lack for income.”

“I can’t take money for not working,” Kima said firmly. “It feels like....”

“Understood,” he answered giving a knowing nod. “Can I switch you to the books then, you can do the purchase orders

for the hotel and payroll, general accounting and this can be accessed from the computer in my offices here.”

“I can do that,” Kiman sighed. “Annika is making me a prisoner in my own home. I’ll be stuck inside, and I hate the feeling of not being able to go as I please, where I please. It’s like being trapped in that house again.”

“No, nothing in your life will be like that again,” Lennox promised firmly. “Anytime you want to leave, I’ll take you, so you can feel the sun on your face.”

“Maybe you’ll show me your highlands?” Kima looked up at him.

He gave a stiff nod, his face revealing nothing. “Aye, if that’s something you would like.”

Kiman looked away; unable to bear the fact that it seemed Lennox was disgusted with her now.

“I’ll try to get some sleep now,” Kiman said suddenly. “Thank you again, or everything.”

“I didn’t think you wanted to sleep in your clothes, so I brought—um one of my pajama shirts for you,” he inclined his head to the pile on the bed. “It’s only the top, the trousers wouldn’t fit you though.”

“You are a rather large man,” she teased. “But I’m a size fourteen, I’d probably just have to roll up the legs. Curves work to my advantage.”

His deep blue eyes seemed to darken at her word. “Should I grab them for you?”

She shook her head. “No, the shirt is fine, goodnight, Lennox.”

“Goodnight.” Lennox hesitated with his hand on the doorknob. “Kiman, I promise you, you are safe here, with me.”

Kiman nodded. “I know.”

He closed the door with a soft click and silence reigned again in the room. Kima got up and went to the bathroom after

a hot shower and brushing her teeth, she put her long braids up in a bunch using the scrunchy she kept around her hand. Samara would have her silk bonnet tomorrow and it would be easier to keep her hair neat.

In bed she pulled the blankets up over her waist and took a sip of the hot, now warm toddy on the bedside table. The taste of whiskey was even more prominent, but she drank almost the whole mug, hoping it would relax her enough to sleep. It did the trick and soon her eyes were closing, the stress and exhaustion released her tight shoulders as she fell asleep.

You are so very pretty; our clients will love you.

Kimman, you do as you're told or face Viktor's belt again.

This bitch, drug her, he likes her compliant.

Hit her harder so she knows...

Kimman woke up screaming—screaming because she could still feel the lash of the belt and the prick of the needle in her arm. She could still feel cruel hands dragging her to rooms where she'd rather die than face the horrors inside. The lifeless eyes of Tamara with a needle in her arm and foam at her mouth. The faces of the other girls just like her, some who might not have escaped.

The screams turned into feral noises, and she fought more, strong hands holding her, and then she was being rocked against someone's hard chest. A low voice was crooning to her softly, a song in deep baritone between the pleading words for her to wake up and that she was safe.

"Lennox," she said the name slowly as the dream left her and reality came into focus.

"Aye," his voice was husky with emotion. "You're safe, *Mo chridhe*, you're not there anymore."

She wrapped her arms around his waist feeling the warmth of his bare skin. Kimman held on for dear life as if Lennox was the anchor to this world and she couldn't be dragged back to the past.

“I can still taste the bitterness of what they injected into me on the back of my tongue,” Kiman shuddered. “Feel the hands that I know shouldn’t touch me even though it was like I was outside my own body.”

“Don’t,” Lennox’s voice broke. “Please don’t.”

She moved away from him. “I’m sorry that I disgust you now.”

Lennox looked shocked. “What? No, Kiman that never entered my mind.”

“I see how you looked at me earlier when you brought me the towels, your face doesn’t have the same expression that you had before this,” Kiman told him. “The one that seemed to be just for me, I can’t blame you, I was used, and tossed aside.”

“Stop that now, not another word,” Lennox took a deep breath. “You’re completely and utterly ravishing in my eyes, beauty beyond measure.”

“I saw your face,” Kiman persisted. “You don’t need to lie to make me feel better. I know the stigma that many face after violations like I faced. I learned in therapy and in group sessions, many women chose not even to tell their mates because of how they feel they would react. I accepted this a long time ago.”

“On my honor it’s not so,” Lennox vowed. “The reason I mask my face is to hide my utter need for vengeance, and the rage I feel towards those who dared hurt you. I don’t want you to be afraid of the violence that’s surging through me now. You’ve had enough of that to last several lifetimes.”

Kima cupped his cheek. “I am never scared of you, Lennox, from the time I met you. I’ve felt safe and comfortable in your presence.”

“Aye, as a friend, I understand that,” he looked away. “I’m an old fool feeling for you the way I do.”

“You’re fifty-two and how would you know how I feel unless you ask?” Kiman replied. “And it’s not just as a friend.”

He kissed the palm of her hand. “Then I have hope.”

“More than that,” she hesitated.

“Are you able to go back to sleep?” Lennox asked gently.

“Can you stay?” Kiman asked hesitantly. “Until I fall asleep?”

“I can,” he agreed. “You get under the blanket and get settled.”

While she got under the blankets, Lennox sat with his back against the headboard and took her hand.

Kiman put the blanket over his legs. “You can lie down.”

“It will be best, love, if I sit like this,” His tone was husky, and he squeezed her hand gently.

“What were you singing to me in Gaelic?” Kiman asked. “It pulled me from the darkness.”

“An old lullaby my ma sung to me long ago, when I was a wee lad, before I became a holy terror that caused her many a gray hair,” Lennox replied amused.

She gave a soft laugh. “I’ve seen you and Alastair together, I’m sure it’s exactly as you say.”

“I’ll share our adventures one day soon,” he promised. “You sleep, I’ll watch over you and keep the *cat-sith* from snaking into your dreams and causing chaos.”

“I appreciate that.”

Kiman smiled from where her head lay on the pillow, looking up at him and he smiled in return, his face not the mask that disguised his feelings anymore. Instead, it was familiar, Lennox made a warmth spread through her, that she could not deny. It was the only time she ever felt that way, desire, need and it was Lennox, the feelings also scared her. Samara said she had to move on; to not let the actions of others keep her from living a good life. Maybe her cousin was right, but it would be slow going; and until Anika was in prison or dead... Would she be able to move on?”



Chapter Two

Lennox sat behind the desk in his office and thrummed his fingers against the hard wood of the desk impatiently. The voice on the other end of the phone he held up to his ear just annoyed him and offered no new information on where Anika Petrov could be lurking. If it was within his power to end this with one fell swoop, he would do so quick and precise. The Petrov woman was adept at hiding because no one could find where she was staying. Lennox assumed one of the pricier hotels in Edinburgh would have her there but no such luck.

“Matthew—” the voice went on and Lennox said his name sharply. “Matthew—shut up and listen. Find her, I don’t care what hole she, and her muscle crawled in. Find the bloody woman or I’m going to take Edinburgh apart brick by brick until I do.”

Lennox hung up and pinched the bridge of his nose before a knock on the door caused him to lift his head.

Samara poked her head around the barrier. “I’ve got Baz with me. Is it safe to come in?”

“As safe and it’s going to get, I’m annoyed,” Lennox waved her in. “Come on, then.”

“I’ve got Kim’s luggage and things, I wanted to see if you had any information before I head up to see her,” Samara was dressed in her high waisted jeans with suspenders over a light blue shirt. The boots she wore made her look at least three inches taller than her usual five’ seven height.

“Like a cockroach, the Petrov woman has found a place to crawl into that none of my people can find,” Lennox said. “This makes me quite unhappy, I wanted to find her so you and your people could just take her into custody before I drop her in the loch.”

Baz laughed. “It would be less paperwork for both of us, she’s on so many watch lists, I can’t fathom how she’s travelling.”

“Rich friends,” Samara said. “I’m sure she had clients who seem to be fine upstanding members of society on the outside. Only to be the biggest abhorrent bastards when the doors of the sanctuary close behind them.”

“Well, we should root them all out to the light of day,” Lennox answered. “Any information on any of her clients?”

Baz sat back in the chair. “We’re running some names now as known associates, but some of these people are considered untouchable.”

“Are they now?” he clenched his fists. “Give me the opportunity to reach out and touch someone, on repeat in the face—with my fist.”

“You’re certainly riled up,” Baz commented. “But alas, we both have been ordered to tread carefully. Our higher ups have no problem snagging Anika Petrov as a feather in their cap, but to point fingers as some of our elitist friends, they want solid, irrefutable evidence of their crimes.”

Lennox gave a short laugh. “Of course, we don’t want to offend the rich bastards, right? Bunch of sycophants, the lot of them.”

“Baz, I will let you fill him in with what little we know while I go see my cousin,” Samara stood and moved to the door. “I’m sure she wants to be out of the clothes she’s been in since yesterday.”

“I gave her a set of my pajamas too, so she could have something else to sleep in,” he told her.

“Did you now?” Samara shot him a sidelong glance.

Lennox felt his face warm. “I wanted her to be comfortable.”

“I’m sure,” she called over her shoulder.

As Samara left, Alastair walked by her. “Samara, you continue to look ravishing, don’t you age?”

“You men of the hill are all a bunch of sweet talkers,” she laughed and kept on her way.

“Beastie,” Alastair said to Lennox and then looked at him curiously. “Why is your face red beneath all that scruff?”

“My beard is neatly trimmed,” he ran his hand over his salt and pepper beard.

“He just revealed that Kim slept in his pajamas, very intimate,” Baz explained jovially.

“I will wallop you,” Lennox glared at the younger man.

“I’m forty-one,” Baz pointed out.

“Still a whelp to me,” he retorted.

Alastair sat down. ‘It’s rather amusing, that you can still blush. You’re not cold and dead inside like you claim.’”

“Baz what names are you tracking?” Lennox asked ignoring his longtime friend.

“Clayton Berry, June Sims, John Moore and Argyle Rizzo,” Baz listed them.

“Christ, I could see Clayton and Rizzo as criminals,” Alastair looked at Lennox. “Remember him when Rizzo was running for parliament? He called us on the hill thugs and accused me of running a mafia type family.”

“That cunt, we had to file a defamation suit to get him to stop and retract his words publicly,” Lennox nodded. “Between the Marshall and Bacchus name, he was about to pay out the nose.”

“Money, he doesn’t have, because when I ran his financials, he is robbing Peter to pay Paul,” Baz commented. “Whatever wealth he may claim to have, is on paper only.”

“So being in some criminal shite would bring in money he needs,” Lennox mused. “June Sims is a new name for me, but even women have their perversions. I’ll get my people to start watching her, discreetly.”

“Eleven years later, Anika Petrov still strikes fear in Kiman,” Alastair said. “Some trauma, never fully heals, but I think it’s more than that. Why would she come out of hiding now to find Kim?”

“Starting business again, would be a possibility,” Baz suggested. “There are heightened human trafficking crimes across the world, she’s greedy for her piece of the pie.”

Lennox ran his hand over his beard. “That is a possibility, her exact words were a debt needed to be paid. She didn’t sound like she wanted to kill Kiman but take her to finish some kind of deal. I’ll be damned if I let Petrov lay hands on her.”

“Edinburgh, tracking her here and these people, it’s all connected,” Alastair frowned. “Maybe Kiman, can place voices, if Baz could get samples?”

“Maybe,” Lennox said doubtfully. “But do we want to potentially traumatize her further?”

“To truly heal from this, she’s going to have to face her demons,” Alastair said firmly. “She has to conquer those fears and face these people in court when it’s over. Best to start dealing with it now.”

“That’s easy for you to say…” Lennox began.

Alastair cut him off. “No, it’s not, we’ve all heard tales of what our women have suffered, generations before and yet they survived. Samara has said the same thing at the B & B, you agreed. It doesn’t change now because it’s Kiman. You can only protect her so much, not cover her from the truth.”

Baz stood up. “I’ve got to get back to work, I’m driving into Glasgow. I’ll tell you what I have recording wise and any more information I find.”

“Thanks,” Lennox stood and shook his hand. “I’ll owe you a boon.”

Baz flashed him a grin. “I don’t mind collecting.”

Lennox knew Alastair was right but didn’t like the fact that Kiman would have to even set eyes on filth such as these people. Baz closed the door and there as silence for a moment before Alastair spoke.

“So, you love her then,” he said in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Aye,” Lennox didn’t try to deny it. “Am I a fool?”

“Are the feelings reciprocated?” Alastair asked.

Lennox hesitated. “She says it’s more for her as well, but can I believe that after all she’s faced? I don’t want her to see me as a protector because of this situation, it could be the feelings Kiman thinks she might have, are because of the matter at hand.”

“Len, I’ve seen the looks you’ve given to each other way before this,” Alastair pointed out with a wide smile. “The secret smiles, shy glances from her, the way her eyes are instantly drawn to you when you walk into a room. From what Samara has said, Kim has spent years in therapy overcoming what happened to her, so it doesn’t control her life. Give her the benefit of the doubt to know what she wants.”

“You didn’t see her crawl into my lap after I found her curled up in a corner of my office,” Lennox pointed out, thinking about it, made to hit something more palpable. “I wanted to run outside and kill Anika Petrov and the muscle she brought with her through my doors. Kim was terrified, I don’t want to take advantage...”

“Beast...”

Lennox sighed. “I wish you’d let that nickname go.”

Alastair chuckled. “Like everyone let the *lion* fade for me? My friend, the reason why Kim acted like that was the shock of seeing the Petrov woman after years and years of feeling safe. It had to make the memories flood back in.”

Lennox sighed. “I didn’t look at it from that perspective.”

“I’m here to be the voice of reason, like I always have been,” Alastair said amused.

“So, you suggest taking it slow and trusting in the connection we had before this situation happened,” Lennox confirmed.

“Exactly that my friend,” Alastair chuckled. “It’s quite interesting to see my bigger than life friend, being felled by love. After all this time.”

Lennox thought back to the past. “I don’t think I was in love then, just lust and hardheaded to boot. Living up to the namesake of being the ‘Beast of Bacchus Hill,’ gave me an inflated ego.”

“Aye, but the times we had, yes?” Alastair grinned.

Lennox smiled. “That we did, I thought that part of me was dead and buried. Now the beast has to rear its ugly head again. Last night I sat with her almost all night because of her nightmares, I’ve never felt so helpless.”

“Can I say something?” Alastair asked.

“Of course,” Lennox inclined his head.

Alastair leaned forward. “Give the beast free reign for someone you love, bring hellfire down on their heads for Kiman.”

That was all Lennox needed to hear. “Aye, that I can do, sometimes the old ways are best.”

“Very true,” his friend agreed.

It was settled, he knew what needed to happen for the protection of Kiman from the people who caused the dark shadows in her life. He would bring light to those corners again, where her fear held her its grips while she fought unknown monsters in her dreams. Lennox would also show her how gentle his hands could be and show her not all men are animals. But the ones who were, who caused Kiman harm, Lennox promised to put down like the rabid dogs they were.



KIMAN PUT HER THINGS away in the closet and chest of drawers of the guest bedroom of Lennox’s penthouse, while Samara, sorted her make-up and hair supplies on the bed.

“I like this shade of wine-red lipstick,” Samara opened the cap. “Liquid lipstick that’s not matte is hard to find, why does everything have to be matte?”

Kima laughed. “It’s the new thing.”

“Your lips look dry, and I always liked gloss for a pouty lip,” Samara smiled.

“I’m sure Callum likes that as well,” Kiman teased.

“We’re not much of a secret now, are we?” Samara sighed. “I wonder if Alastair knows?”

“Maybe he does, is that a problem?” Kiman asked.

Her gorgeous cousin chewed the corner of her lip before speaking. “I’m forty-one to his thirty-two, maybe three? Would he want that for his youngest son?”

“I think that would be the pot calling the kettle black seeing his age and that of his wife,” Kiman folded a pink blouse quickly before adding it to the pile in the drawer.

“That’s the father, he may have expectations for his son,” she pointed out.

“The Bacchus men don’t seem to have any expectations past being genuinely good people.”

Kiman worked on her undie drawer next, she was a bit obsessive compulsive with her need to fold and color coordinate items. Her therapist said it was because she could control the order in her life compared to the past where she lost her control and was held against her will.

“And what of Lennox?” Samara gave a soft laugh when Kiman’s hands stilled. “Even his name affects you huh?”

“My nightmares were back last night, he sat with his back against the headboard all night to watch over me,” Kiman hesitated then gave the admission. “I wished he would’ve laid beside me and held me, but he said it was best he sits there. I woke up with my head in his lap and he was so still I thought he wasn’t breathing.”

“A man willing to stay up all night to watch over a person he cares about is a rare find.” Samara concluded. “I think he feels he would scare you with his passion.”

“I—I want to feel passion, but am I...”

“Are you what?” Samara prodded.

“Am I so broken, that I won’t feel anything or be unable to feel? “Or will I be terrified and start screaming making Lennox feel horrid about even touching me?” Kiman quietly asked.

“Kimmy, you knew this day would come,” Samara waved her over to come sit next to her and took Kiman’s hands in her own. “I can only counsel you to take it slow, take it in stages until you know how you feel. You’re not broken, you feel something for him and he for you. So, we know the attraction is there, now it’s time to not be afraid, to take your life back and not let those sodding bastard’s win.”

Kiman took in a deep cleansing breath and exhaled slowly. “I can do that; a first kiss is a good place to start right?”

Samara nodded before giving her a hug. “It’s the best place to start but talk to him first.”

Kiman firmed her shoulders. “I got this.”

“Relax,” Samara laughed. “You’re forming a relationship, not getting ready to lead an incursion or a coup.”

“You’ve met Lennox, isn’t it an incursion? You can never tell what he’s thinking,” she laughed.

Samara’s smile faded. “We knew what he was thinking as you told your story yesterday, Kiman. Be prepared to live with the knowledge that he may just kill for you.”

“I know,” the thought was right in the forefront of Kiman’s mind. “I know I’m supposed to feel bad, but how many times have I dreamt of that bitch dead for what she did to me?”

“It’s much different when its real,” Samara answered. “I won’t lose any sleep over it, but then I am much more jaded.”

“I suspect that’s what you tell yourself,” Kiman went back to unpacking. “Between the two of us, we’ll get it all sorted, won’t we?”

“That we will. Of that I am certain,” Samara stood. “Now, I have to get on the road, for Glasgow. Baz thinks he’s meeting alone with his people, but it’s going to be a combined effort,

my superior and his will be there as well. Anika Petrov should've stayed in her filthy hole."

"Money makes people desperate, and that will be her demise," Kiman said firmly. "I'll go to the bed and breakfast to help the ladies while you're gone."

"Kiman no, I have Ellie covering," Samara shook her head. Kiman wondered how she managed to be a deep cover agent, and still run a shelter that helped abused women and children relocate. Samara would always be a superhero in her eyes.

"I'm going," Kiman repeated firmly. "They know me, and I will not be in hiding because of Anika, never again."

"Well, you run that past Lennox," Samara smiled. "If you can send one of the guys with you, I'll feel much more secure, with you being there."

"I'll go down with you now."

Kiman grabbed her purse and together they left the penthouse and used the private elevator to go down to the main floor of Skymile. Samara took her leave and Kiman knocked on the door of Lennox's office.

"Come," his voice was loud and brisk, but when she stepped inside, his demeanor visibly softened. "Kiman, I thought we agreed no work today?"

"I'm not," she smiled. "But I do need to go to the bed and breakfast, Samara is going to Glasgow for a meeting."

Lennox frowned. "And she asked you to go, after all that has happened yesterday?"

"She didn't," Kiman answered, as he came around the desk, he was in one of his usual impeccable three-piece suits and his Marshall tartan green plaid tie. "I offered and Ty or one of the boys can take me and stay until I'm done."

"I'll take you," Lennox said firmly.

Kiman shook her head. "Lennox, you shouldn't put business aside for me, I'm sure I'll be fine with Ty or Alex."

Lennox moved to grab his satchel and he closed his laptop before slipping the slim computer into the bag. “I can sit discreetly in the dining area and work or make calls. I won’t be deterred, Kiman.”

“Of course, you won’t,” she said wryly. “Very well, let’s go.”

Two minutes later, they were in his polished black Bentley heading to the hill.

“Samara said I should pursue my attraction to you,” Kiman said simply.

The car swerved and Lennox worked quickly to get back in his lane while horns blared at him.

“What?” he glanced at her shocked at her matter-of-fact statement.

“By your reaction, I think you heard me,” Kiman smiled. “I would like to see where my attraction to you will lead.”

“It will lead to my bed,” Lennox said bluntly. “I’ve tried to suppress my need for you to no avail.”

“So, you’re willing?” Kiman asked.

“Very much so, lass,” he answered quickly.

She chose her next words carefully. “Lennox, I’m not broken.”

“Who said you were? Give me a name and I’ll smash my hand into their face,” he said angrily.

She covered his hand with hers. “Calm down, no one said it. I felt like that for a long time after my life with Anika. Like I was shattered into little pieces and could never be put back together, but I’m still learning that I am more than the events that happened to me.”

“What are you trying to say?” Lennox asked.

“In essence, if this goes where we expect it will, you will be my first lover, the one of my choosing. But I’m still hesitant of that step in a way, so please be patient with me.” Kiman pleaded.

“*Mo chridhe*, I can have the patience of Job, when need be,” he kissed the hand that covered his. “For you, I will be the gentlest and most patient man.”

“No too gentle,” Kiman said. “I want to feel passion, the fire that steals my breath away.”

“You shouldn’t say things like that until... well... not right now while I’m driving,” Lennox’s voice became deep and husky with desire which in turn made his accent more pronounced.

“What does *Mo chridhe*, mean?” She asked.

“My heart,” Lennox took a beat before he answered. “To lose you, sweet Kiman would turn me into a man of stone, and god help who stands before me if that ever happens.”

He was dead serious; Kima could tell and as he parked in front of the bed and breakfast. Lennox got out of the car to scan the area before letting her out and ushering her inside the doors quickly. As the B7B does for many women who come through the doors, it felt safe and you were immediately comforted. The warmth of Samara’s sanctuary surrounded her reminding Kiman how it helped heal her as it did for many of the women, and children who passed through her doors.

“I’ll be in the back corner when you’re ready to leave,” Lennox promised, knowing that the women were sometimes apprehensive around men.

She cupped his cheek for a moment, “You are amazing. Do you know that?”

He looked away in embarrassment. “Go, on with you then, trying to charm me with sweet words.”

“Is it working?” Kima smiled.

“Aye. It is,” he kissed the palm of her hand.

Kiman went on to take care of business for the ladies staying with Samara, and sometimes that included helping them get financial services. By the time they came to the bed and breakfast, things had gone past the realm of safety. So, Samara’s underground network also helped with new identities

and relocation, and therapy. That was one of Samara's main services that she made sure her clients had.

The underground network was strong and without it, Kiman knew she would be much worse off than she was now in trying to cope with her past. It was easy to fall into the routine of helping the woman at the bed and breakfast, by the time Samara came back it was well into the evening. Still, Lennox patiently sat at the same table, with his laptop open, except now he had a glass of his whiskey beside him.

"How did you get that?" Kiman asked.

"Saul brought it, after you brought me a meal," he smiled up at her. "Are ye ready to go then?"

"Yes, Samara is back and told me to get you home from being a specter in her dining area," Kiman smiled. "Shall we go home?"

"Home," he repeated the word slowly before draining his glass. "Yes, let's do that."

"Why did you say home like that?" She asked as they went out to the car.

"Honestly, in all the places I've been very few have felt like home, like the penthouse is a place I use as a sanctuary," he admitted and put his hand over his heart. "But you said home and I felt our bond strengthen within me. My home and hearth are with you."

"That's..."

"Too much, too soon?" Lennox asked uncertainly. "I keep forgetting that in these times, me putting my heart on the line can be off putting."

"That's perfect actually," she finished. "I feel the same way, when I crawled into your arms, I felt your arms around me, and I knew—I just knew."

He smiled and opened the car door for her. "Let's go home."

The evening drive had much less traffic, so they made it back to the Skymile earlier than expected. Lennox parked in

his usual spot and opened the passenger side door for her before he took his satchel from the back passenger seat. Together they walked inside the hotel lobby to see a huge bouquet of blood red roses at the reservation desk.

“Kiman, these were delivered for you today,” the male reservationist said with a warm smile.

She took the small card and opened it to read the elegantly written words. “See you soon, brown skin princess, I still own you. Anika.”

“That fucking woman!” Lennox snarled. “I’m going to wring her neck like a yard fowl.”

“Throw them into the trash,” Kiman said simply.

“As you wish,” Justin said. “I knew they gave me a bad feeling; I’ll take them to the incinerator. The best way to destroy darkness under the guise of beauty or so my ma would say.”

“Good idea, Justin, thank you,” Kiman steered Lennox towards the private elevator.

He was practically vibrating with pure seething rage and as soon as the metal doors opened, he stalked into the room and pulled his cell from the pocket.

“I’m going to get a no trespass order out against her or anyone that fucking works for her,” he grated out.

“It was a delivery service, they wouldn’t have known,” Kiman pointed out gently. “Lennox leave it for now, any solicitor will be closed by now anyway.”

“Not Saul, he’ll answer and get started on it in the morning,” he replied. “What I’ll not have, is you being terrorized at every turn before I rip ever bloody cobblestone from the path to find her. I cannot abide...”

Kiman stepped closer to him and stood on tip toe to press her lips against his. It stopped his stream of words, and in an instant she was pulled against the broad expanse of his chest. The kiss was languid, soft friction from his mouth to hers, and with a soft sigh she parted her lips, giving him the invitation to

take a taste of her. A soft groan rumbled through his chest and he dipped his tongue into her mouth to taste her.

Kimani in turn savored the bold whiskey that was left upon his lips. He deepened the kiss, and his arms tightened around her, it was then Kimani placed her hands on his chest to stop and pulled away. Lennox sensed her cue and pulled away, while his breathing was ragged.

“Samara was right the first kiss was a good place to start,” Kimani smiled up at him and his rich laughter echoed around them.

“Aye, it was love,” he answered gently. “I’ll have you in my bed tonight, yes? Only to sleep, only to feel you in my arms as I chase away the demons.”

“Yes,” Kimani nodded. “And there I will stay, each step we take will be together.”

“Together,” Lennox held out his hand and she took it.

There it was, the one thing that sealed her life with Lennox Marshall. He would be her protector, lover and as they said in Scotland, her mate. Age had nothing to do with it, just the strong bond of the heart. He would be hers and she would be his, her past could never get between that.



Chapter Three

“We’ve got Anika Petrov and she’s in custody.”

One week later the words came from Baz who sat in the penthouse living room with a mug of coffee in his hand. Samara had called earlier to let her know and that Anika wouldn’t talk to anyone else but Kiman. She agreed to go and that was one of the reasons Baz was there, Lennox didn’t know as yet that it was her plan to see Anika. Even Baz seemed nervous at his reaction, while sitting there dressed in a royal blue suit with a tie to match and as usual his badge was clipped to the belt on his waist.

“Where was she found?” Lennox asked.

“In a private apartment complex,” Baz replied. “Under the name of Vanderbilt Enterprises, we’re trying to run down the owners but the banks in Sweden are like Costa Rica, they work on numbered accounts instead of names. They are quite firm on anonymity for their clients.”

“I’ll get my people on it,” Lennox replied. “I have more than a few connections in the banking world of Sweden.”

Kiman watched him as he spoke, today was his version of being dressed down, in black slacks and a black sweater. Lennox looked completely devilish and handsome.

“Is she speaking, has she named the others, the bastards she consorts with?” Lennox asked, moving to sit next to Kiman.

“She has not, Anika won’t speak to anyone except Kiman,” Baz replied.

Lennox gave a harsh laugh. “Then her mouth and throat can wither away without talking.”

“I’m going,” Kiman said with a firm voice.

“I bloody well think not,” Lennox said firmly.

Kiman turned quickly and gave him a look. “We may care for each other Lennox Marshall, but don’t you ever dare tell

me what to do. I have spent long enough trying to regain my independence and I refuse to give it up again.”

“That’s not how I meant it, my apologies,” Lennox ran his hand through his hair in frustration. “That woman is not worthy to be in your presence.”

“She’s not,” Kiman confirmed. “But for me to reclaim my life and to bury all she did in the grave I must confront her. To show her that I’m no longer afraid. She saw me at my worst when she walked into Skymile and thinks she has some control over me. She does not and she’ll see it!”

“Then I shall go with you,” Lennox took her hands. “If only to be your support.”

“I would like that,” Kiman smiled. “Samara is there waiting, we should go.”

“Before you do, Kiman I want to you to listen to some voices,” Baz pulled a small recorder from the jacket of his suit. “If you can confirm any of these voices then we know some of her counterparts here in Edinburgh. People we suspect and would like to either focus on or take off our list completely.”

Lennox looked worried. “It’s been so long…”

Kiman gave short caustic laugh. “I could be one hundred years old, and I’ll still remember their voices.”

“Ready?” Baz asked his deep voice gentled.

Kiman nodded and reached for Lennox’s hands once more. “I’m ready.”

Baz played the first voice as she closed her eyes, Kiman shook her head, the voice wasn’t familiar.

“No,” she whispered the anticipation of hearing a voice from the past made her heartbeat faster.

“Next one,” Baz played another audio clip, and the voice made her blood run cold.

“Him—he—um, he laughed a lot, when they drugged me,” Kiman said. “I can remember him telling Anika, she needed to make a room specifically for girls to be drugged.

“Who’s this one then?” Lennox voice was stiff with anger.

Baz answered. “It’s Argyle Rizzo, the minister of parliament.”

“I, and Alastair know him well, he grew up right outside the golden mile,” Lennox said. “He thought he was someone powerful, seems to me, I’ll again have to prove otherwise.”

The next voice gleaned nothing, neither did two more but the last one, once again was imprinted in Kiman’s memories.

“This one, likes to hit the girls, beat them with crops and other things to degrade them,” Kiman’s hand trembled and Lennox squeezed it. “This one never touched me, as far as I know, but he was one of the ones who drove Tamara to her death.”

“And this name?” Lennox asked.

“Clayton Berry,” Baz answered. “That large yacht that’s usually moored at Victoria Docks, is his. He’s in bed with some pretty hardcore Russian oligarchs, so I assume this is how he knows Petrov.”

“And I shall settle her accounts,” Lennox’s tone was deadly.

“Now we know where to start,” Baz said. “Len, I have no doubt that Rizzo owns that apartment complex. If you can find me proof, I’ll say I got it from one of my informants.”

“Don’t you need to name me as a source?” Lennox asked. “Not a problem, I can work my way around that. I need to be as anonymous as possible with certain areas of my business.”

“You Marshall’s,” Baz chuckled. “Can you follow me down to the Scotland Police Authority or SPA as we love to tease. Interpol moved my office there with the *Polis*.”

“At least you have an office, I still don’t know where Samara works out of,” Kiman said amused as she and Lennox stood.

“She’s a spook,” Lennox pointed out. “For all we know, the cellar of the bed and breakfast is one of their secret office blocks.”

“Now I need to look in the cellar,” Kiman smiled.

The ride to the SPA took around twenty minutes and by the time they parked, Kiman’s hands were clammy with nervousness. She hoped one day the time would come she could face and confront her abusers, but she never thought it would actually happen. Now she was given the chance, she was still nervous but brave.

Stories like hers needed to come to the light, in safe places where women didn’t feel as if they were being ridiculed. People like Anika and the men she confirmed by voice alone needed to face the public eye and be judged accordingly in a court of law. A few minutes of being uncomfortable wouldn’t destroy her, she was willing to face them in court long before now and Kiman firmed her shoulders to face Anika one on one.

Samara was waiting for her near the front desk of the department, dressed in her usual slacks and a yellow form fitting shirt with a three-quarter length sleeve. The black jacket matched the slacks and Samara wore her credentials around her neck on a lanyard.

“Are you okay?” Samara asked in concern.

Kiman nodded. “I’m fine, I recognized two of the voices on the tape, so Baz said that will help tremendously.”

“Only Baz huh?” Samara cast a devilish glance at Lennox. “This one is usually quiet, nothing to say Mr. Marshall?”

“We’re at the *polis* love, premeditation is a real thing,” Lennox said smoothly. “Where is the bitch?”

“In interview room one,” Samara said. “We can watch from behind the glass, Kiman it will all be recorded, every syllable or veiled threat.”

“You’re safe,” Baz added and looked at both her and Lennox. “You have my word.”

“Let’s do this,” Kiman said with an even voice and nod.

She was lead down the hall of the police station. Samara opened the door to the completely grey room, only one table

with chairs opposite each other were in the center of the room. Anika looked up when Samara led Kiman in, and a slow smile spread across her face.

Anika wore a pink track suit made of fleece and she wore no make-up. Her black hair was pulled up into a high ponytail and without her flawless make up, it was easy to see the age on her face. That or too much *high* living on the back of the victims she procured for her clients.

“I’ll be right outside,” Samara gave a cold glance at Anika. “In case you need a hand or a bullet.”

Kiman grinned. “Thank you.”

The two women sat across from each other, silently accessing each other. Kiman refused to be the one who spoke first, so she said nothing as Anika stared at her.

“Aren’t you going to say something?” Anika asked.

“You wanted to see me, not the other way around,” Kiman answered simply. “I always hoped you were dead somewhere.”

“Where has the little mouse gone who ran from me at the hotel?” Anika asked smoothly.

“That was a shock I admit, but that little mouse died a long time ago, Anika,” Kiman answered. “I know you’d like to think you broke me, and for a time you did. But I came through the flames stronger, so no one like you scares me any longer.”

“I always liked you best, your spirit, even after the drugs,” Anika laughed. “Then a new brown princess came out, so willing and submissive.”

“You make me sick,” Kiman spat out. “I’m going to go now; you have nothing to say, and I feel your filth crawling on my skin.”

“Your mouth always put you in a bad position,” Anika snapped.

“And your age truly shows without your palette of make-up, we both have our problems. Kiman went to stand. “It

brings me joy to know each year in jail will harden your face even more and the crone will truly have to look at herself in the mirror.”

“Do you know how I found you and Tamara that night?” Amika said in a conversational tone. “A person like me in a local little dance club, a hole in the wall dump in Ghana?”

“Not really, predators like you know where to find innocent victims,” Kiman answered.

“I can always find talent, this is true,” Anika said, and pinned her with a gaze. “But I had help, this time, in the form of your father, Mr. Asher. A dignified man with a penchant for money and opulent lifestyle.”

Kiman shook her head slowly, it felt like she was doused in cold water. “My father wouldn’t do that; he would bring shame to his family like that.”

“He had another daughter, the good one who chose to be educated, do as she was told, and become a doctor,” she answered. “While you were good with numbers, as he said, there was something in you that made you disobey him. I think he said *ademone*, that means demon, doesn’t it?”

“You’re lying,” Kiman felt her heart breaking. Beyond the little to no contact with her family, she always felt as if they searched for her, they did after all call Samara to find her. How could she believe her father would do this to her, where was her mother in this? Did she even know?

“You weren’t supposed to get away,” Anika continued and sighed. “God, I wish I had a cigarette in here. In any case, the story was to be, one of a willful daughter who didn’t listen, being lost to a good family. While he carted away one hundred thousand US dollars for his lifestyle. You were sold to me; Tamara was just a happy coincidence.”

Unable to restrain herself, Kiman drew her hand back and slapped Anika. An angry noise escaped her, then her hands were around her abuser’s neck. She heard the door open and slam against the wall, Samara’s voice begging to her to let go and Baz prying her hands from around Anika’s neck.

“I will kill you for what you did to me,” Kiman screamed.

Anika coughed. “Not me, but your own family.”

Kiman surged forward to strangle her again.

“Lennox get her out of here,” Samara yelled.

Kiman felt herself being lifted and carried from the room all the while yelling that Anika was lying.

“I hate you! I hope you die in prison!” Kiman screamed. “I hope they rip the flesh from your face!”

Lennox carried her past the police coming towards the room and out to the car. He pinned her between the car and his body, holding her, trying to wipe the tears that streamed down her face, until all the fight left her. Then pressed his forehead against hers as she sobbed.

“They sold me, they sold me like cattle,” Kiman sobbed. “My own family.”

“Oh love,” Lennox whispered raggedly. “I’m so very sorry, no one should suffer this knowledge, no one.”

“I still care for them, send them money, all the while, they knew!” She cried loudly and began to slip down the side of the car as her legs weakened. “Dear god, was I that bad of a child?”

“No, it is the greed of men. I don’t care if you were made from the fires of hell yourself, you did not deserve this,” Lennox held her up and to him before cupping her face and kissing away her tears. “I can tell you right now at eighteen, I was much more of a terror. That was an excuse and none of this is your fault.”

Samara rushed out the door and practically pushed Lennox aside to hold her cousin.

“I have to know if it’s true,” Kiman said the words through numb lips. “I need to know if mama and Delisa knew as well.”

“I’ll find out,” Samara promised. “If it is true your father, my uncle, committed a crime and aided in the death of Tamara indirectly. He will go to jail.”

“Drop him in the hole with the rest of them,” Kiman said dully. “I no longer care what the fuck happens to any of them. Can Lennox take me home?”

Samara looked at her worriedly. “Okay, I’ll come to you later?”

“Thanks,” Kiman said. “You can just call, I-I just need to be alone.”

Samara looked struck at her words. “Okay I’ll call. Lennox please don’t let her internalize this.”

“I will not, and for future reference I told you and Baz, this was a fucking bad idea. Anika wanted to inflict more pain and by God the both of you let it happen.” Lennox voice was restrained anger. He helped Kiman into the passenger seat of his car and closed the door.

The drive back to the hotel was a silent one and continued as they went upstairs to the penthouse. Kiman couldn’t voice into words what she was feeling. It was late afternoon, and with the fall coming in, the chill was in the air quicker as the first drops from a storm hit the panes of the floor length windows.

She stood there, watching the clouds roll in and the rain course down the glass as it became heavier. The thunder was an ominous roll in the sky that was only matched by the turmoil within her. She felt cold from the inside out and once again wondered if she would ever be warm again.

“*Mo chridhe*, you must eat something,” Lennox begged. “I have warm chicken and dumpling stew. It’s my ma’s recipe.”

“Maybe later,” she murmured and didn’t even turn to face him.

Lennox turned her to him. “Talk to me.”

Kiman shook her head. “I don’t know what to say, I feel like the filth of all this evil is on me and now it’s worse because my father was part of it.”

“Come then, we’ll shower, until you feel clean,” Lennox took her hand.

“Is this a way to get me naked?” Kiman managed to tease as he led her to the master bedroom.

“No, it’s for you to understand, none of these actions soil you. The blackness is in them, and it will be answered in this life or the next.” Lennox promised.

“If I asked you, would you make them pay as justice for me?” Kiman asked.

“I would take their lives if you asked it of me,” he answered automatically. “Is that what you want?”

“I want them to pay, I want them to suffer,” Kiman said viciously. “I want them to lose everything and for the world to know of their dark evil hearts.”

“Then you’ll have it,” Lennox promised. “This is my vow to you, as my woman. You’ll have your justice, and they will find no penance, no mercy.”

“Yes,” Kiman heard bits and pieces of his past and the nickname he was given. She was giving him reason to unleash the *beast* and so be it, she was tired of being the only one suffering the consequences for the actions of others.

Lennox undressed her and then himself, she could see the desire in his eyes as he viewed her body. But he never once did anything to cause her to think he was anything less than a gentleman of the old ways. The honor, kindness, the rage against the people who hurt her. He thought he hid so well, but it was part of his DNA. Kiman knew Lennox would cut his hands off before he’d ever hurt her.

Under the hot spray of the shower, she lifted her face and her tears mixed with the water running out of the shower head. There was a sob, then another and Lennox pulled her against him until her back was snug against his chest. He wrapped his arms around her and let her cry and the water wash the tears and pain away, then he bathed her, washing her skin and hair.

Stepping from the shower he wrapped her in large fluffy towels and all the while no words needed to be spoken. By the warmth of the electric fire of the heater against the wall, he combed his fingers through her braided hair, until it was

almost dry, and she was half asleep. It was the most cherished Kiman ever felt, as she fell asleep in his arms. Both still naked and Lennox held her cocooned against his body her silent sentinel.

Later she woke and turned in his arms and she felt him tighten his hold on her as if protecting her even as he slept. She opened her eyes to the dim room and could still hear the rain against the window. Night had fallen and the shadows in the room were caused from the ambient flame of the electric heater. Kiman drew slow circles in the hair on his chest, fascinated by the feel of him and the sensations of skin meeting skin. Her finger traced circles around his nipple watching it tighten and a soft groan escape Lennox.

“You’re awake,” Kiman said softly. It felt as if loud voices would break the warm sensual bubble created in the room.

“How could I not be with your exploration,” a small laugh made Lennox’s chest shake. ‘But I’ll need you to stop now it’s already torture laying with you like this and not being able to... well you know.’”

“We’ve held each other every night since I began sleeping here,” she pointed out.

“Not naked, feeling your skin against mine and your scent intoxicates me.” Lennox said huskily. “I’m trying to be a gentleman above all things and not make you afraid of me.”

“What if I don’t want you to be a gentleman?” Kiman asked looking up at him.

His blue eyes darkened with desire. “Don’t say that a man has only so much control.”

She cupped his cheek. “I want to feel what true lovemaking feels like, where my needs and passion is for someone, I care for. I want to feel this with you, Lennox teach me.”

“Where going to take this slow,” he told her. “It may kill me, but by the gods, I will make sure you never fear lying with me.”

Kiman smiled. “Okay, how do we start?”

“With—a—kiss,” Lennox punctuated each word with soft nibbling bites of her lips.

Her sigh was taken in by his lips that sealed against hers for a kiss that made something curl in her stomach. A delicious sensation that made her squirm while his kiss decimated her senses.

Lennox lifted his head his breathing ragged. “I’m going to touch you, at any point if you want me to stop, just say no and I’ll go dunk myself in a cold shower. You are in control here.”

Kimman nodded. “Can you kiss me again?”

“A wonderful idea,” he murmured and began kissing her in soft teasing pecks on her lips and taking her bottom lip lightly between his teeth.

She gasped when she felt his hands roam down her body and then back up her thighs to cup her full breasts.

“You’re curves, the softness of your skin,” He murmured against her lips. “It’s like the goddess Brigid molded you herself to be luscious and just for me.”

Lennox passed his thumb over the hard aching peak of her nipples before burying his face in her bosom with a low groan. Kimman could feel the hardness of his erection pressed against her thigh. Instead of fearing his desire-as she feared she might- hers spiraled up and emboldened her to reach between their bodies and take his cock into her hand. His hips jerked in response to her touch, and he moved her hand away quickly.

“Why did you stop me?” She asked worry in her tone. “Did I do something wrong?”

“No love, I would just rather hold on to my senses,” Lennox’s tone was a low gravelly, rumble filled with need. “Tonight, is for you, I want you to just feel.”

He cupped her breast. “Shall I taste them, *Mo chridhe?*”

“Please,” she said breathlessly.

Lennox built new feelings inside her, when he pulled the perky tip of her nipple into his mouth. He left his task to look at Kimman with such love and desire, any words on her lips

were lost. *He loves me*, she thought, he didn't have to say the words for her to know.

"You my darling, taste better than ambrosia," Lennox said almost reverently. "The dark ruby skin of your nipples and areolas, my God you are a treasure to behold."

"Why do you say such sweet things to me?" Kiman asked suddenly. "Even when I tried to date in Glasgow, no one has ever made me feel so cherished."

"Because you are cherished, my sweet love," he promised. "I say these things not to charm you, *Mo chridhe*, but because I feel them in every fiber of my being."

Kiman was the one who pulled him into her kiss and he simmering need burned bright within her once more. Lennox supped at her breasts while his hand ran down her torso and lay lightly against the trimmed mound of her sex.

"Open your legs for me, love," he whispered raggedly.

Kiman spread her legs giving him access to her core. As she felt his large digit slip between the folds of her outer labia, she shivered with anticipation. Lennox teased her clit in gentle circles, and her hips rose in response.

"You're so wet, I just want to sink myself inside you." Lennox murmured. "I'm going to touch you a little differently now. Tell me to stop if you're not ready."

Kiman bit her lips when his finger slipped lower, and he penetrated her slowly and a gasp caught in her throat.

He started a slow rhythm watching her face as he fingered her. "Do you like this?"

"Yes," Kim licked her lips and her hips rose gently searching for more of the sweet friction. "More, let me feel it all."

Lennox's kiss was hungry, and the pace of his digit increased, the way he touched her managed to graze her clit on repeat. A soft cry escaped her, and he groaned in response.

"Aye, yes love, find your wings and fly," he said.

“I feel...” Kiman’s words fell away as she arched into the bed when Lennox added his lips sucking at the sensitive tips of her breasts along with the penetration of her sex.

He drove her higher and higher, until heat washed over her in waves, taking her breath and she instinctively pumped her hips against his hand, seeking to prolong the pleasure coursing through her. She finally lay back gasping watching the back of her eye lids.

“Love, that was magnificent,” he crooned. “I think I will love watching you come for me over and over again.”

“What about you and your needs?” Kiman finally said as she lay on her side to face him.

“They will be sated soon enough, tonight, I wanted you to see, this is pleasure,” Lennox told her gently. “Nothing that happened to you was intimate or freely given. They are monsters and will be treated as such.”

“I’m better than most, I can only remember things in flashes because of the drugs they gave me,” Kiman pointed out. “Others have to live with the memories day after day.”

“One does not outweigh the other, both destroy its victims,” Lennox assured her. “Their end is coming sooner than they think.

“Hey, Lenny,” she said and looked at him. “No?”

His smile was wide. “No, my reputation cannot survive Lenny, I tolerate Len from those who are closest to me.”

“I have to find you a good pet name, Lennox is always so formal,” she mused. “I’ll come up with something, but right now I’m hungry and our dinner sounds pretty good right now.”

“Chicken and dumplings it is,” Lennox climbed out of the bed.

His body was toned, muscles of his ass tight and his large frame was appealing in the dim room as he opened the door.

“Hot Stuff, Fine Ass?” She called out the door.

“None of those,” he said loudly.

She grinned vowing to find a suitable name for him and feeling lighter than when she went asleep after the shower. This was what real caring felt like, knowing now that she truly hadn't felt it all her life. She wouldn't let the revelation about her family ruin the rest of her life. Kiman knew she was ready to move on with her life, to live in happiness and not fear. Lennox came back minutes later holding two bowls and they shared a warm dinner in bed. Later, they fell asleep holding each other after some exploration of her own, that he called torture. Kiman's heart led her exactly where she needed to be and she couldn't live her life in fear. Not anymore.



Chapter Four

The invitation to family dinner that came from Alastair and Eden was two days after Kiman heard the devastating news. Samara unfortunately confirmed that her uncle, Kiman's father had indeed taken the money and in essence sold his child. Lennox could tell that Kiman braced herself for the news, and was indifferent when Samara told her, that neither her sister, nor mother knew about the deal her father brokered. Still, she refused the invitation to talk to them, and let each call go unanswered, even when her father was arrested. She heard second hand from Samara that both denounced her father's actions, and refused even help post the bond to get him out of jail.

Lennox had left Kiman in the safety of Alastair's home with Eden, Indigo, and Samara. Mr. Campbell and Callum were there as well so he knew she was safe. He and his best friend had a conversation that needed to be had with Argyle Rizzo, waiting until Sunday was perfect. He was an unmarried man, living in a high-end home in Ravelston. Lennox didn't want to go to the parliament building or his offices where a record of him being there was out of his hands. This was under his control and offered him the opportunity to confront the bastard. He and Alastair, along with Rohan and Saul sat outside the home on opposite side of the street.

"Boys, you wait here until we reacquaint ourselves with an old friend," Lennox said casually.

Saul frowned. "Maybe I should go in as counsel, in case words are said...."

"We'll be fine," Alastair added mildly.

"I feel like this is some old-world bullocks that will definitely get you both in trouble," Rohan said. "You can't go around threatening a minister of parliament."

"Anything I say will not be a threat," Lennox said.

"Good, because...." Saul began.

“It’s a promise,” Lennox finished.

“And here we go,” Rohan threw up his hands. “Why are we here, in case you get arrested?”

“Yes, exactly,” Alastair flashed a wicked grin at his sons. “See you in about ten minutes.”

Lennox and Alastair stepped from the black SUV and crossed the street. After ringing the doorbell, they waited patiently for someone to answer. A housekeeper answered the door and looked at them silently before stepping aside to let them in.

“Is he in residence?” Lennox asked in a low voice.

The housekeeper nodded. “In the sauna he had built downstairs in the cellar. He’ll be in there for another ten minutes or so.”

“Would he have heard the doorbell from down there?” Alastair asked.

The housekeeper shook her head. “Not at all, and even if he did his head is so far up his own arse, that he’d think its paparazzi annoying him.”

“Does he have paparazzi?” Lennox asked.

The older woman gave a snort. “No.”

Lennox pressed an envelope into her hand. “Thank you.”

She tightened her coat. “No thanks necessary, and I’d do this for free, after how he harassed my daughter when she worked here with me. Drop him in a well for all I care.”

“Is there a well?” Lennox asked intrigued by the notion.

“We’ll not be dropping him anywhere,” Alastair cut in. “We’re here to talk, very seriously, nothing more.”

“That should be enough to hold you over until you find another job,” Lennox ignored Alastair, if there was a well, it was an option. “If you’re having trouble, call me and I will find one for you.”

“There’s no need for that, my brother has already found me a nice spot with a lovely family,” the housekeeper answered. “I’ve already given him my notice, this was the last meal I cooked for him. You gentlemen have a good conversation.”

She stepped behind them, opened the front door and left, leaving them in the silent mansion.

‘Office?’ Lennox suggested.

“Why not, let’s see what our tax monies pay for,” Alastair said and together they walked down the hall.

It was easy enough to find the office, and the pretentious painting he had hung over the fireplace. Lennox looked at the sallow eyes and face that had hardened into a cruel hard jawline.

“Age has not been kind to dear Argyle,” he commented.

“He’s got a lovely drop here, from a barrel aged twenty years,” Alastair held up the bottle. “Shall we partake?”

“Why not, he is our minister of parliament after all,” Lennox moved to sit across from the massive desk. “Didn’t he call asking for donations to his campaign last year?”

Alastair handed him a glass before sitting. “He surely did.”

“I’m thinking about taking Kiman up to the highlands for a week or two,” Lennox took a sip. “This is a lovely drop, surely wasted on this perverted cunt.”

“The highlands is a good place to get away, she doesn’t need to deal with this day in and day out,” Alastair said. “I want to gut all these people, including her father so I’m sure you need the break from it as well. I know you, Len... you’re planning vengeance—in the worst way.”

“Aye I am,” Lennox took a sip of his drink. “No trip to the highland home will stop that.”

Alastair raised his glass. “I know, I’ll try my best to keep you out of prison.”

That is how Argyle found them when he walked into the office with his cell phone to his ear.

“I promise you darling, if you come over now, there’ll be much more in your bank account than you expected,” he drawled. He stopped, eyes darting from Lennox to Alastair. “I’ll call you right back, I think I have *unwanted* guests.”

“Unwanted, is that how you speak to the people you represent in parliament?” Lennox asked casually.

“How did you get in?” Argyle asked warily.

“Carefully,” Lennox answered.

Argyle went around the desk wearing an expensive gray bathrobe. “If I represented you, you would’ve contributed to my campaign.”

“Why would you want our money in your coffers, Argyle?” Alastair asked. “We’ve been accused by your father and now you as being thugs and a form of organized crime. Our money is tainted.”

“Money is money,” Argyle also poured himself a glass from the whiskey bottle. “I see you helped yourself to my drink, are you planning on sending me a case from your distillery?”

Alastair laughed. “Not likely, you can afford to buy like anyone else. Besides our tax money seemed to be used to buy this fancy drop, why not share it with you?”

“You’re not here to write a check and I see the dark look on Lennox’s face, it’s quite reminiscent of when he threatened to kill me as a child,” Argyle commented.

“I should’ve for what you did, your Da had deep pockets then to buy you out. You were eighteen and a cunt,” Lennox said. “And still are.”

“Why are you here?”

“Anika Petrov has been arrested,” Lennox watched his face and watched the so-called minister’s face go pale. “I see you know her well enough, wondering if she’s started talking yet?”

“I don’t know whoever that is,” Argyle’s voice was supposed to be firm, but the tell was the trembling octave

when he spoke.

“Oh yes you do, and your voice has been recognized,” Lennox’s tone was deadly. “I’m here to tell you to turn yourself in now or suffer the fate I have planned for you.”

Argyle downed the whiskey and poured himself another. “Why would you care what I do?”

“Because you’re sick and people like you, who need these perversions, to hurt those weaker than you— need to be put in the ground,” Lennox was seething when he leaned forward to speak, his anger made each word clipped.

“These are horrendous accusations and if I hear them in the public, I will sue you for slander,” Argyle said coldly.

“Go ahead,” Alastair replied casually. “You and your father always wanted to know how much wealth the Bacchus clan had in its coffers. I will throw the full extent of that wealth to topple you off the pedestal of your own creation.”

Argyle stood. “I need you to leave, these baseless accusations, and threats. I could have you arrested for breaking and entering.”

“Go ahead, I can wait,” Lennox answered and stood. “I will not have even an hour within a *Polis* station wall. But you’ve chosen, the hard way it is, this pleases me. We’ll take our leave. Ready my friend?”

Alistair stood. “Yes, the air in here is especially stagnant and unpleasant.”

“Why are you pleased Lennox Marshall?” Argyle called out as they moved towards the door.

“Because the old ways work best for people like you,” Lennox turned, and his smile was diabolical. “I plan to destroy you, Argyle Rizzo and taint that family name forever.”

You can try!” Argyle yelled as they left the office.

Lennox and Alastair made their way to the exit.

Argyle shouted angrily. “You hear me, Lennox Marshall, you can fucking try.”

Alastair opened the door and stepped out with Lennox on his heels. “I think we may have spooked him.”

“Spooked him? I want him to have nightmares about me,” Lennox replied while they crossed the street.

“I see the authorities haven’t been called,” Saul commented as the duo got back into the car. “Did you have the affect you wanted on our dear minister of parliament?”

“I think it was quite successful, Alastair did you get the bug placed?” Lennox asked.

“Placed right under the shelf with the good whiskey,” Alastair confirmed.

“Nothing that a bug gives you can be entered into evidence,” Saul pointed out. “It’s illegal what you just did.”

“So is destroying an entire business, and maiming a few people,” Rohan pointed out.

“Touché,” Saul murmured.

Lennox sat back. “Let’s go eat, I am completely famished.”

Alastair maneuvered the SUV away from the sidewalk and merged into the light Sunday traffic. Lennox was satisfied that the first move was made by him and now it was Argyle’s turn in this game of chess. He would be ready but first, he and Kiman needed some alone time to connect more fully. He was about to take her to his family village in the highlands near Lock Torridon.



THERE WAS A SENSE OF family at the dinner table, one that Lennox cherished. Even if he didn’t admit it, he loved the family dinners at Alastair’s home, and definitely when the family from Fife and the hills came down for a family event. Weddings, funerals, births and birthdays, everything was celebrated in the Bacchus fashion of food, music, and a shite load of fun.

Being close kin, meant his people were mixed in the revelry as well for larger events, right now the laughter around the table warmed his heart. Kiman was laughing and talking with everyone as well, reminding him of how she was when he first met her. Samara got him to interview her for his night auditor and it was the best thing that ever happened in his life.

“You’re awfully quiet, Lennox,” Eden said casually.

“Just taking everything in,” he answered. “It’s good to be around family.”

Eden’s stomach was definitely more pronounced in the knit sweater dress she wore. Mr. Campbell hovered over her, watching intently in case she needed anything. Lennox smiled, because the older man was besotted with Eden and the unborn addition to the Bacchus clan.

“Teddy Bear has been worried over me, so it’s good to see him relax,” Kiman said.

Lennox almost choked on his bite of food before speaking. “What?”

“Teddy Bear?” Alastair said slowly.

“I’ve been trying out new pet names for him since Lennox seems so formal,” Kiman said unabashedly. “Big, sexy and strong with a heart of gold— Teddy Bear.”

“In private, love, in private,” Lennox pleaded.

“That’s cute,” Eden agreed.

Rohan held up his butter knife. “Mr. Campbell could you possibly go heat this up on the stove so I can deafen myself with it I need to hear nothing else in my life... that did me in.”

“Teddy Bear,” Saul’s laughter was loud. “Wait tell I tell Baz.”

“Shall I tell them, your pet names?” Indigo gave Saul an innocent look as she put a bite of beef in her mouth.

Saul instantly stopped laughing, murmuring. “Um, nice name, great choice.”

“I’m telling Sammie,” Callum chortled.

“Will you now?” Samara said lightly.

Callum turned red. “I changed my mind, no need for it to go past this table.”

“Yay or nay?” Kiman asked Lennox.

“We’ll discuss it later,” he said in a low tone and deftly changed the subject. “Eden, any word on the bairn, how is the wee one doing?”

“The baby is fine, heavy already, so it’s definitely a Bacchus,” Eden laughed. “Plus, Will keeps feeding me snacks.”

“In my defense, you’re always snackish of late,” Mr. Campbell said from his place beside her.

“You are right Sir,” Eden replied around a bite of food. “I see how the men folk eat, I’m just hoping for a baby under ten pounds.”

Eden insisted Mr. Campbell started eating Sunday dinner with them when his wife left for an extended stay with her sister who had a stroke. She was helping her with recovery and mobility in Fife, so she either came home to visit once or twice a week or Mr. Campbell went to his sister-in-law’s house.

“Yeesh, ten pounds,” Indigo winced.

Eden winked at her. “Your husband is the biggest of them all, so be prepared.”

“Boy or girl?” Kiman asked.

“We’re waiting to be surprised at the birth,” Alastair answered. “The doctor is to keep that a secret.”

“Welll...” Eden drew out the word. “The last weeks she kinda accidentally told me what we’re having in a roundabout way.”

“We said we didn’t want to know!” Alastair, exclaimed.

“Hey, I didn’t ask,” Eden defended. “She let it slip while we were discussing my last trimester and if I want a natural birth. I chose home water birth by the way.”

“What does that entail?” Alastair asked.

“It means I labor at home, and they come in and set up a tub in one of the bedrooms.” Eden explained. “I walk and bounce on a birthing ball, and use techniques with a doula and I float in the water. Then when it’s time to give birth, you and I are in the tub when I push, and the baby pops out into the water. A water birth is more relaxing for the baby, plus all the family around is supposed to be a great connection.”

“Aunt Magda said...” Alastair began.

“Nope, no sir,” Eden said firmly. “A real doula, not Aunt Magda or any of the women from the hills. I’ve had a few calls about how their birthing techniques and it almost ran me to the hospital to stay there until I gave birth. And they can’t have the after birth.”

All of the men at the table went quiet, and still, Lennox had to tell himself to put his fork down before he dropped it.

“I’m full,” Callum said pushing his plate away. “Don’t even care what’s for dessert.”

“When you say all the family around, do you mean extended family,” Lennox asked slowly. “I don’t mind being the one in charge of the whiskey and cigars.”

“I’m hoping all of you will be here, Sammie is a pediatrician, so he’ll be here, and he’s enthused about a water birth,” Eden pointed out. “He’ll be checking over the baby after delivery.”

“Exactly what are we supposed to do?” Rohan asked.

“Walk with me, help hold me up through contractions, watch the birth if you’re comfortable,” Eden explained and added gently. “You’re Da will need some help.”

“I have never seen a baby being born, I must insist, I stay with the whiskey,” Lennox piped up.

“What if we ever have kids?” Kiman asked.

His heart seemed to stop in his chest. “Is that an option on the table?”

Kimman shrugged. “Who knows what the future will bring.”

“So many babies, I may be the one woman here who is too old to have them,” Samara said lightly. “Forty-four, is the cut-off point I believe and I’m two—three years from that.”

“The world of medicine has evolved, women are having babies now well into their forties,” Callum interjected.

“If babies are wanted by older women sure,” Samara answered. “If it’s a deal breaker in some relationships, a woman may just say to hell with it.”

“I certainly don’t see it as a deal breaker in a relationship, just an option,” Callum countered. “The couple can decide when the time is right and have a discussion about it.”

“But are they a couple I wonder? No parameters have ever been set,” Samara took a sip of her drink. “The woman may think she’s still a free agent to do what she will, and with whomever she wants.”

“Then these choices should be made by said couple then,” Callum said through gritted teeth. “Lest assumptions are made, and faces get broken.”

The table was pretty much quiet as the exchange went on, Lennox hid a smile behind the rim of his glass and Kimman ducked her head.

“What’s happening here?” Rohan asked curiously.

Indigo rolled her eyes. “Lord, the Bacchus men can test one’s patience.”

“What?” Rohan looked innocent and clueless.

“What indeed,” Alastair said mildly and looked from his son to Samara.

“It will be a good experience for everyone,” Eden said deftly changing the subject. “It may be in our family’s best interest to see her being born so when they have children of their own, they’re prepared and not pass out.”

“Her!” Mr. Campbell shouted. “You said her! The bairn is a girl!”

“I heard it too!” Indigo clapped her hands over her mouth and started waving her hands by her eyes. “Oh, I’m about to cry.”

Alastair took her hand. “Truly? We’re having a daughter?”

“I guess the secret is out,” Eden nodded with a smile. “Are you happy?”

“I am beyond happy,” Alastair cleared his throat of the emotion that clogged it before speaking again in awe. “We’re having a girl.”

“A Bacchus little princess,” Mr. Campbell didn’t hide his tears, he mopped his face with the navy-blue cloth napkin.

“Not a princess, she will not be spoiled rotten,” Eden said firmly.

“My little princess will have the world,” Alastair said beaming with pride.

“I don’t think they’re listening to you,” Lennox commented. “But my little niece will have anything she wants.”

“A sister!” Alastair’s sons began shaking each other’s hands and hugging each other.

“You’d think they created her,” Samara said amused.

“The baby shower will be massive,” Alastair said enthusiastically. “I want pink balloons and unicorns everywhere! Unicorns are the pride of Scotland. We need to start on the nursery, tonight love, we will start planning everything.”

Eden took his hand. “Honey, calm down, we have time—I see that look passed between the lot of you. Alastair Bacchus, and William Campbell, everyone, please don’t go crazy again. The baby proofing everything was enough.”

Alastair went on as if he didn’t hear her. “William. I think the bedroom with the add on reading room would be fantastic for a nursery with a playroom.”

“We can buy so many toys,” Rohan said happily. “Do little girls like video game consoles?”

“She’ll be a newborn,” Kiman pointed out.

“Right, I’ll wait until she’s five for the video games,” Rohan replied.

“I can carve her a rocking horse,” Mr. Campbell said nodding. “One just like a carousel.”

“We’ll have to set her up a trust, I’ll start on the paperwork,” Saul pulled out his phone to make a note.

Callum rubbed his hands together. “Time to put my artistic skills to use. I see a blush pink room with unicorn stencils. Oh, and one of those round cribs with the canopy and one of those plush glider rocking chairs.”

Alastair pointed at his son. “Good man, get on that.”

Rohan piped in. “I’ll make a list of the best nursery schools in the area. I’ll interview each of them myself. Best to get her on the list as soon as possible.”

“And I’ve lost them, they’ve gone overboard,” Eden shook her head in amusement.

“In their defense, it’s sweet,” Kiman smiled and then men talked over each other and then stood to take the conversation to the family room.

“Shouldn’t you follow them?” Indigo asked.

“Would you?” Samara asked with a laugh.

“Nah, they’ll remember us eventually,” Eden continued with her dinner. “Pass the potatoes please?”

“The first girl for the Bacchus heir, Alastair’s father, grandfather and I think four generations back has boys,” Lennox explained. “This is the all-boys curse being broken.”

“There’s not an actual family curse to only have boys is there?” Kiman asked dubiously. “I know how lore and heritage works hand in hand for Scots.”

Lennox smiled at her. “Worried you may have a bunch of boys running you ragged?”

“Not if you’re not worried about the twins that run in my family,” Kiman said sweetly. “And you know we’ve haven’t done—except for those lovely experiences you...”

Lennox cut her off. “Love, in private, shall we?”

“Oops, sorry,” Kiman said.

“Lennox I should’ve warned you that my cousin has a broken filter and can sometimes be too honest and over share,” Samara laughed. “One doesn’t expect it until you get to know her and then all bets are off.”

“It’s refreshing she says whatever is on her mind, too many people hide behind fake masks far too often,” he replied. “She’ll never be chastised for being genuine.”

The men folk finally seemed to remember they left them at the table and came back with a slew of apologies. Dessert and coffee were had in the family room and Lennox noted how Alastair stared at Eden lovingly and more often than not covered her baby bump with his hand. He wondered how that felt, to be a father and love a little being with your entire heart. Lennox never had a chance for that and wondered if he would with Kiman. After their goodbyes, hand in hand they walked out where he parked the Bentley and Lennox

“Would you like to go up to the highlands for a week or so?” Lennox asked. “To get away from all of the stress and we can spend more time alone.”

“That sounds lovely, when do we leave?” Kiman turned to him with a smile.

“Tomorrow, I’ll hand...”

Lennox never got to finish his statement because bright lights filled his view from the side when he went through the intersection just steps from Darby’s pub. A vehicle crashed into the side of his Bentley and shattered glass all over them as it spun his car around in a full circle. Silence reigned and there was a ringing in his ears.

“Kiman,” his words sounded hallow in his own ears. He looked over and Kiman’s head lay limply to one side while blood trickled from her scalp.

“Kiman!”

Adrenaline pulsed though him, his side was crushed, and he managed to rip his seatbelt off and climb to the backseat.

“Aye, Lennox!” Darby’s voice came from outside the car.

“Don’t worry about me man, get Kiman out the car!” Lennox yelled from the back seat as he kicked the door. “I can smell petrol.”

“Boys come help me here!” Darby yelled. “Someone, call 999 and get Alastair on the phone!”

He could hear others trying to open the passenger side door and after no success he kicked out the rest of the back window to climb through.

“Fuck the car is smoking, it’s going to burn!”

A voice yelled and they tugged at the door in earnest. Lennox landed on his feet and even as a wave of vertigo hit him, he was moving towards where Kiman was trapped.

“Its’ jammed right and proper,” Darby spoke urgently. “We need the extinguisher from the bar, hurry now, Luci run get it!”

Lennox was not going to wait. With inhuman strength he didn’t know he had, he pulled at the door and got it open before he got Kiman’s seatbelt off and pulled her free from the wreckage. Flames started under the hood as everyone moved away, the explosion still surprised everyone, and the heat of the flame did nothing to warm his heart as he looked down at his Kiman.

“*Mo chridhe*, answer me,” he whispered huskily, pressing a kiss on her lips. “Wake up.”

She lay still and he held her tighter as the sound of the sirens approached. Alastair and his family arrived at the same time as the emergency services.

“Come then, Lennox, let medics have a look at her,” Alastair said gently while both he and the boys pulled Lennox’s hands from around her.

“Samara needs to be called,” Lennox said numbly.

“Callum got het on the phone. He needs to be seen to as well, the car was hit on his side,” Saul said.

“I’m fine,” Lennox said, and a paramedic tried to press gauze against his head. He pushed the man away. “I’m bloody well fine, see to her and get her to the hospital!”

“Lennox you need to go to the hospital,” Alastair said. “Your shoulder is dislocated for sure.”

“Fuck it, pop the thing back in,” Lennox snapped. “Where is the driver from the van?”

“He got out and ran off, just before we ran up,” Darby said. The thing is, the light was green for you and that guy ran the light on purpose. He’d been idling parked for more than a beat.”

Realization bloomed in Lennox, and it filled him with such a rage that the bellow that escaped his lips made onlookers step back.

He looked around the crowd and saw a young man who seemed out of place, Lennox eyes narrowed as he zeroed on the man and strode towards him with angry intent.

“You look new, I’ve never seen you on the hill before,” Lennox grabbed the man by the throat. “Were you the look out, then, to tell the van driver when we were coming?”

“No sir! I—,” Lennox’s hand tightened cutting off his words.

Darby came to the man’s rescue. “Lennox Marshall, this is Delores’s grandson visiting from university. Can I ask you to stop strangling him please, he was in the pub with friends.”

“Someone tried to kill us,” he walked around raging. “I know you’re watching; you want war! Then war it shall be, I will fucking kill you all.”

“He’s talking out of his head, he had a good bump, that’s for sure,” Alastair spoke loudly and then pulled him to the sidewalk, whispering harshly. “Be quiet, before you say something that gets you in trouble! Premeditation comes along with statements like that. Sit your arse down, let’s get your shoulder to rights.”

“I’m going to kill them all, each and every last one of them,” Lennox whispered brokenly as he watched them put Kiman into the ambulance. “They’re going all going to die.”

“Aye, I know,” Alastair confirmed.

Lennox barely winced when Saul got his shoulder back into place. Instead, he was glad someone heard his testament because his vow would be kept. They just set things in motion, that no one could stop, not anymore.



Chapter Five

Kiman's eyes fluttered open to a room painted in baby blue and closed blinds that made the room dim. The soft beeps of the machine made her frown, this wasn't Lennox's bedroom, where was she?" Slowly the memories came back, of talking with Lennox in the car and then being spun around, hearing the crunch of metal. They were hit on Lennox's side by a delivery van, where was he? This time Kiman sat up and pulled the pulse monitor off her finger and the oxygen tube out of her nose.

"Kiman, no love, lie back now," his hands stopped her and gently lay her back on the bed.

She looked over and relief flooded through her. There were three butterfly bandages holding a cut together. He looked haggard, worry and anger swirled in his blue eyes.

"It wasn't an accident, was it?" She said softly as he put the oxygen back to her nose. "They were trying to kill us."

He gave a stiff nod. "I don't know who yet, but when I do, they're going to pay."

"Are you alright?" Kiman reached out to caress his bearded face.

"You're in the hospital bed and asking about me?" He closed his eyes and rubbed his face against her palm. "I'm alright, just a dislocated shoulder and this cut."

"And me?" Kiman wiggled her toes and fingers. "Everything seems to be in place."

"Concussion, you had a pretty hard blow to the head on the car door, plus all of the airbags deployed," Lennox explained. "The seat belt did its job but you're going to see and feel it for a few days."

"Oh God, now they're trying to kill us," she closed her eyes to the tears she felt pricking at her eyes. "When will this ever be over?"

“It will be over, love, we’re no longer just waiting for something to happen, we’re going to be proactive,” Lennox promised and kissed her hand. “They should’ve stayed hidden in the shadows, because I’m going to destroy them all.”

“I don’t want you getting hurt, promise me you’ll be careful and not put your life on the line,” Kiman insisted. “Promise me, Teddy Bear.”

“I swear,” He grinned. “So, you’ve stuck with that one hmm?”

“It suits you just perfectly,” she replied and closed her eyes. “My head hurts.”

“I’ll get the nurse,” Lennox stood and hesitated. “I think we should stay in the highlands until this is over, it will be difficult for them to find us there, and my kin are all around. If they dare try then...”

“They are lost in the hills,” Kiman ended his sentence for him.

“Aye,” Lennox went to the door. “The others are outside to see you as well. There are too many of us to fit in this small room.

Samara rushed in after Lennox went out and Kim could tell she was crying. She must’ve been worried; she could only remember her cousin crying while she cared for Kiman after she saved her.

“I’m all right,” Kiman held out her hand.

“I swear I’m going grey with all my worrying,” Samara gave a watery laugh as she took Kiman’s hands. “I had to hear it for myself that you were okay.”

Kiman sighed. “I’m glad that I am too, the look on Lennox’s face when I opened my eyes. I swear if I was anymore injured, he would rampage.”

“Trust me, at the crash site, he did,” Samara said. “The only thing that has claimed him down is that Anika Petrov says she will talk and make a deal about her operation. That includes her clients in Edinburgh.”

“Will she still go to jail,” Kiman asked doubtfully. “She can’t be set free with all she’s done; she has to be held accountable.”

“She will be, this was a deal so she wouldn’t be extradited back to the US,” Kiman replied. “A lifetime in prison here is more palatable than the prison’s in America. But they get what they want too, all the information she has on her clients there, so they’ll be happy.”

“And after she talks it’s only a matter of rounding up the people she’s named,” Kiman nodded then winced and touched her head. “Didn’t know I had a cut there too.”

“You’re going to be sore for a while,” Samara said. “I hear you’ll be in the highlands, are you ready for that?”

“I am, Lennox has been patient and the most honorable gentlemen with me,” she told her cousin. “But I want more, I want to feel... and show that I healed the right way and can love him.”

“Can or already do?” Samara asked gently.

“Already do,” Kiman admitted. “The connection was there from the first day we met, and it’s only grown as I worked for him, and we talked. Lennox and I have a lot in common and he would bring me books to read from his library. He saw me and I him, past the business suit and the mask he wears for the world. I can be more than happy with him; I think we could complete each other.”

“I’m happy for you my dearest cousin,” Samara said. “I hoped one day you would move past what happened to you and allow yourself to love and be loved. You walked through the fire with bravery and such a will to not let any of it break you. Now you come out on the other side, stronger and it doesn’t mar your soul. That is the best revenge, living a full life.”

“While Anika rots in prison,” Kiman said firmly. “I want to know each year I grow older, that she does the same withering away in jail.”

Samara smiled. “Me too. Your sister and mother reached out again. They are desperate to talk to you.”

Kiman frowned. “I can’t—I just—Samara, they never questioned where Papa got the money from, a hundred thousand in US dollars is over a million Cedi. They lived in luxury, in ignorant bliss while the daughter he sold suffered. Then looked at me with the same disapproval when you took me home. He caused this, I can’t fathom talking to them right now.”

“I won’t force the issue, in your own time,” Samara answered gently and squeezed Kiman’s hand. “We have footage from CCTV and Darby’s pub, we’ll find who the guy in the van was and who he works for.”

“Find him before Lennox does,” Kiman begged. “I don’t want to visit him in a prison.”

From there Eden and Indigo, even Alastair and his sons came in to see if she was okay. Finally, she and Lennox were alone again in the room, and he sat on the chair with his head in her lap and she ran her fingers through his soft hair.

“We’ll leave for Shildaig as soon as they say it’s okay for you to travel,” Lennox said. “There myself. and my kin can protect you.”

“That sounds good,” Kiman said and felt a huge sigh escape him as his shoulders relaxed. “And your shoulder should be in a sling, Saul told me he set it while at the crash site because you wouldn’t come to the hospital.”

“I’ll be fine, love,” he didn’t open his eyes. “It is barely sore.”

“I want to go home,” she said suddenly. “So, I can sleep in your arms.”

“They wanted to keep you overnight to monitor you,” this time Lennox lifted his head.

“You can do that at home, please Lennox,” she pleaded. “I hate the feeling of hospital rooms.”

“I’ll get it sorted,” Lennox promised.

An hour later, Ty was driving them home after the disapproving gaze of the doctor who signed the papers to release her watched them load her into the vehicle.

“We’ll have to get me a new car, Ty,” Lennox said conversationally. “Let’s get go with a Land Rover SUV this time, something sturdy in the hills. When the Bentley is replaced, you know where to park it.”

“On it, boss,” Ty answered. “When are you leaving for Shildaig?”

“Tomorrow, if Kiman is up to it,” Lennox answered.

“I’ll be up to it,” she said with a smile.

“Get the Land Rover first thing in the morning Ty, you’ll be in charge while I’m gone,” Lennox told his second in command. “My kin know we are coming, and all has been prepared.”

“That I can do,” Ty replied. “You’ll love the highlands, Kiman.”

“I’m looking forward to it,” she looked at Lennox. “Where is your house?”

He smiled. “You’ll see.”

That night she slept his arms and wondered if he even slept at all, every three hours he woke her up, asked her questions and looked for changes in her eyes. He then nodded in approval of what he saw and settled her back down to sleep in his arms. In the morning, she woke up to an empty bed and walked out into the living room of the penthouse.

Lennox looked up from his tasks in the kitchen with a smile. “Do ye want to pack while I make breakfast?”

“I can,” Kiman walked over to kiss him. He wore faded blue jeans and a navy-blue thick turtleneck sweater and black boots. “You’re dressed the most casual I’ve ever seen you.”

“A suit doesn’t suit in the highlands,” he pressed another kiss on her lips. “Now go, get ready dress warm, fall will definitely make it cooler in the hills.”

“I will, be back soon,”

Kiman turned to the bedroom where all her clothes were kept and decided to wear jeans, a sweatshirt, and comfortable sneakers for the four-hour drive to Shieldaig. After breakfast Lennox helped her into the new hunter green and black Land Rover and another SUV pulled up beside him.

The window rolled down with a soft mechanical sound and Alastair looked out. “Ready to go?”

“Aye, lets,” Lennox agreed.

“The boys are staying here, they’ll keep an eye on things,” Alastair said. “Baz will be at the house and Sammie will be in the cottage in Shieldaig.”

“Hey Kiman,” Eden waved.

“Hi, travel buddy,” Kiman grinned.

Both cars backed out of the parking spaces slowly and merged into traffic seamlessly.

“I didn’t know we’d have guests on the trip,” Kiman said.

“Just in case, Alastair and I always fight back-to-back, he wouldn’t let me go without him and Eden wasn’t letting him go without her,” he explained. “Don’t worry, Alastair has his own house just on the outskirts of town.”

“Where’s your home, again?” She asked curiously.

Lennox flashed her a smile. “Nice try, you’ll see.”

She would indeed, excitement filled her for this new adventure even in the midst of the trouble they faced. At least in the hills, she would be alone with Lennox and just the thought of the pleasure to come made desire curl in her belly. She wasn’t patient any longer, Kiman fully intended to feel much more than comfort in his arms. She wanted to feel the burn of passion and to be his completely.



THE DRIVE TO THE HIGHLANDS was beautiful, they passed rolling hills that were in various shades of green, reds,

and fall yellow as the air grew cold. Little white sheep with black faces dotted the landscape, along with cows and goats, owned by small working family farms. Streams trickled through rock, and soon they traversed the rocky coastline that would lead to Shieldaig.

A house wasn't what Kiman would describe it as, it was more like a stone manor house that Lennox owned on the cliffs, and it was right next to a lighthouse, painted in red and white. The first day they got to Shieldaig, and he gave her the tour, she looked around in amazement when he parked on the outside of the rustic stone fence.

"You own a castle and a light house," Kiman stated standing at the gate.

A baritone laugh escaped him. "It's a house, love, just a house. My father was the lighthouse keeper for a long while and while it is still in use, its more automatic now as the world progressed. Many of the stones in this house I helped place as he built it. The two rooms that made up the old house is now the family area with a large hearth."

Inside was decorated in comforting warm colors, like reds, blues, and hits of yellow that reminded Kiman of the fall leaves they passed on the drive. Here the master bedroom featured an actual fireplace and Kiman watched as Lennox built fires in the living room and bedroom to help warm the house.

Another wonderful and sexy surprise was that while she looked around, he went to change. Lennox came back wearing a black long sleeved, t-shirt and the green tartan kilt of the Marshall clan. His black boots were cut to his lower calf and then black socks went a bit higher. He looked delectable and Kiman found out instantly she had a thing for a hot older man in a kilt.

"You should dress like this back in Edinburgh," Kiman walked around him slowly and ran her hand across his back. "I mean like every other day, how many of these do you own, and can we buy you more?"

"The things you say," he murmured.

“Well, it comes naturally when my man is so big and sexy,” Kiman purred.

“Shall we make dinner?” Lennox asked and held out his hand in a flourish.

She took his hand. “Lead the way kind sir.”

In the kitchen, he pressed the buttons on a digital screen set into the wall and soft music filled the room. Lennox poured Kiman a glass of wine, and himself a Shieldaig made whiskey and sipped them while they made roasted potatoes, steaks, and green beans. He would stop in intervals to dance her around the room. Kiman set the table and turned only to be in his arms once again as he swayed them.

“Do you do this with all the women you bring to the highlands?” Kiman asked with her arms around his neck.

“I’ve brought no other here but you,” Lennox answered. “I tended to have relationships few and far between.”

“Why?”

Lennox frowned as he stepped away; he spoke as he brought plates to the table. “I was a brute not willing to settle down, admittedly, no one wanted to settle down with me then anyway.”

Kiman poured herself another glass of wine and refilled his whiskey. “Because you and Alastair, ran the streets?”

“They used to call me the beast, I tended to solve things with my fists in a good brawl,” Lennox pulled her chair out and Kiman sat down. “For Alastair’s father wasn’t as mild mannered as he, sometimes he needed things done and chose me to do it. Then I joined the military, and they refined the violence in me and made me as sharp as a blade. I was embedded with US troops in Bosnia and other countries a few times. By the time my service was done, and I came back home, the *beast* was even worse.”

“You saw and were part of things outside your control, and you didn’t know how to process it,” Kiman said gently. “Trust me I know, before I really got help, I chose to drink myself

numb so I could sleep but it didn't stop the nightmares. I had to get help for that to happen.”

“Aye, but to men of my generation, therapy was considered weak. Generation X, I think they call us,” He replied.

“1972, yep you were part of the last group of feral children,” Kiman confirmed with a laugh. “Were you making yourself dinner by the age of eight?”

Lennox laughed. “Beans and toast if ma or da weren't home, and when we were on the hill it was dinner with Alastair and his family. Back to my story, after one-to-many calls from, constables when I returned from my military service. My father came and got me from the local *polis* and brought me back here. A few months of back breaking work and swimming in the cold loch, I learned to refine my thinking and my violence. Now, I'm a businessman who very rarely gets violent unless it is in protection of those I love. But my past always bothered the fairer sex and add a bad relationship into the mix... I was enough for me; I was at peace and content being alone.”

“That's quite a tale,” Kiman cut into her food. “I think the man and the beast are one and same and if a woman couldn't calm that beast, then she's not meant for you.”

“And can you calm the beast,” Lennox's startling blue eyes pinned her with a stare.

“I already have, he lays in my lap and purrs like a kitten when I stoke his hair,” she smiled around the wine glass that she held to her lips.

“You asked me to make them pay, to suffer as you did, to lose everything,” Lennox said in a somber tone. “What if that means I kill them, would you still see me the same way?”

“Yes,” Kiman said without hesitation. “We're under attack, they made it pretty clear our lives mean nothing to them, as they did when Anika took me. You're defending yourself—us, how could I look at you differently because of that.

Lennox Marshall you are a magnificent, honorable man, and if you unleash the beast within it's for a reason."

"What kind of siren are you that you can woo me with your words?" He took her hand and kissed it.

"One who's food is getting cold and she's hungry," Kiman laughed. "Let's eat."

"Did you find the study?" Lennox asked casually.

"Yes, now I know where your secret library is, I can read whatever I like," she teased. "Just don't tell me the endings."

"I would never," he said. "Alastair did that to me once and I still won't let him forget it."

"When it did it happen?" Kiman asked.

"Twenty years ago," Lennox's eyes gleamed with merriment. "I remind him yearly on the anniversary of the insult."

"Commitment, I like that," Kiman laughed.

"Do you now?" Lennox murmured.

"I do. What are you thinking?" Kiman asked gently.

"Do you want the blatant truth?" He asked.

Kiman inclined her head. "Please."

"I'm contemplating sweeping this all on the floor and taking you on this table," he said in a husky drawl that made his accent thicker. "What are you thinking?"

"My thought was a little more refined, me and you in bed later," Kiman. "No more teasing, no more tastes of what passion you have to offer. I want all of it."

"While I was thinking about making love to you, I can be patient. Kiman, you haven't been with anyone since—" he began.

She shook her head. "No, don't mar it with the past, I know what I want and how you make me feel. I want all of it, Lennox, don't hold anything back."

He shook his head. “You don’t know what you are asking, I’ve been called a brute and a beast—,”

“By women who weren’t meant for you,” she broke in. “You’re my beast, and I’ll have my taste of your passion.”

“You know I will never let you go, through thick and thin, I will have your love for a lifetime,” Lennox took her hand. “I’ll marry you, and make a life with you, I will never want another.”

“And I for you, I even want to carry your beastie children,” she laughed gently.

“Did we just exchange vows,” he teased.

“I don’t think it’s legal unless in front of a man of God, or a judge,” Kiman pointed out.

“Mmm, good point,” Lennox sounded contemplative.

They finished dinner and in the family room, she sat resting against him while Lennox leaned against the sofa. It felt like something they did every day after dinner and Kiman hadn’t felt anything more perfect.

“I think, I love you,” she said suddenly. “No, I don’t think, I know. For the past year and a half working with you, laughing at the silly jokes Ty makes just to see you roll your eyes. Watching your compassion and how our friendship took a natural course to love, how could I not? We weren’t searching for it, but the bond formed between us, even though we both didn’t act on it long before this.”

“It wasn’t the right time, now it is,” Lennox said before kissing her temple. “*Mo Chridhe* how I love you. Here I was a foolish older man, falling for the pretty younger woman. But now I offer you all my love and to have you accept it, it’s far beyond any dream I could have.”

“I love you,” Kiman lifted her head for a kiss.

“And I you,” Lennox kissed her gently. “I adore you.”

“Let’s go to bed,” Kiman stood.

“You go, sweetling, I need to lock up for the night and make sure the lighthouse timer is set. The caretaker left this morning before we came, he texted to remind me to take care of it. I’ll be back soon.”

“Will you take me up to the lighthouse one evening?” Kiman asked. “I think the sunset would look glorious from that vantage point.”

He kissed her soft lips. ‘Aye of course, my love, it is a sight to behold. Go on up, I’ll join you shortly.

“I’ll go take a bath,” Kiman smacked him on the ass.

“What the...”

“Hurry back Teddy Bear.”

She loved the look of bemused shock at her slapping him on the rump. Lennox was not accustomed to anything like that, and Kiman looked forward to keeping him on his toes. The ornate vintage tub called to her from the time he showed her the room. After filling it with hot water and adding her bath oils, she sank into the fragrant liquid and sighed as the heat relaxed her body. She would make love and be loved that night. Instead of apprehension, Kiman didn’t fear it at all, he had been slowly introducing her to his touch and his body. Instead of being afraid, her body hummed with excitement.

“I’m back,” Lennox called from the bedroom.

“Okay,” she answered and left the cooling water to dry herself off.

Kiman did her usual skin care regimen and instead of slipping on pajamas, she took a deep breath and opened the door. Lennox was wearing his usual t-shirt and pajama bottoms, in hunter green. She was learning he had an affinity for the color.

“I took a quick *waucht*, in the other bathroom...” Lennox turned as he was speaking his words fell away.

“I assume *waucht* means bath?” Kiman asked.

“Hmm—what,” he took in her nudity with a heated gaze.

“*Waucht*, shower or bath?” she hinted with a smile.

“Either or, have mercy woman, you expect me to think with you standing there looking like...” Lennox seemed to be a loss for words.

“Like?”

“A vision of pure beauty and lovely curves,” he said huskily. “The light from the fireplace dances across your skin and I wonder if you are created by the flame.”

“You say the most charming things,” Kiman moved towards him with slow deliberate steps. “With that Scottish brogue, it’s like a caress.”

“May I touch you?” he asked while she stood close to him.

“I was hoping you would,” she answered huskily. “I’m also wishing you would take your clothes off so I can touch you as well.”

Lennox whipped the plain white t-shirt over his head and kicked away the pajama bottoms in an instant. He pulled her into his arms and as skin connected with skin, a gasp escaped her, and a low groan emanated from Lennox.

He ran his hands over her body greedily and his voice was reverent. “I could of never imaged you’d feel this good against me.”

“I’ve wanted this as well,” she looked up at him. “I think we’ve been moving in this direction for a while now. Would you have waited much longer?”

Lennox kissed her restrained hunger before he spoke. “I would’ve without hesitation, but now that I have you, I’ll take an act of God to get me to let you go. Even then I’d fight tooth and nail to keep you.”

“Then show me how much you love me,” Kiman said breathlessly, she nipped at his bottom lip and whispered. “Show me.”

Lennox’s blue eyes darkened and the kiss they shared, ignited a heat within her she never thought possible. His touch was greedy, and he cupped her breasts while he teased her

mouth with his tongue. He used the pads of his thumbs to rub gently over the peak of her nipples and she felt them harden under his touch.

“Is it normal to feel this kind of...” she tried to choose the correct word. “Heat?”

“Is it like before?” he asked.

“Hotter.”

“Then we’re doing this right proper,” Lennox kissed her and smiled. “But by the end we should be in flames.”

Lennox trailed his hands down her back into the dip at the base of her spine and then over the curve of her ass. He cupped the cheeks and slowly ground his hips against hers and Kim trembled in response.

“I love how you tremble for me; do you like how I touch you?” Lennox asked fiercely.

“Yes,” she said and got no further as he kissed her hard.

He spoke against her lips. “I’m your beast, to do whatever you will me to. What will you ask of me, Kiman, *Mo chriide?*”

“Take me to bed and love me,” she replied. “Until its only you left in my mind.”

Lennox’s eyes flashed with the fire of desire, and as he kissed her hard, he lifted her into his arms.

“I’m too heavy for you to do this,” she gasped and wrenched her mouth away from his with a hard kiss.

“Bullocks, I’ll lift my woman,” Lennox growled. “It’s that perception of men nowadays. That curvaceous woman can’t be carried to bed?”

“You don’t do social media, do you?” Kiman said dryly. “You’d be surprised some of the views men have lately.”

“Best I don’t know, I may bloody someone’s lip,” Lennox lay her down and covered her body with his own. “You’re perfect, and for my eyes alone.”

She warmed under his gaze, felt beautiful and cherished for the first time in her life. Self-esteem was one thing, but to be seen, wanted, and considered precious to a man who loved her, took it to a whole new level.

The slow build up was gone; there was now just intensity and pure sexual heat. His fingers dragged through her hair, and he grabbed fistfuls, holding her still as he devoured her mouth. Kiman could barely think, all she could do was feel his tongue penetrate her mouth and take her taste with a soft deep groan. Beneath his touch, she was like hot wax melting from each place Lennox's hands roamed. He was by no means done, his hands moved upwards to cup her breasts and bent to bury his face between the full globes.

Lennox teased one nipple with soft kisses and nips before sucking the tight bud deep between his lips a man starving for his first greedy taste of ripe fruit. Unable to help it, a cry of pleasure shot through her like a spear straight to her core. Kiman arched toward him and felt Lennox's large hand splay on her back to pull her closer to him. A whimper was the only sound that escaped her, while she shifted restlessly at his touch, he gave the other breast the same attention, passionate sounds escaping him.

"I can never get enough of you," he muttered against the softness of her skin, all the while tasting between his words. "Your taste will be imprinted in my memory until the day I die."

Kiman tried to answer but only a gasp escaped. She could only swim in the sensations that his mouth caused within her body while Lennox kissed his way back to her lips once more and plundered her taste. Kiman wrapped her legs around his waist and felt the hardness of his erection at the core of her. She lifted her hips seeking the final connection, but Lennox wouldn't give into her silent demand, not yet.

"Shall I taste you, love?" Lennox asked when he pulled away from her kiss, his smooth voice grated with need.

"Taste me, how?" Kiman asked breathlessly.

“Close your eyes and feel,” he replied as he moved to kneel between her legs.

Kimman licked her lips as she looked up at him. His muscular arms and broad shoulders that tapered down to a lean waist. The hair from his chest went downward to the muscles of his lower torso and definition of his thighs and abdomen would rival any man of a younger age. His cock stood erect and thick between his legs and when Kimman reached out to stroke him, he leaned away from her touch.

“We’ll not have that, not yet” his voice was low. “I’ll have my fill of you first, do you trust me, that I’ll never hurt you?”

“Always” Kimman said instantly.

Lennox moved to the edge of the bed before slipping his hands around her thighs to jerk her forward to him. A cry of surprise escaped her and Kimman leaned up on her elbows to watch his every move. He closed his eyes and inhaled her scent, his breath warm against the soft lips of her sex.

“You’re mine,” he said while his finger slid along the wet slit of her pussy.

Kimman held her breath in anticipation while her body trembled, a moan escaped her as he parted the outer labia of her sex to tease her clit with a gentle circular motion.

“I’m going to taste you, Kimman,” he said. “I’ve wanted your taste on my tongue from the first time you hugged me, and I fell hard for you.”

“Please,” she begged not knowing what she was asking for but only knowing she craved what was to come next.

Kimman twisted the sheets next to her as she felt Lennox’s mouth against her sex. She lifted her hips pressing her core against his mouth while he lifted one of her legs over his shoulder with a low grunt of desire.

“Oh God.”

The words left her lips on a slow moan, and she couldn’t help the undulation of her hips when she felt his tongue delve and lick between the velvet soft lips of her sex. Lennox parted

her labia so he could suck at her clit and soon that wasn't enough. There was a savage sound and then he buried his face between her legs, tasting, sucking, and using his tongue to penetrate her until she writhed in ecstasy. Kiman tried to squirm away, but Lennox locked her tight to him with his powerful arms.

“God stop,” Kiman cried out and he lifted his head.

“Am I hurting you?” he asked in concern.

“No, don't stop,” she gasped out. “It just felt wildly too good, and I felt like I couldn't bear it.”

“How about two hard taps on my shoulder in case you truly want me to stop,” Lennox suggested. “I want you to always be able to tell me it's too much so I can step back and make you comfortable.”

“Okay,” Kiman breathed out. “But... so, you know, I don't want you to stop this.”

“Good to know, I wasn't going to stop until you come on my mouth,” he replied. “Shall we begin again?”

Kiman nodded. “Please.”

Lennox went back to his sexual ministrations of her aching sex. Kiman buried her hands in his hair and whimpering sounds of pleasure escaped her while she pumped her hips against his seeking lips and tongue. Her hands were tight in his hair down to the scalp and it only seemed to enhance his pleasure at tasting her sex. He wasn't going to stop until she came, Kiman gave herself over to the sensations completely. Each lash of his tongue against her clit only drove her higher until she was begging for release. While his tongue teased and penetrated her, Kima came on a loud cry, her body arched like a taut bow off the bed while Lennox reaped the rewards with carnal sounds of satisfaction.

Her body fell back against the bed, limp from her orgasm while Kiman tried to catch her breath from the intensity of the sensations that rolled through her body. Lennox was far from done, she bit her lip against the soft whimpers that escaped her

while he slipped a lone finger into her pussy and began a slow penetrating rhythm.

“One more love,” he said his voice hard, rough with need.

She arched as Lennox added another finger and she spread her thick legs wider to take more, feel more as he fucked her with his fingers. This time he leaned over Kiman to kiss her; she could feel the dampness of her own essence on his beard and taste it on his lips. Lennox lifted his head to watch as pleasure played across her face, his blue eyes glittered like dark sapphires with desire.

“Do you like this, my love?” he asked.

“Yes,” she whispered and licked her lips.

“Say it’s only me who can make you burn like this,” Lennox’s voice was a gentle command.

“Only you, please more,” she panted as he increased the speed of his fingers just a bit more.

“I’m going to keep this slow pace until you can’t take it anymore and come all over my hand,” he kissed her hard. “Say my name, tell me you want me inside you.”

“Lennox, it’s you that I want...oh god,” Kiman whimpered. “I want you inside me, now.”

“That’s my sweet love,” he crooned. “Come for me first, I want to see you come again under my touch.”

Lennox was her mate, her man and her body knew it, at his gentle command, her body quaked, and he swallowed her scream. Kiman trembled while another release rolled through her, Lennox didn’t stop fingering her, and he was driving her crazy until she begged in a frenzy of words for him to take her. Finally, he relented, and he covered her with his body, their lips melded together as they moved further up on the bed.

He kissed her now with slow deliberation before he knelt between her legs. Her eyes followed his hands as he took his cock and ran the shaft up and down the slit of her sex before dipping the head inside her. Lennox took her inch by inch until he was buried inside her. It was even more erotic as he met her

gaze while he withdrew and then thrust into her again. His face, a mask of pure primal need and his jaw ticked with the tension of his control. Lennox stretched the walls of her sex with the length of him, each stroke took him deeper, and he was now braced on his hands above her.

“I want to ride you,” she panted feeling the need to have some kind of control.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he said bluntly. “I can taper my thrusts like this, but on top you’ll be taking all of me.”

“I want this,” Kiman gasped out. “For me, baby.”

Lennox nodded and as he kissed her, he rolled while their bodies were still connected, so now she was on top. She felt his heated stare as she straddled him and bent over to kiss him and then press kisses down his neck. He cupped her full breasts tasting them as Kiman was poised above him.

A harsh sound escaped him when she took his thick shaft in her hands and stoked the length of him. Kiman positioned him at the entrance of her sex and took him slowly until Lennox’s cock was fully encased within her. She arched as she moved, releasing his length, and cried out when she pistoned her hips down against him hard to take his cock deep inside her again.

“Fuck,” his hands were clenched in the sheets next to him. “You’re so tight around me, move love I beg of you, this is torture.”

“Do you like how I feel around you?” Kiman leaned low and nipped at his lips and used his own teasing against him. “Tell me you like me fucking you.”

“Bloody hell.... yes, I love how you take my cock.” Lennox said harshly. His hands were tight on her waist now. “You’re perfect for me, my love. Ride me hard, break me, fuck me until I want to die from the pleasure of it.”

His thighs tensed beneath hers when she began a slow rhythm then increased her pace. Kiman’s hands were braced on his chest as her control slipped as carnal need spurred her on. She raised her body and arched in delight, undulated her

hips sensually and Lennox cupped her breasts, teasing the nipples and sending more pleasure coursing through her. Kiman went past the point of reason and gave herself over to the primal instinct to give and take pleasure without hesitation.

“I need to come,” she moaned.

“Let go, my love” Lennox ground out and thrust upward to meet her movements.

Her sex clenched and tightened around his shaft, and Kiman felt his cock throb inside her. Instinct told her then Lennox was going to go over that edge with her, so she spurred them both on, like a jockey taking her stallion to the finish line past the point of insanity into the abyss of pleasure. A harsh cry was torn from his lips and Lennox’s head was arched into the pillow as he came. She cried out his name when he grabbed her hips and fucked her hard sending her over the edge. Kiman slipped against him while he wrapped her in his arms and Lennox nuzzled and kissed her neck and shoulder.

“This was bliss,” she sighed contentedly.

“I want to go climb the lighthouse and howl at the moon.” A low purr of contentment escaped him after his words. “Love, how do they say it? You rocked my world.”

“That’s exactly how they say it. I’m picturing it in my head, you, baying at the moon, and its more than a little sexy,” Kiman had her eyes still closed Lennox rolled so she was on the mattress and facing each other and she caressed his thigh with her toe.

He rubbed his trimmed beard against her face. “I have a lovely impromptu idea.”

“Let’s hear it,” she replied loving the intimacy of their caresses.

“It may be a theme here with the Bacchus and now Marshall clan,” he lifted his head to look at her. “Let’s get married, in the old chapel my Ma and Da got married in right here in Shildaig. Something quiet and simple with just us,

Eden and Alastair as witnesses. Let me love you for the rest of our lives, all I have is yours; my heart, my soul, my wealth.”

“Your money doesn’t mean anything to me,” Kiman said firmly. “It’s only you I want.”

“I know, but that still is given freely,” Lennox answered. “Marry me, Kiman Asher and make my life complete, yes?”

“It may be the happy endorphins in my body right now, but yes,” Kiman beamed him a smile. “Let’s get married.”

“Another reason for me to go howl at the moon,” Lennox kissed her long and deep.

Desire stirred within her once more and when he lifted his head Kiman had another suggestion.

“I think we should stay right here and practice some more of this,” she ran her hand down his chest, torso and then grasped his cock.

He groaned. “Aye love, a much better idea.”

With the wood in the fireplace crackling, and the air filled with sensuality, Kiman gave herself over to the need that swirled within her once more.

Evil blew into Kiman’s world once again to cause terror and chaos. Instead, it was the catalyst to something beautiful that was slowly being created between her and Lennox. *Older man, younger woman my ass*, she thought as his touch made her writhe. What they found in each other was timeless and pure, something they both needed in their lives.



Chapter Six

“So, you’re finally going to be a married man,” Alastair slapped him on the back.

“Gladly and willingly so,” Lennox grinned. “We’re going into the village later to pick the rings and talk with Father Raine later this evening.”

“You know Uncle Martin would’ve married you,” Alastair pointed out.

“Yes, but then the entire clan would descend on Shildaig,” Lennox pointed out. “A small intimate wedding is what we’re looking for.”

“Very well then, small intimate wedding it is,” Alastair grinned.

It was a day later after he proposed, and Kiman said yes. They were sitting in Lennox’s kitchen having lunch, Eden and Kiman went to walk off their meal along the cliffs. Both women wanted pictures of the beautiful landscape and to look around the base of the light house.

The wedding would happen the next day, Samara was Kiman’s only relative around and she wanted her cousin in Shildaig to witness the wedding. When she arrived Kiman and Eden came back to the manor house, Samara also brought with her news that was not good for any of them to hear.

“Anika Petrov had a bond hearing, and it was granted. Not an hour later, someone paid one and a half million dollars for her to be free,” Samara said in a blunt manner, she was always a rip the bandage off in one tear kind of woman.

“What Lord Justice gave that woman bond?” Lennox asked outraged.

“One who is now on our list, because someone called in a marker to get her freed.” Samara explained. “Even the crown prosecutor seemed shocked she wasn’t being held and as soon as she knew that she’d be out, she refused to talk.”

“She’s planning to leave town, isn’t she?” Kiman said and a humorless laugh escaped her. “Anika always seems to evade justice.”

“This time she won’t,” Lennox promised. “Our little friend we planted in Rizzo’s office has picked up some juicy tidbits, some with him and Clayton Berry.”

Samara rolled her eyes. “You men, none of what you got is admissible in court. It’s an illegal wiretap.”

“We know,” Alastair took a sip of his coffee. “It just gives us places to look and happen to slip the information to the right authorities.”

“Not to me or Baz,” Samara sighed. “You people will do what you want anyway. I’ll give you a number to call anonymously. Have someone, not either of you or the boys whose voices can be records for court.”

“Give us some credit, Samara,” Lennox said smoothly. “This isn’t our first time rousting corrupt bastards.”

“At least we’re safe in Shildaig,” Kiman said taking his hand.

“The prosecutors are willing to come to Shildaig and take your statements to build the case for a trial,” Samara explained. “But eventually you will have to confirm the voices you heard as Clayton Berry and Argyle Rizzo in the witness box, in front of the lord or lady Justice whoever is chosen to preside.”

“I’m willing to do that,” Kiman said firmly.

Lennox looked from his wife to be to her cousin. “She’ll be protected at call cost, they tried to kill us, and I’ll not have it happening again.”

“All of this is being taken into account,” Samara promised him.

“Enough of this,” Eden smiled widely. “We’re getting ready for a wedding.”

“One, we never thought would happen,” Alastair teased.

“I was waiting for the right woman,” Lennox looked at Kiman. ‘And she climbed into my lap for me to protect her.’”

“And you did,” Kiman smiled at him. “I was falling for you then, but it felt stupid to admit it. I felt so unsophisticated around the man who wore impeccable three-piece suits and with such a regal disposition.”

‘And I felt stupid for being a man my age falling in love with a woman in her thirties,’ Lennox admitted.

“Hey, I was thirty-four, when I met Alastair,” Eden pointed out.

“Yes, and Callum tried to buy you to leave because of the age difference,” Lennox reminded her. “I felt for sure, Samara would flay the skin from my body if I dared to even ask her out to dinner.”

“Who am I to stand in the way of love?” Samara said lightly.

“As one could say about any relationship between a man and a woman of a different age,” Alastair mildly. “How can anyone disapprove of two people falling in love.”

There was silence as his words were digested, Lennox and everyone at the table knew exactly who the comment was directed too.

“I agree,” Samara said finally. ‘But there’s always things to sort out.’”

“Love finds a way,” Eden said sagely.

Kiman smiled at him before laying her head on his shoulder. Lennox wondered, how her smile could snatch his breath away each and every time since the moment he met her. Lunch was finished and Samara chose to stay in Shieldaig in case she needed to leave quickly, and she didn’t want to disturb them in the manor house. On their way out to go buy the rings, Lennox repeated the same invitation he made to Samara.

“She is more than welcome to say with us,” Lennox commented and asked curiously. “Is she uncomfortable around

us in some way, because of the age difference?”

“No, she said she doesn’t care,” Kiman pointed out.

“Well people say things to respect others but...”

“Samara isn’t that way, she and Callum have been seeing each other for two years in secret,” Kiman pointed out.

Lennox laughed. “It was a secret for about a year, I’ve known for some time, I think Alastair found out a few months ago, his other two sons—well Saul knows. Rohan is always in his own head, so he may be clueless.”

“I think Rohan knows, he just doesn’t care about other people’s personal lives,” Kiman replied. “He’s probably got his own things going on.”

“More than likely, he’s the secretive one, not much to say until he has too,” Lennox said. He maneuvered the large vehicle through the winding streets of the village. “I swear these roads get smaller every time I come here.”

“Or you’re driving bigger vehicles each time,” Kiman pointed out. “You don’t tend to buy compact cars; the Bentley was pretty large.”

“I’m not a small man, folding into a compact car would make me into pretzel,” he pointed out. “And here we are, the jewelry store. I need to pull around the side. If I park on the street, I’ll block traffic and people will not be pleased. I don’t need them to cursed me up one side and down the other.”

“Yes, let’s not do that,” Kiman looked up at the sign. “We don’t need any of your family upset at me before we even marry.”

“That would never happen,” he chuckled. “I’d by them a few pints and all would be well with the world.”

“A lot of men still wear kilts in the village,” Kiman commented.

Brigadier Jewelry was owned by his cousin Tennyson and the name was the rank he had in her majesty’s army. Lennox didn’t think much of his military career, not even the rank,

many of the things he saw he wanted to forget. But his cousin was proud of his service and more power to him.

As Lennox escorted Kiman into the shop, it smelled of rich spices and soft bagpipe music played in the background. His cousin came back from the back of the shop, long hair of gray and brown. He of course wore the family colors in the kilt and vest, when he saw it was Lennox a broad smile cracked his usual stern face.

“Well as I live and breathe, Lennox Marshall you hound dog,” he came from around the corner to embrace his cousin. “What are you doing in the village and in my shop.”

“Hello Tennyson, nice to see you,” Lennox clapped his cousin on the back. “I’d like you to meet Kiman Asher, my bride to be.”

Tennyson looked shocked and his laugh boomed out. “How did you get this lovely lass to marry the likes of you?”

“Because he’s the best man a woman could ever want as a husband,” Kiman laced her fingers with his. “It’s very nice to meet you.”

“Aye, that’s not how you greet your new kin,” Tennyson embraced her and lifted her off her feet.

“Oh goodness,” Kiman said breathlessly.

“We came to buy a set of rings, Father Raine is marrying us at the village church tomorrow evening,” Lennox told him.

“Aye, it will be a wonderful reception to say the least, the guests will spill out of church,” Tennyson boomed out, Lennox winced his cousin truly had a voice that carried.

“Tennyson, it will be a small wedding,” Lennox said. “Discretion is key, yes?”

“The family will want to celebrate...”

“Small and for a reason,” Lennox said. “Have you seen anyone strange in town or asking questions to the whereabouts of my home?”

“It’s always filled with tourists this time of year,” Tennyson frowned. “Are ye expecting trouble then?”

“Maybe, someone is trying to hurt my wife, and this cannot happen,” Lennox told him. “After the wedding, pass the word around the family to look out for anyone suspicious, big guys with no social skills or a woman with a Russian accent. Hair as black as coal and the personality of a banshee.”

Tennyson nodded. “Aye, I’ll get on that, we’ve got a few larger boys working at the pub and the hotel. Cousin John is back from Glasgow, and he wanders the woods beyond your house to hunt. I’ll tell him to keep an eye out for anyone trying to sneak up on you, he’s pretty accurate with his bow.”

Lennox nodded. “Good to know, thank the boys for me. Can we look at a set of rings?”

“I have the perfect set,” Tennyson said proudly and went behind the counter. “Kiman did Lennox tell you I craft the jewelry I sell, nothing from an outside distributor. They don’t put love and care into each piece, but I do.”

“That’s so wonderful,” Kiman gushed. “You must be such an artist.”

“Aye, so people say,” Tennyson said proudly. He pulled out a box, that was set aside in his glass case and handed it to Lennox. “This is my best creation, a set of rings, for one of our family whenever the time comes, and I am honored if it goes to you. The set is white gold and platinum, I wanted the two distinct metals to form heart and soul.”

Lennox opened the black velvet box to reveal an expertly crafted set of rings. The engagement ring was a one carat diamond in a heart shape, and the wedding band was a slightly a different color but was designed with the hands of the Claddagh making a heart with an opening. The engagement ring settled into that space connecting the rings together. The wedding band for the Lennox was larger with a thicker band, and there was etched Gaelic into the metal.

“These are magnificently done,” Lennox said looking at the set. “Can we try them on?”

“Of course, ye can, that’s why I showed them to you.” Tennyson replied. “Have ye never shopped for jewelry before?”

Kimán held back a laugh as Lennox glowered at his cousin. Instead of retorting, he instead took the rings from where they were nestled in the box before he took Kimán’s hand.

“Let’s try these on, shall we?” Lennox said huskily and slipped them onto to her finger.

They fit perfectly and so did his, Tennyson smiled proudly. “I think they were destined for the both of you.”

“The inscription, what does it say? Kimán asked looking at his ring.

“Wife is to man, as air is to breathe,” Lennox said slowly as he turned the ring. “A perfect statement.”

Kimán smiled at Tennyson. “These are so intricate, beautiful, I’m in awe of the craftsmanship.”

“Aye looks like it, we’ll take them, how much is the set?” Lennox asked.

“A gift, from kin to kin,” Tennyson said looking pleased at Kimán’s compliment. “With my love and blessings for the upcoming nuptials.”

“Tennyson, I have to give you something,” Lennox said.

“Name your first child after me,” Tennyson gave a jovial laugh. “Or at least the middle one.”

“I think that can be arranged,” Kimán said with a smile. “I think Tennyson is a very distinguished name and the poet wrote “The Charge of The Light Brigade,” and other fine works of poetry.”

“I was named after him of course,” Tennyson puffed up his chest. “My ma said she saw talent in my hands from the day I was born.”

“I am sure she did,” Kimán leaned over the counter to kiss his weathered cheek. “Thank you, Cousin Tennyson.”

“See I’m already her favorite,” he teased.

Lennox pulled her close. “I’ll have to take offense to that, I’m her favorite. You’ll have to take a close second. We’ll have you round for dinner soon.”

“Ah well that I can live with,” his cousin called to them as they moved to the door. “Let me know when and I’ll clean up right proper!”

“We will,” Lennox promised.

“Aren’t you going to miss a big celebration for your wedding?” Kiman asked, hand in hand the walked around the corner to where he’d parked the car.

“You are my celebration,” Lennox kissed her as he opened the passenger door so she could slide into the seat. “I need no more than to make you, my wife.”

“Tomorrow can’t get here soon enough,” Kiman told him when he got into the driver’s seat.

“It will be the best day of my life,” His grin was wide when he glanced at her. “The very best day.”



LENNOX STOOD NERVOUSLY with Father Raine waiting for Kiman to come up the aisle. Dressed in the formal wedding attire of his clan, the dress coat was cut a few inches above the waist and his long sleeve muslin shirt was laced neatly in the front. His kilt was fully adorned and pinned with the coat of arms of the Marshall clan. His boots were polished and shined, and he carried the dirk of his family, by the leather frog strap from his waist. He carried another sash for her for after the wedding. In the small dressing room of the church, she was with Eden and Samara, they were already five minutes late. *Did she change her mind, were they trying to find a way to tell him, so his feelings weren't hurt?* Lennox wasn't used to self-doubt; the feeling of insecurity was not pleasant, and he made a low sound of frustration in his throat.

“It’s alright, m’boy, women are notoriously late for their weddings,” Father Raine consoled. “It was the height of

summer, and we were going through a heat spell, this bride was over an hour late for the wedding. People started passing out from the heat. The back of the church became a cooling station. Needless to say, extra pints were needed to calm the ire of her guests.”

“She’ll be here shortly, have patience,” Alastair added. “You’ve waited your entire life for this very moment, a few more minutes will’nae hurt ye.”

“Aye it’s not, but I hope she isn’t unsure of us, it happened rather quickly,” Lennox admitted.

“Aye, you are an older man, she may be seeing the light,” Father Raine joked.

Lennox stared at him without smiling.

“Not funny, I admit,” the priest muttered.

Alastair chuckled before tapping Lennox’s elbow. “Your bride to be, has arrived.”

Lennox turned and time seemed to stand still, Kiman was a vision of beauty, wearing a dress cinched at the waist and a flared out into a flowing skirt. The white color associated with a wedding and was broken up in the front with an African print of yellow, green, and royal blue to represent her heritage. Instead of a veil, she wore an intricately tied head dress to match the vibrant colors. On her forehead a golden chain with hanging tendrils hung down with the longest one falling between her eyes on her nose.

Cuffed gold bracelets were on her wrist and in her magnificence, she looked and carried herself with the regal air of a queen. With Samara and Eden by her side, Kiman walked slowly to him. Lennox sent his thanks to the heavens that she would be his wife. He never believed in luck and always made his own way, but now he could agree he was sent a gift from the gods, to bless his life. Finally, Kiman stood beside him, and Lennox took both her hands in his as they turned to each other.

“You honor me to let me stand in the presence of your beauty,” he said huskily.

“You look completely dashing,” Kiman complimented him.

“Oh lord,” Alastair said. “This one’s become a poet.”

“Like you don’t say some of the same things Alastair Bacchus,” Eden pointed out. “Let the man be, to cherish his wife with his words.”

“Yes, my love,” Alastair answered. “Continue, my friend.”

“Nothing left to say, but I do,” Lennox replied with a smile not fazed by his best friend’s teasing.

“And with that said, let’s begin the wedding,” Father Raine said brightly. “I have a pint waiting for me.”

Lennox shook his head but said nothing as the ceremony began. He chose to focus on his wife and taking the vows that would bind them together for a lifetime. Lennox slipped the rings on her finger and Kiman did the same. After a prayer in Gaelic and then in English, Father Raine said the words that would always ring in his heart.

“I now, pronounce you man and wife,” Father Raine said with a warm smile. “You may kiss the bride.”

Lennox wrapped Kiman in his arms and looked down at her. “I love you with every breath in me.”

“I love you too,” she whispered.

He sealed their lips together in a deep kiss while their friends clapped lightly.

“Okay now son, save that for the marital bed,” Father Raine said when the kiss went on for longer than expected.

“Sorry Father, but my wife brings out the fire in me,” Lennox said. “Alastair the sash please?”

“Here you go,” Alastair passed him the swash of cloth in the Marshall’s tartan plaid.

While he wore his on the left, Kiman would do the same. Lennox explained the reasons why she would wear hers on the left while he pinned it with the clan coat of arms.

“You wear your sash on the same side as me for a few reasons,” Lennox told her. “One, I am a high-ranking military officer of her majesty’s highland regiment, and I am also the Chieftain of the Marshall clan in Shildaig, when we married into the McGregor clan and some of my people moved here from Lothian. *Veritas Vincit* is on our crest, and it means “truth prevails,” we live by honor and truth. Under my clan you will always be protected, even when I’m gone, my people will always care for you.”

“You’re not going anywhere for a long time yet,” Kiman cupped his cheeks and kissed him. “A very long while.”

Lennox grinned. “Of course, my grandfather lived to be one hundred and three.”

“Well, let me remove my robes and I’ll be ready for that pint,” Father Raine said.

Lennox frowned. “Were exactly?”

Alastair cleared his throat. “I put together a small dinner at the manor house. You can’t just marry the lass and not celebrate.”

“Our celebration dinner was to be much more intimate,” Lennox sighed. “But you went out of you way to do this, so thank you.”

“He went out of his way alright,” Eden murmured.

“What?”

“Nothing,” Alastair propelled his wife to the exit. “Father you can ride with us.”

Lennox sighed again, knowing that this was much more than a small dinner. “I take this to mean, this is a full-blown reception.”

“You never know,” Kiman said as they filed outside into the evening sunlight.

“It’s Alastair Bacchus, I should’ve known,” he replied.

As he suspected when they made the turn that left the village and would take him to the house, he saw the tents with

each carrying a red and white flag with his family crest in the center. Ribbons were tied on the fence, and they blew gently in the soft breeze. There were fire pits to ward off the coming evening chill and even with the windows closed, he could smell the roasting meat and food.

“Seems like you were correct,” Samara said jovially as he parked the car.

Both sides of his driveway were lined with vehicles and while he wanted to curse until his Ma reached out of the ether and smack his mouth. Lennox knew he would grin and bear it, he longed to be alone with Kiman, but tonight they would celebrate with family and friends.

“Will you be, okay?” Kiman said as he helped her from the car.

He snagged her around the waist. “Aye my wife, tonight we’re married and that’s all that matters.”

A cheer went up among his family when they stepped inside the reception area where guests waited. He saw Alastair’s boys in the forefront, Baz, and other members of his extended family.

Tennyson came up and embraced him, before hugging Kim and taking her off her feet. “Congratulations, I knew you wouldn’t disappoint the family.”

“I’d of boxed his ears if he did,” Aunt Magda said. She was one of the reasons, the Bacchus and Marshall names were joined. “Blessed be, for a marriage full of love and children.”

She kissed Lennox’s cheek and then Kiman’s before handing her a green plaid bag. “My gift is already inside.”

“Gift?” She looked up at Lennox.

“They’ll all give you money to start our home,” he explained.

Kiman opened the bag. “There’s an envelope and a small statuette.”

“Aye, that one will be a fertility totem,” Lennox replied. “It seems that at every wedding one appears.”

“I guess traditions must go on,” Kiman said lightly. “But we don’t need money.”

“They’ll do it regardless; we can donate it to a foster care home or something along those lines,” Lennox answered.

“Ah, okay then,” Kiman replied.

“You didn’t think you’d get married, and we wouldn’t celebrate,” Saul said with grin. “Blessed be your marriage.”

Indigo hugged them both and slipped the envelope into Kiman’s bag. “Blessed be your marriage.”

It went like that as they made their way to the table. From Callum, Rohan, Baz, Sammie, to Cousin Liam and so on. Finally, he was at the head of the table, and everyone picked up their glasses waiting for him to speak. With Kiman by his side, he picked up his own glass, and she followed while he raised it in a toast.

“I did not expect we’d be coming home to this,” Lennox began.

“The baby making can wait a few hours,” one of his other cousin’s yelled, making everyone laugh.

“At least I’m married and can make bairns!” Lennox yelled. “Find ye a woman and you’ll be quiet!”

Laughter echoed again and Lennox waited for them to quiet down.

“It does my heart good to see us, standing with the sunset on the cliffs, where I remember watching the boats come in when I was child,” he continued and looked at Kiman. “Now I have my wife, one who carries my whole world in her hands. We both thank you for coming to this reception, let’s eat, drink, and fill our bellies with Shieldaig whiskey, mead, and our hearts with song! Veritas Vincit!”

“Veritas Vincit!”

The cheer went up and then the music started, Alastair had somehow managed to get a live folk band. It all reminded him of celebrations he grew up watching and soon Lennox was enjoying the evening like anyone else. He watched Kiman

dance in the circles, and he danced with her as well. His cousin Bethany wrapped a tartan blanket over Kiman's shoulders and Kiman hugged her tight as he saw her lips for the words thank you. The party went well into the night, and it was around two in the morning before people began to filter away.

"Should we start cleaning up?" Kiman asked looking around.

"Let it be, people will wander in to take the extra food and drink, tomorrow, Alastair will have people out to clear everything," Lennox replied, and he lifted her in his arms before stepped across the threshold. "Welcome home wife."

"I left here with you this afternoon," she pointed out dryly as he placed her on her feet.

"We left as two and came back as one," Lennox answered and bent his head to kiss her. "I love you."

"I love you too," she took his hand and led him upstairs. "You can show me how much."

"That I can do," Lennox felt his desire rise.

By the time they both got undressed and managed to shower and all the things they did at night, they both were yawning. Lying in bed, naked he pulled her close and the feeling of her bare skin against him made a sigh of contentment escape Lennox.

"How about we get frisky tomorrow?" Kiman suggested with her eyes closed.

"Aye that might be best," Lennox kissed her eyelids, cheeks and then lips. "Go to sleep my love, tomorrow is another day."

"Mmhmm," was her sleepy reply.

Sleep began to claim Lennox quickly, but even in the darkness of his mind, he could feel Kiman close.

"I'm a married man." He murmured and the smile that crossed his lips lulled him into a deep sleep. That knowledge was the best gift that he'd received in his life.



Chapter Seven

A week of bliss passed. They didn't need an exotic destination to find the romance of a honeymoon. With his manor house Lennox felt the bubble of love, and sensuality surround them. Regardless of if she made him dance in the kitchen with her while they were cooking or sitting with their feet on each other while they read in front of the fire.

Nothing broke in to destroy what they were building, making Lennox wonder how he lived the first half of his life without her. He couldn't see a minute without her in his life. If Lennox walked into a room and she turned and smiled, he'd of considered his life well lived if he died the next day. He saw the love in her eyes and her lips curved in pleasure because of him. Their torrid nights of passion only caused the fire within him to burn even brighter.

This evening was something special, with a thermos and two glass mugs in hand, Lennox went to find Kiman in the family room. She was curled up with a book, and that picture always brought him a sense of contentment. She felt safe, secure, and loved here making Lennox rethink living in the penthouse and instead buying a home close by.

Lennox stepped behind her and kissed her neck. "May I disturb your reading?"

Kiman put the bookmark between the pages. "Of course, my love."

"Good. Grab your shoes and come with me," he waited until she was ready then left the room.

"Where are we going?" Kiman grabbed the blanket given to her by Bethany and wrapped it around her shoulders. "There's a nip in the evenings lately."

"The first cold snap will be coming soon," he agreed. "And while it's not too cold, is the perfect time to watch the sunset from the light house with hot toddies."

Kimman clapped her hands in delight. “Oh, that’s perfect, do the lights go on when the sun is down low enough?”

“Yes, they do,” Lennox confirmed.

“I need to bring my cell for some pictures,” she patted the pockets of her jeans. “Got it!”

His cellphone buzzed on the table in the kitchen before they could step out the door. The number was unknown, and Lennox frowned, it wasn’t the time in the evenings for business calls.

“You go on, I’ll catch up,” Lennox said. “It’s probably one of my overseas business associates who does not think about the time difference.”

“I’ll wait out here on the steps,” Kimman replied. “Don’t be too long.”

“I won’t,” he promised and pressed the icon on the screen to accept the call. “Good evening.”

“Well, aren’t you pleasant,” Argyle Rizzo’s voice made Lennox’s anger simmer immediately upon hearing his voice. “Marriage must suit you.”

“Why the fuck would you be calling me, Rizzo. Is this another call for money to support your campaign?” Lennox made sure to keep his voice light, but moved into the living room so Kimman wouldn’t hear this conversation. “It must be hard being just rich on paper and begging for scraps.”

“Me, beg you?” Rizzo laughed. “I think it’s more like you’ll be begging me. I saw some pictures from your marriage, very beautiful wife.”

“Do not speak of her, lest I pluck your eyes out of your head,” Lennox said in a low angry voice.

“I remember her, you know, from her days in the mansion, I didn’t at first,” Rizzo’s voice would make anyone’s skin crawl. “She was a fierce wildcat, until she was forced to be compliant. I wish our mutual friend had found more just like her.”

“I assume you mean Anika Petrov; we have no friends in common,” Lennox’s hand tightened around the phone. “I was pretty much sure you were the one who paid her bond. Putting up the property you own in Essex as collateral was a good idea, but I can find anything I want, like you don’t even own the property anymore. I’m going to buy it when it goes into foreclosure, I’m thinking a homeless shelter would clean up the place.”

“Fuck you, my home will never have derelicts living within the walls,” Rizzo snapped.

“Really, so you’re leaving the property then? You’re the only derelict I know,” Lennox commented. “You never know, I may just be recording this conversation to preserve it.”

“It’s illegal to record someone without their knowledge,” Rizzo pointed out.

“Aye, but I just told you,” Lennox pointed out, there was a tense silence.

“Tell your new wife to not testify, if she does you won’t like what happens,” Rizzo said. “She won’t even make it to the trial.”

“Are you threatening my wife?” Lennox’s tone was deadly, “Think carefully, Rizzo, because I will not take your answer lightly.”

“I’m a minister of parliament, who do you think they’ll believe? Me the distinguished member of society, or you, the thug, whose family lives in the hills, like goats?” Rizzo questioned.

“We shall see,” Lennox said. “But know this ye cunt, you signed your own death warrant. My wife will’nae be stopped by the likes of you. She’ll be there to speak and to point to you, in front of Lady Justice and those you are supposed to serve who will now judge you.”

“You can’t threaten me!” Rizzo yelled. “I’m fucking Argy...”

Lennox disconnected the call and put his hands on the back of the sofa while taking a deep breath. He tried to calm

the deadly anger rolling through him because he wanted to drive to Edinburgh and kill the man himself.

Kimman poked her head around the corner. ‘Are you coming? We’re missing the sunset.’

“Aye, love,” Lennox answered and dropped the phone in the sofa.

As they crossed the grass, a breeze tugged at his kilt, all the while a plan formed in his head. That call would end Rizzo, Lennox would make sure of it.

“The wind wants me to have a peak of your thighs,” Kimman teased. “I love a man in a kilt.”

‘Any man?’ Lennox glanced at her.

“Only you, Teddy Bear,” she said with a laugh.

“Good, so I don’t need to fight single men kilt wearers in the village,’ he replied.

“You say that so seriously,” Kimman said lightly. “I know you’re teasing.”

“Am I?” he murmured.

Knowing how he felt right now, a good bar fight would do him good. At the light house, he pulled a heavy old key from his pocket and opened the door with huge metal hinges.

“If there is ever a need, this key is kept in the drawer by the coffee pot, get it and lock yourself in. No one will get in behind you,” Lennox explained. ‘There is also a local landline in here and a ham radio if the aired line goes down and we can only make contact through radio wav communication, food provisions and the likes.’

Kimman studied his face carefully. “Are you expecting something to happen.”

“Just in case,” he assured her.

“I am amazed all you listed, and you keep it all up and running?” Kimman asked.

“You never know when it might be needed.” Lennox pushed the door open and flicked on the light before letting her in. “When I’m not here, one of the cousins, come up and takes care of everything. The timing changes in the summer since the sun sets later in the evening.”

The lower room was storage space, and they took the stairs to the very top room of the light house. On the second floor, were the small living quarters where the lighthouse keeper would live.

“Before the manor house was built, the lighthouse keeper and his family would have to share this small area,” Lennox explained.

“It’s close quarters but I could see how they could make do,” Kiman replied. “In Ghana as I grew up, we had both my parent’s family at the compound sometimes, it was close quarters and arguments when personalities didn’t get along. At least here it was just his family.”

“I’ve seen some of the smaller homes higher in the hills, they made me claustrophobic,” he told her as they went up. “I used to have to bend down in my Aunt Magda’s old house, luckily Alastair and I had a new one built on the same land, she loves it, and I don’t crack my head on the beams anymore.”

Kiman ruffled his hair as they climbed upward. At the top of the lighthouse, was where the mechanical aspects of the lighthouse were placed, while most of the technology was updated to automated use that could be set. The older consoler was there, as well. Lennox made sure that nothing was covered in dust and was always well kept. On the way to the beacon in the lantern room he grabbed the thick Shearling blanket off the back of the rocking chair in the corner.

“This is the beacon,” Lennox explained as the moved around the large circular glass fixture in the center of the room. “Before, it was a lantern that needed oil nightly, and this was part of the lighthouse managers job to ensure the oil didn’t run out.”

“This is all so fascinating,” Kiman told him. “Do we watch the sunset from here?”

“No there is a walkway balcony type thing outside this room. In case the lantern went out or a storm was too fierce, men would come out with lanterns and wave them so boats could see the rocks.” Lennox opened the door. “Are you afraid of heights?”

Kiman shook her head. “Not at all, let’s do it.”

“My adventurous wife,” Lennox kissed her as she passed by him to head out the door.

He always loved the peace and the beauty from the top of the lighthouse. As a boy he climbed up those long stairs to just to sit outside and feel the silence surround him like a blanket. The sun going down behind the water, the trees on the lower banks, starting to turn the colors of fall. Not to mention the boats were still on the water and at these points Lennox wished he was an artist so he could paint the picturesque scene. A camera could never do it justice. Kiman gasped as she took in the horizon, she moved closer to the rails.

“It’s so beautiful, I don’t want to look away to take a picture,” she said softly.

“I’ll do it for you,” Lennox placed the thermos and mugs on the cement floor before he took her camera. After he snapped a few shots before he slipped her phone into his pocket and spread the blanket for them to sit on. “Come sit with me, *Mo chridhe* and have a hot toddy.”

Kiman sat beside him and opened the blanket she had around her shoulders. “Share with me, it’s big enough for two, or three, your cousin Bethany did not skimp on the fabric.”

“It’s a family blanket,” Lennox chuckled. “Her way of wishing us a houseful of children.”

“I wouldn’t mind one or two even three, but a houseful, I think I’m okay on that.” Kiman teased.

He handed her a mug. “I can drink to that.”

Kimman took a sip. “Mmm, not too much whiskey this time.”

He laughed. “I’m learning, making sure I’m a good man to ye.”

“You already are,” Kimman snuggled closer. “I love the feeling of home we have here, like the world can’t filter in.”

“Speaking of homes, how about we buy us a nice house back in Edinburgh?” Lennox suggested. “The penthouse seems so cold, and it never was a home, just someplace for me to sleep. A nice stone house—.”

“With a large fireplace?” Kimman added. “And one in the master bedroom, like we have here?”

“Aye we can find that, the hill has a few open listings, I can get my people to start looking,” he suggested.

“Can we visit them ourselves so we can choose?” Kimman asked. “I’d rather we find our own home, instead of the tasks being delegated out.”

“Very true, darling,” he agreed. “I’m so accustomed to outsourcing.”

“This should be fun for a newly married couple to pick their house,” Kimman laughed and drained her cup. “Can I have another?”

“I hope I don’t have to carry you down the stairs,” Lennox teased while pouring more of the drink into her glass mug.

“Would that be such a bad thing?”

He laughed. “No love, I would carry you anywhere.”

They sat in companionable silence, sipping their drinks and snuggled to get under the tartan blanket. Lennox watching only the sun descent slowly behind the horizon, but also his wife as the warm colors of gold yellow, orange and red played across her face. The soft ink of twilight took over the sky and Lennox looked at Kimman.

“Ready to go down?” He asked.

“Not quite yet,” She turned and pressed soft kisses against his neck. “I’ve decided to be daring.”

“Have you now?” Lennox held back a groan as she nipped the skin of his neck.

“Do you want to be daring with me?” Kiman ran her hand down the front of his chest to his groin and cupped his already hardening cock beneath his kilt. “I feel like you do.”

“Woman,” his voice held a soft warning. “I feel a bit savage tonight.”

“Just like a beast should,” she whispered against his ear. “Will you stand for me?”

“Why?”

“Do it,” she demanded softly. “I have the control tonight.”

This was important to her, to be able to be the one who made the decisions, who took instead of giving. Lennox took the time to take her lips in a deep kiss until she was trembling against him.

“Do with me as you will,” Lennox said against her lips, his need already made his cock ache.

He stood and faced her standing with his feet apart and still as a statue, his body hummed in anticipation of what was to come next. Kiman moved closer and ran her hand up his corded thighs and he felt them twitch under her hands. She grabbed the edges of his boxer briefs and pulled them down his legs.

“Jesus, Kiman,” the words were groaned out. “This will be torture.”

“Pleasure,” she answered and stroked his hard shaft.

Kiman parted his kilt to reveal his erect cock, and Lennox’s head fell back in pleasure. He held the rail behind him and as she ran her tongue over the head of his cock, a moan of pure need escaped him. She needed this sense of power, he understood that but by God, Lennox thought he might just die from the pleasure of it all. Kiman took his shaft deeper into her mouth, her tongue swirled each time she

released him from the gentle suction of her lips. He caught the rhythm of her mouth and his hips moved in tandem to her hand and mouth.

“Ah love, stop,” he groaned feeling the sweet ache of release tightening his balls.

Instead, a soft purr escaped her, and Kiman only increased her pace, taking him deeper, her mouth following her hand down his cock as she stroked him. Unable to resist, Lennox cupped her head and fucked her mouth.

“Is that what you want, to feel me hard as a rock between your lips?” he asked in a savage voice.

Lennox pulled her up into his arms and devoured her lips with a kiss. Jesus, he wanted to embed himself within her, until where she ended and he began couldn't be deciphered. He ran his hand down her body, loving the full curves.

Kimman pulled away from his kiss with a gasp. “The way you touch me, always goes straight to my core and make me wet.”

“Then I shall endeavor to do it every fucking day,” he growled.

Lennox pressed his forehead against hers, their breaths left parted lips and mingled while desire was thick in the air around them. He ran his hands up her body and Lennox felt her breath still, all while she arched, while his caress went from her shoulder to her neck. He slipped his hand into her hair and tightened as he kissed her and moved her back until she was pressed against the lighthouse wall.

A savage fire burned within him, desire that burned just for her, he used his knees to part her legs before stepping between them and grinding his hips against hers. A gasped escaped her, but by God, he wanted her to scream her pleasure, so everyone knew she was his. There was no fear in her, no one like Rizzo would ever pull her into the darkness again. Lennox pulled away, their lips just a sliver apart, and he stared at her for an instant.

“I love you,” he whispered and kissed her once then twice. “I fucking love you so damn much.”

“I love you too,” she looked at him worried. “What’s wrong?”

He shook his head. “Nothing, worried about keeping you safe, worried I may fail.”

“Lennox,” she said gently. “You have kept me safe, every day since I met you.”

He kissed her, a feeling of desperation making his kiss wild. “We should stop, I have no restraint in me right now. I feel this savage need to take you hard and I don’t want to make you afraid of my passion.”

“This is exactly the time, we should be together,” Kiman lifted his head so he could look at her. “I’ll never be afraid of you, and I refuse to have you hide any of your feelings from me. I don’t need filtered Lennox all my life, I love the man, the beast, and every part of you.”

She kissed him tenderly. “Love me.”

“Kiman,” his groan was a plea.

“Love me,” she kissed him again and again, harder, and deeper until he took control of the kiss with a low groan.

He was laid bare by Kiman and her love, the sounds that emanated from deep in his chest as they kissed spoke of his deep need. God, it was so delicious, so fucking good, that his hands trembled with urgency when he pulled her leggings and panties down her legs in one fell swoop. He cupped her sex, feeling it already hot and wet, he teased her clit just enough to wring a cry from Kiman’s lips. Lennox moved his hands upwards taking her sweater with him and tossing it to the ground. He filled his hands with the fullness of her breasts, and her nipples were already beaded tips when he ran his hands over the pert tips.

“What are you doing to me? I feel like I’m mad, to want you like this,” Lennox said against her mouth. “It’s all I can think about.”

“Then have me, right here. Looking out over the water and the stars to witness us together.”

“You’re magnificent, bathed in moonlight,” Lennox said, he slipped his hand between her legs again, penetrating her slowly and watching Kiman’s lids become heavy with desire. “Your curves drive me to insanity. You’re voluptuous and sexy as hell like you were carved and smoothed out of clay just for my hands.”

“Don’t stop,” she whimpered and pumped her hips against his hand. “God, don’t... stop.”

“Aye, your come is running down my hand, and against your thighs.” Lennox murmured. “This pleases me so much, touch me, Kiman.”

He groaned when she reached beneath his kilt to stroke his cock., and while she came, her essence coating his finger. Lennox kissed her savagely, trying to control the need to come between her grasp. He cupped his hand around her neck and brought her hard against his mouth and her kiss was as fierce and demanding as his. He slipped his tongue past her teeth, and as she trembled Lennox shuddered as well, the pulse of their desire, was so palpable, that Kiman was a part of his every breath.

This wouldn’t be the kind of lovemaking that usually took them to the edge, it would be raw, hard, and forceful, and without any of the restraint of before. A wicked smile crossed his face for an instant when he pulled away and began to kiss his way down her body. Hot open-mouthed kisses that allowed Lennox to taste her skin and commit every dip and curve to memory.

She gasped at the feel of his hands on her ass and Lennox teased her breasts with deep ardor, teasing one nipple with his tongue and then the other, before sucking each into his mouth. She cried out and he exalted in the sound, knowing it was because of him. The sounds that escaped him, were foreign to Lennox’s own ears, deep raw guttural sounds of pleasure that never escaped his lips before. *Did love, cause a man to lose his senses, make him burn with a carnal need?*

Kimán's legs were spread wide enough that as he dipped he could slip inside her and wrap her legs around his waist and fuck her against the lighthouse wall. *Not yet*, he told himself, when he did take her, she would be shaking from how many times he made her come over and over again.

"You smell so good." She ran her hands over his muscled back and shoulders and bit the skin where his neck and collar bone met.

"Ah yes, again." Lennox demanded loving the sting her teeth created.

Kimán did it again and he groaned in response. His blood burned in his veins, their foreplay heightening the need in him, especially when she moved sensuously against him. He didn't even recall when he removed his kilt but now his cock was trapped between her heated skin and his. With each fevered caress, the ache inside him built to a pounding roar but still something within him made him hold back. His love and need to not cause her fear overriding his own need.

"Stop thinking, just feel," Kimán demanded impatiently. "I won't break, I haven't before, and I won't now that the man I love is making my body sing with pleasure."

"Kimán," Lennox said her name reverently and let the last of his control slip away.

His body was against hers, the wall their only brace. A low cry wrung from her lips was his reward for letting go, when his hand slipped between Kimán's legs and probed at the wet, velvet lips of her sex. Lennox loved the feel of her slick essence and when he teased her clit and she bucked against his hand as he penetrated her with two fingers to bring her to climax fast and hard. She bit and sucked at the skin where her mouth was pressed.

"Ah fuck," he groaned.

"Oh now, Lennox, I need you inside me," Kimán's voice was urgent.

"Not yet, *Mo chridhe*, I'm not done yet," Lennox went down to his knees and pulled spread her legs wider.

Her fist tightened in his hair, causing his scalp to tingle, while he kissed her flat stomach. Kiman trembled when his breath was against her pussy and when his tongue probed between the folds of flesh, and her legs turned to jelly, and she began to slide down the wall.

“You’ll stand if you please,” He growled the polite order, as he looked up at her. “You wanted it all and now you’ll have it, I won’t stop until my beard is wet with your come. Is that understood, love?”

“Yes...” her words trailed off into a whimper.

Lennox pressed his mouth against her again, sucking the bud of her clit, before lashing it thoroughly with his tongue. Lennox pulled her hips towards him so to seal his mouth over her sex and penetrate her with his tongue. A soft scream escaped Kiman and she bucked under his mouth’s onslaught, her hips writhing against his seeking mouth. He used his tongue to tease her, fingers to fuck her or tease her until her every breath ended on a whimpering cry. He fucked her with his tongue and played with her clit until it was beyond torture. Kiman couldn’t help but writhe against his seeking mouth, begging for more and then pleading for him to stop the sweet torture.

“Please don’t... oh God more, Lennox!” she cried out, and her fingers were tight in his hair.

Lennox now plunged one of his long fingers into her wet sex in a deep pulsing rhythm. It took her over the edge with the insistent sensations of his finger working in and out of her pussy and his mouth against her clit. He felt Kiman go over the edge and her essence gushed onto his hand and lips when she screamed her release.

“This light house is now a shrine to our pleasure, I can never look at it the same,” Lennox sat on the blanket and brought her down to straddle his lap.

“Please,” she whispered and licked her lips. “Please.”

“You ask so nicely, what do you want?” Lennox murmured. “Go ahead, take what you want, I’m yours love.”

He pressed kisses down her neck and fingered her clit, while Kiman moved against him. She spread her legs wider, and grasped his cock, whimpering as she ran his shaft along her slit, until Lennox had to grit his teeth at the sensations assaulting him. Kiman took the full length of him inside her on one smooth stroke, connecting them intimately. She began to ride him hard, and he greedily thrust upwards to match her movements. He grabbed her hips with rough hands pulling her down against him hard. A harsh grunt escaped him each time he brought her down hard, and her breasts were pressed against him.

“Lennox, oh God, I can’t stop, it feels—Oh god,” Kiman cried out in earnest.

“You’re mine, always mine, ah Kiman,” His voice was raw with desire. “*Mo chridhe.*”

The sound of their bodies meeting, slick feminine wet against pounding steel hardness filled the air. Lennox pounded into her body, deeper with every thrust, pushing her to a blinding orgasm. His balls tightened until he gritted his teeth, the agonized sound of pleasure still left his lips. Lennox was striving for his release while taking her to the pinochle of pleasure.

“Yes, yes!” Kiman cried out as she rode him.

Lennox wrapped her hair tight in his hand, he lifted his hips to meet her downward thrusts, making sure he penetrated her as deep as he could. He kissed the skin of her neck, his hot mouth pressed against her collarbone. Kiman’s hands were braced on his shoulders and her knees pressed into the shearling blanket. Lennox ran his hand down her body to the curve of her ass pulling her hard against him.

“Fuck, yes,” he said, his voice harsh with desire and he closed his eyes as he spoke visualizing what he planned to do to her next. “I’m going to watch you touch yourself just so I can watch you get wet. You’ll never look away from my eyes because I’ll be the one that makes you so aroused, I can see it coating your fingers. When you come, I’ll lick your essence

off your hand, then wife, you'll scream my name while I fuck you, deeper and deeper until we're both lost to our desire."

"Oh, Lennox please," Kiman trembled. "I can't help it."

"Let go my love, let me feel you come," Lennox couldn't take his eye off her.

Kiman's head thrown back in ecstasy, the way her breasts rose and fell with each breath. The sensation of her wetness was his undoing as her pussy clenched around him with each rolling shudder of her orgasm. As she shattered in pleasure, Lennox let go of the last of his control and he thrust harder, until his own release caused his cock to jerk within her and heat cascaded over his body.

A low groan escaped him. He pressed his rigid length inside, prolonging the sensations they created together, the heady experience of his come filling her and running down his cock, marking Kiman as his forever. The inside of her thighs was coated and wet, and Lennox kissed his way up to her lips in a sense of reverence. The sound of their breathing was only punctuated by the soft wind.

"How could I not love you with everything in me?" he said huskily as he cupped her face, lifting her head from his shoulder. "The fates wanted me to finally feel this sense of happiness, and completion." He kissed her shoulder. "You've blessed me, Kiman in ways I never thought possible."

"Lennox, I love you so much, sometimes the ache in my heart is like physical pain," she kissed him one then twice before raining kisses on his face.

He'd never felt so humbled, and loved in his life, and he knew right then and there, he would give his life to see hers continue.

"I should take you inside before it gets colder, wrap you in my arms in bed, by the fire." Lennox said, hating to lose the weight of her body against his.

"One more dare," Kiman smiled wide, and her eyes danced in wicked merriment.

That led to him streaking across the grass from the lighthouse to their home in the twilight. Her laugh being caught on the wind and Lennox wondering what spell she put on him to have him running naked in the Scottish night. It didn't matter, watching her free, barefoot, and looking back at him with a smile and her light braids streaming in the wind, took his breath away.

He'd see that she never had to feel another night of doubt or suffering ever again. That night as she slept, he went downstairs quietly and picked up his cell phone from where he dropped it on the sofa earlier. He pressed one number and waited for an answer before he spoke.

“Leak to the press as many outlets as you can, I want Scotland saturated with their faces and what they've done.” Lennox ordered and hung up the phone.

He was done playing the quietly patient game. This would come to an end so he and Kiman could get on with their lives without this cloud over them. One way or another, this would come to an end.



Chapter Eight

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Baz yelled as he paced the penthouse floor.

They'd woken up to the new being blanketed by breaking news and each outlet was reporting on the elite who were named in the documents leaked for their perversions. Millionaires, royalty, billionaires, actors, and actresses, none were left out and everything was in an uproar. Baz had summoned them back to Edinburgh and while Lennox seemed angry about being ordered around. They drove in early the next day.

“What happened to being patient and waiting while we made a case?” Baz asked. I have my superiors crawling up my arse, to find out who did it and we all know who it was.”

“That went out the window, when Rizzo called to threaten my wife,” Lennox got to his feet and snarled the words. “As far as I'm fucking concerned, it's about them. You and your people need to pick up the pace. And that goes for you too Samara, it's to come to an end, I've had my fill of this bullocks.”

“When did he threaten me?” Kiman asked, feeling like she was out of the loop, it was her life they were talking about, and it was like she was looking on the conversation sometimes when choices were made.

“At the manor house, before we went to the lighthouse and...” Lennox words fell away.

“Why didn't you tell me?” Kiman asked.

Lennox looked at her and she saw the worry in his eyes. “I don't want you terrorized even more, love. I was trying to protect you.”

“I wish people would stop trying to protect me from the truth,” Kiman said in an exasperated voice and a hurt caustic laugh escaped her. “Trust me I lived the hard part; this next step is a cake walk compared to what I've been through.”

“*Mo chridhe*, it wasn’t my intent to make you feel excluded from what you must face,” Lennox apologized.

“Well, you did, all of you do sometimes, talking around me instead of asking what I want to do,” Kiman snapped.

Samara looked at her cousin. “Well, what do you want to do?”

Kiman sighed. “I get what you and Baz are trying to say, but it’s taking too long and each day we are more open to danger. I’m on Lennox’s camp on this, its time we tackle it head on. Let me do an interview and accuse them outright, with my lawyer present to say we’re going to sue them in a civil court, with what information we have.”

“Go on,” Lennox encouraged.

“Then since that is on record, we can potentially use some of this evidence when you and Baz arrest them,” Kiman continued. “I’m tired of hiding in the shadows like I’m the one who is guilty, and they lead an extravagant life. It’s time to put a light on them for what they did to too many young girls and boys. I’m not the only one, I’ll step up and maybe others will as well.”

“Can that work?” Lennox looked at Saul.

“It should,” Saul looked thoughtful. “Usually it’s the other way around, victims use the evidence presented at trial to sue the defendant if the case doesn’t go their way. But I don’t see any precedent as to why we can’t do that.”

“Will you represent me?” Kiman asked Saul hesitantly. “I understand if you don’t want to be the face on the front lines of this in the public.”

Saul snorted. “That wouldn’t be a problem, I’m working for the victim here. And even if people had a problem with it, they can kiss my arse, I’ve never quelled under public scrutiny.”

“Thank you,” Kiman gratefully.

“I can actually file suit in the morning, and we can have the interview outside of the courthouse,” Saul said. “Lennox, it

wouldn't hurt to have Ty or one of the others there standing with you and Kiman. You put men like these in the corner, they'll do anything to get out."

Lennox nodded. "That was my intent."

"I'll come along as well," Callum said. "Another pair of eyes won't hurt."

Samara added. "I'll be there too. I will get permission from my superiors. Hell, even if they don't give it to me, I'll put my badge on the desk and go private."

"Sam, you can't do that for me," Kiman said horrified.

"It's for me as well, you're my cousin and I'm going to protect you," Samara gave her a wicked grin. "They don't want to lose me anyway, with my connections, they need me more than I do them."

Baz who was quiet after his outburst, sighed in defeat. "I'll be there as well noting Interpol's interest in the case since it happened not only in Scotland but the United States. I can discreetly slip you some travel itinerary I've found for both men."

"Working outside the law, are we Baz," Saul teased.

Baz gave an impolite grunt. "Being born into this family that's more often than not. But family first."

Lennox looked at Alastair and his sons. "Where has Rohan been of late, he pops in and out, does he think we don't know?"

Callum shrugged. "I think he said he's working on a project in Glasgow."

"What kind of project?" Alastair asked. "We've got no finance business in Glasgow at the moment."

"Da, we're as clueless as you," Saul said. "Rohan's words were it's a personal project and to keep our noses out of it, lest he rubs them on the cobblestones outside our homes. I can only assume it's a woman and he doesn't want us to know or bring her home as yet."

“He’s being very secretive,” Callum’s voice held interest. “Maybe I should...”

“Stay your arse home and let your brother be,” Alastair said firmly. “Let Rohan have his peace in whatever he’s doing.”

Lennox nodded. “Somethings are meant to be private, and until he wants you or all of us to know. We pretend we don’t notice his absences too much.”

“That leads to another curiosity,” Alastair leaned back casually facing his friend. “I’ve heard rumors before we came down from Shildaig, there was a large naked man running from your lighthouse. And he was laughing, do ye know what that about then?”

Kimán put her head down to hide her smile and she heard husband clear his throat.

“I have no idea who that was, did you see anything love?” Lennox asked her lightly.

“Not a thing,” she folded her lips not to laugh.

“Maybe someone drunk from the pub, a usual occurrence,” Lennox added.

“Hmm, completely strange indeed,” Alastair commented. “Especially when it was described that said man was running with a dark-skinned woodland nymph—also naked.”

“Blasted shite, I’m going to ban Big John from hunting game on my property,” Lennox muttered.

“So, it was you outside running free to the wind,” Alistair was grinning. “What has happened to my very stalwart friend?”

“He fell in love and decided to be daring, with his wife.” Kimán spoke up for her husband who sat on the edge of the sofa next to her.

“I’m thanking God, I didn’t see that sight,” Saul chortled.

“And ye never will,” Lennox said firmly.

“Nine in the morning, on the steps outside parliament after I file in the court of session,” Saul deftly changed the subject back to the business at hand. “It’s my hope that this filing will cause a grand jury inquest to be convened, against Berry and Rizzo.”

“Aye, we go on the offensive,” Lennox said.

“Good, then the plan is set,” Saul said. “I’ll head out now and start on the paperwork needed and list the evidence we can use.”

“See you tomorrow, and thank you again,” Kiman said as he left.

Later when the penthouse was empty, and they were alone in the dark, Lennox held her tight, while they watched the lights of the electric heater.

“Are ye sure you’re ready for this, *Mo chridhe?*” His voice a soft baritone as he spoke.

“I have to be,” Kiman turned in his arms. “What was done to me was over ten years ago and it still mars my life. I have to finish it, bury it in the ground and move on to be happy. I can’t do that until I find justice for me and Tamara and every girl and boy who they ever took. I need to be free of this weight.”

Lennox kissed her gently. “Then we stand together, my heart.”

“I love you,” Kiman said, settling into his arms.

It was the first time she fell asleep without worrying about what would happen. The next move would be hers.



FLASHING LIGHTS AND the camera clicks were all around her and for a moment, Kiman wondered if she made a huge mistake by doing this. Saul was speaking to the press at this point, laying out to the foundation of her claims, against Anika, Clayton Berry, and Argyle Rizzo.

There were other names on Saul’s list, people she didn’t know, but they were all listed as counter parts of the illicit

dealings. Kiman focused on what was going on around her, Lennox squeezed her hand lightly, so she knew she wasn't alone. Baz stood there with his badge clipped in plain sight and Samara did not wear her credentials but was there as moral support.

"If these incidents happened years ago, why is your client stepping forward now?" one reporter asked.

"I'll let Mrs. Asher-Marshall answer that herself," Saul said and stepped back so Kiman could stand where he was.

Lennox stepped right beside her, and his face said he would suffer no fools lightly.

"I came forward because for over ten years, this has haunted my life, my very being," Kiman said. "They took from me what could never be replaced, they drugged me and caused me so much harm. I thought I was over it, until Anika Petrov walked into my employer's hotel, and it all came flooding back. She threatened me, as she did before, except I'm stronger now and I refuse to hide from any of them. They caused the loss of my friend; I'm also seeking justice for Tamara Mensah. She was seventeen when she died."

"The men named in the lawsuit are prominent men, businessmen and one parliament member, how do you know they were involved?" Another reporter asked.

"I know their voices, its burned into my memories," Kiman swallowed the bile that rose at the memory of their voices. "I can't forget them, and Anika Petrov no one can ever forget her and the evil she caused."

"Is this for money, naming names or prominent men to get a pay day," a male voice shouted from the back of the crowd.

A low growl escaped Lennox and he made a move to step forward. Kiman stopped him by squeezing his hand that she still held. That didn't stop Lennox from pinning him with a dark gaze that made the reporter gulp nervously.

"I don't need their money or want it for that matter," Kiman said. "If this case is won, half will be donated to Tamara's family, to have her taken back to the land of her

birth, buried the right way and for them to live a comfortable life. The rest will be donated to the National Human Trafficking organization to help other victims.”

“One more question,” Saul said in a no-nonsense tone.

“Is there anything else you’d like to add, in your own words, Mrs. Asher-Marshall?” One female reporter in the front of the crowd asked gently.

“Yes,” Kiman breathed out slowly. “I also urge anyone who is dealing with this to get help, find a safe space sign and ask for help, runaway, hide until you can get to the police. You’re not alone, you are never alone. I know there are others like me who suffered under Anika Petrov’s hands and the hands of these men. Join me, speak out and let’s live free of what they did to us. It’s a long road, but one worth walking to not be defined by what happened to us, but to be free and stronger in spite of it. Thank you.”

Kiman stepped away and Lennox put his arms around her. “Well done, my love, well bloody done.”

“Gun!” Baz voice roared out.

Kiman didn’t get to look around as shots were fired, Lennox had her low to the ground and his large frame protecting her. Pandemonium broke out with people running, screaming, and trying to find cover to escape the bullets. Kiman heard the screech of wheels as a vehicle left the scene and the chaos that ensued.

“Find me a license plate and CCTV footage, any and everything on that blasted car!” Baz roared out to officers. He rushed over to where Lennox covered Kiman and still held her protectively.

“Are you both okay,” Baz put his hand on Lennox shoulders.

“We’re okay,” Kiman said, with a breath of relief. “What the hell, are they that brazen?”

“No, just desperate,” Baz said grimly.

“Ty, get the car please.” Lennox’s tone was stiff.

“Good idea, the polis can take a statement later,” Baz said.

“Find them, Baz or I will,” Lennox said savagely. “Never mind, I’ll do it myself.”

“Fuck, Lennox stay out of this,” Baz snapped. “For once get out of your own way! Can’t you see any interference in this will weaken her case!”

“Am I to allow these fucking bastards to keep trying to harm my wife!?” Lennox said through gritted teeth. “In the old days I would...”

“Those ways are not what is needed right now,” Baz stopped his words cold. “This time justice has to come from and through the law.”

The soft feral growl he made Kiman think of a wolf protecting its own.

“Take Kiman home, keep her safe,” Baz gentled his voice. “Come on cousin, you know it has to be this way.”

“Hey, hey,” Kiman took his face in her hands, she could practically feel the tension in his body. “Teddy Bear, come on, home is the best place for us right now.”

“We’re going to pack and go back to Shildaig, you get these bastards in jail,” Lennox said firmly.

“Len...”

Lennox cut him off with a wave of his hands. “We’ll be in Shildaig, if you need us, we’ll drive in.”

“Fine,” Baz sighed. “It’s better than you roaming Edinburgh, smashing through any bastard you find until you find the right one.”

“Everyone alright?” Samara jogged up, there was some blood on her shirt which made it all too real.”

Kiman nodded. “The blood...”

“It’s not mine we have a reporter who took a hit,” Samara answered. “This is going to be a mess to sort, but we’ve already heard live reports asking if aforementioned men

weren't guilty why try to kill the plaintiff in front of The House of Sessions."

"We're heading back to Shildaig," Kiman told her cousin. "We'll feel safer there."

"I'll call with regular updates," Samara promised and hugged Kiman. "Stay safe, Kim."

"I'll protect her with my life," Lennox promised.

"And I, him," Kiman said firmly.

Ty pulled up in the car and Lennox bundled her into the Land Rover and they pulled away from the scene. Yellow police tape was being placed to protect the scene of the crime and she was still in shock they tried to kill her in broad daylight.

"Ty you and Alex run things, we're going back to Shildaig," Lennox told him.

"Sir, at least leave Alex and Benji here and I'll follow you up," Ty replied. "I can stay in one of the cottages close by the manor house. But if they did this in broad daylight, we bloody well don't know what they're planning."

"Okay," Lennox sighed. "We're going to drive up in about an hour, follow when you can and let me know you're there. I want us in traffic and settled in the manor before sunset."

"It's good we didn't put the suitcases back yet," Kiman said trying to lighten the mood.

Lennox just grunted and was unusually quiet when they left the Skymile hotel. The drive was made with just a few words here and there, Kiman could see that he didn't like the fact he had to stand down and not handle the situation like he wanted. In the manor house, the silence was deafening while they made dinner and drinking a glass of his usual brand of whiskey. The air smelled delightful when she came in and sat at the granite kitchen island.

"Can I have a glass of wine," Kiman asked.

"Of course, my love," Lennox said automatically and took the heavy cast iron pan off the stove. He went to the fridge to

pour her a glass of Chateau Largo from the winery in Fife. Lennox placed the glass in front of her and Kiman took a sip while looking at him.

“Are you going to keep stewing about it all or are you going to talk to me?” Kiman asked.

“I can’t put into words how I feel right now,” Lennox said. She watched his hands curl into fists. “Not being allowed to throttle the fool who fired that weapon into a crowd is not pleasing to me.”

“I know you’re in protection mode,” Kiman covered his hand with hers until he lay his fingers flat against the countertop. “But I’m here, safe with you, that’s most important, right?”

“Yes, of course darling one,” Lennox came around the counter to pull her into his arms. “I’ll be fine, this weekend is the Shialdaig highland games anyway. I’ll go toss some cabers to work my ire out.”

“I’ve heard about the caber toss, never saw it in person,” Kiman said. “And my man will be there, how exciting!”

Lennox kissed her nose. “I find it pleases me indeed that my wife will be there with me.”

“Is dinner done?” She asked.

“Yes, we can eat,” Lennox hugged her tight and looked outside when a roll of thunder sounded off in the distance. “We’re in for a good squall tonight, the power might go out. I’ll make sure both fireplaces have a stock of wood before bed.”

“I love a good storm,” Kiman said happily. “I can fall asleep, with you holding me listening to the rain.”

“Aye that sounds wonderful,” he agreed.

But later that night when all was quiet, and the rain beat against the manor. She woke up to find she was alone in their bed. Alarm made her heart race for a moment and Kiman threw the thick blankets back and slipped from the bed. She padded barefoot across the room to the door and then

downstairs and found Lennox in the family room. In his hand he held a glass of whiskey, and he sat on the sofa staring broodingly out the windows and into the storm. His face was as stern, and tumultuous as the storm outside, he didn't lift the glass to his lips, he was too deep in his thoughts. Kiman moved from the doorway behind the sofa and straddled his lap.

"Aren't you supposed to be sleeping?" Kiman asked.

She caressed his face feeling the thickness of his beard under her fingertips. He started to grow it out and she loved the feel of it against her skin.

"Aren't you?" his smile was fleeting. "My mind wouldn't let me rest."

"Because of today and that you couldn't act the way you wanted?" Kiman said knowingly.

"You asked me to make them pay and here I am on the sidelines," Lennox's tone had a bite to it.

"I should've never asked you that," Kiman said sorrowfully. "It was coming from a bad place, and I wanted revenge."

"No, you had every right to, you share my bed, and you have my love," Lennox said fiercely. "I would kill them all happily and sleep like a bairn tucked into his Ma's arms. As long as you're safe."

Kiman kissed him. "I know you would and that's why I'm okay with it never happening. I'd rather sleep next to you not wondering who you killed on my behalf. That guilt would eat me alive because you did it for me. I was angry and hurt because of... well... all of it especially knowing my father was involved." She looked him in the eyes and whispered fiercely. "You are worth more than ten thousand of them, I won't lose you because trying to save me. Don't you get it, you did save me, from the time you sat on the floor in your office, and I climbed into your arms."

"Kiman," he whispered her name huskily and pressed his forehead to hers. "I'm supposed to be protecting you."

She kissed him once, then twice. “We’ll protect each other — always.”

One short kiss, turned into two, then three that lingered and became more passionate with every second that passed.

Lennox ran his hands up her body. “I find I like this new type of sleep attire women wear.”

“Ladies boy short panties, and sports bras do it for you?” she laughed huskily.

“On your body, yes, quite,” Lennox murmured.

A slow smile spread across her face. “Shall we change your grumpy disposition, in more pleasurable ways? I think our bed is getting cold.”

“I whole heartedly agree,” Lennox answered. “I’d rather take you here with the storm as our symphony, may I?”

“Please.” Kiman undulated against him; his voice as smooth as the whiskey he drank.

Lennox teased her lips, the way he nipped and teased her, made her impatient and a soft whimper of frustration escaped her. He groaned in satisfaction before gathering her hair in his hands and pulling her into a deep savage kiss. Kiman wrenched her mouth away to gasp and catch her breath. Lennox would not be denied, with his voice rough with desire, he said one word—“More.”

His kiss was hungry with a hint of the fury he couldn’t shake. A man like him, powerful in life and in love not being able to act in defense of the one he loved was tearing him apart. Kiman sank her hand in his hair and clenched, feeling the strands of his hair tighten between her fingers, knowing he liked the pain. Lennox groaned and moved against her, and the hardness of his cock imprint through his pajama bottoms, told Kiman he was ready to lose himself with and within her.

Lennox lifted his lips from hers long enough to speak. “I don’t know how gentle I can be right now.”

“Seems familiar,” teased gently. “But I never asked you to be, I’m just as mad, and how better to deal with that emotion

than for us to get lost in each other?” She asked him and licked his bottom lip gently. “Let’s rival the storm outside with our passion.”

“Yes,” he muttered, and Lennox was already intent on getting her sports bra over her head. “I need to feel your skin against mine.”

She helped him with his shirt, just before Lennox was cupping her breasts and nibbling around the soft areola moving inward to her nipple.

Kiman gasped from the pleasure of his warm lips on her skin. Between kisses and their frantic touching, their greedy hands got her out of her panties and his sleep pants, so their naked bodies could connect. His mouth was doing delicious things to her body, causing this needful sensation to fill, and overcome her. Lightning cut a jagged swath through the dark clouds that layered the night sky before the deep roll of thunder echoed behind it.

She slipped her hands between their bodies, and when Kiman wrapped her fingers around his manhood, his shaft throbbed in her hand. She watched him as she stroked him from the tip to the base of his cock. On her next pass the tip had a pearl of precum that made her thumb wet, and she used that to tease the head of his shaft. Lennox moaned, and his body shuddered under the touch.

“We have each other, Teddy Bear no matter what,” Kiman said against his mouth. “Just a little longer and we can be free of it all.”

“I know, it still doesn’t sit right with me,” Lennox looked at her. “Call me anything but not a coward, that’s what I feel like. I would never cower against men like Rizzo or Berry. It bothers me to no end, that I had to walk away from protecting you, my way.”

“Damn it, Lennox, you don’t always have to fight to protect me,” she said shaking her head.

“Well, we’ll be damned together because I’m sure as hell not going to apologize for wanting to protect you,” Lennox

said with determination.

“I’m not asking you to apologize,” she said in frustration. “Just to take care, you don’t want to lose me, and I don’t want to lose you either. It works both ways, because thinking about you hurt or being without you tears me up inside.”

Kimman tried to turn her face away so he couldn’t see her cry, Lennox wouldn’t allow that. “Ah, my love,” he kissed her closed lids even as tears leaked from beneath them. Then he moved to her mouth, and with each kiss it became more heated, through her tears and their combined touch they became hungry again.

Lennox trailed his lips down her neck as he turned so that her back was against the cool cushions of the leather sofa. She arched at his touch then his lips trailed down her body and when he reached her moist center. Kimman was already slick with arousal when she felt his tongue delve between the folds of her pussy.

“Just like that,” the words were soft as she breathed out slowly.

“I can’t ever get enough of your taste,” Lennox muttered.

Her body trembled, as the storm picked up in intensity so did their need. Kimman’s body arched upward as the pleasure shot through her like the lightning in the sky outside. She could hear the carnal sounds Lennox made between her legs and her own sounds of pleasure rose as he teased the sensitive flesh of her sex. Lennox groaned just before he spread her lips and ran his tongue around the soft skin of her entrance.

He sank his tongue into her pussy, tasting her, using the appendage on his hand to fuck her, and loving her body in the most intimate way. Kimman undulated her hips against his seeking mouth until the pleasurable ache could not be contained and it caused her essence to flow. His sound of gratification was muffled between her thighs at the overflow of her release. Lennox used his tongue at a fevered pace against the sensitive bud buried between the pink hood that covered it.

The intense deliberate movements heightened her need until Kiman couldn't control her body's reactions. She moaned and whispered his name as she came, with her hands buried in his hair and her hips pumping against his mouth. Lennox didn't stop, with each lashing of his tongue, he added fuel to the fire until Kiman came again and could not hold back the cry that left her lips.

"Love, you make me so bloody hard when you come like that," he muttered.

"Do it then, be inside me." She kissed him fiercely as he traveled back up her body.

"In a little while," Lennox replied. "I need to feel you come for me again."

"Please, Lennox, don't tease me," she begged.

"Not a tease, my darling wife, just more pleasure to come," he answered.

A moan escaped her because Lennox was already exploring her body again. With his mouth at her breasts teasing her nipples, his long fingers took over stoking the fire that his lips had begun. Kiman caught his hand and urged his fingers downward until he sent one deep into her with a smooth fluid slide.

"Lennox!"

His name was a cry wrenched out from between her lips as she was rocked by pleasure once again. He drove her higher and higher, all the while his intense blue gaze was on her while wave after wave of sweet pleasure washed over her taking her breath away.

"Come here," he commanded and took her hand.

When they both stood, he turned her around, moving her braids away and kissing the soft skin of her nape while his hands roamed over the front of her body. Kiman bent over, and her knees pressed into the cushions.

"Are you sure..."

“I know what I want,” she cut him off. “Take me from behind and fill me.”

She bit her lip as she felt him step closer and the hair of his legs, touched the back of her thighs. Lennox stroked the length of her slit, coating his cock with her come before sinking deep within her. His harsh groan seemed to echo with the thunder, and she could feel the shudder that caused him to tremble. Lennox withdrew and sank into her once more, and she moaned his name.

“More,” she pushed back against him, taking him deeper and that was all it took.

The control that Lennox strived for snapped, she felt the tight grip on her hips and the thrusts deep, a harsh cry escaping his lips. Pleasure speared through her, making her hips move and meet his now pounding rhythm with the same pounding need. He alternated between playing with her breasts as he fucked her from behind to holding onto her hips so he could pound into her deeper. Kiman lifted her hips higher and bowed her back, until she could feel him glide against the wall of her sex with the fierce pounding thrusts. Something came over her, primal and filled with enough lust she had to voice.

“I love how you feel inside me, thick and so deep,” she gasped out. “Yes more, do I feel good wrapped around your cock?”

“Fuck, yes.” Lennox’s voice was harsh. “By the god’s woman, there’s only you, carved into my soul.”

A low growl came from deep in his chest, and he drove himself into her with wide abandon until her sex clenched around him. Kiman arched her back and gave herself over to the swirling mist of pleasure. Being taken by him, and giving her pleasure made her feel powerful, wanton, with their intimate connection. The sensations could only be described as heated waves.

“I’m coming, oh yes, now!” Kiman cried out.

Kiman’s climax took her breath away, and her vision blurred from the intensity of it all. She brought her vision

back to his face that she could see on the glass of the door beyond the sofa. It was a sight of pure masculine prowess as he gave himself over to the abyss of his own orgasm, it was magnificent to watch. His lips parted, he gritted his teeth, and his body tensed as he pumped into her.

Each muscle became taut and stretched with his release, and he emptied his seed into her warm, wet core. In the aftermath, those little growling sounds he made sent shivers through her and he kissed her back as he was bent over her. He pulled her down with him to the sofa and they were a tangle of arms and legs while they waited for their hearts to go back to a normal beat.

Kimman didn't want to move, and a huge breath heaved out of Lennox, and he ran his hand idly up and down her back and ass. Finally, he stood and with her in front of him and her arms wrapped around his waist, they went upstairs. After they cleaned up, he bundled them up together under the blankets and a sense of contentment swirled around them.

"The storm is dying," she said softly with her eyes closed.

"That's because we put it to shame," Lennox kissed her shoulder.

"Can we stay here?" Kimman asked suddenly and lay on her back. "Instead of buying a house on the hill, can't we just live here and commute or something to the Skymile? I know it's a silly idea."

"It's not," Lennox leaned his head on the crook of his shoulder. "But why, out here is away from everything?"

"It's not, it feels like home," she looked at him. "The scenery, walking through the town, going to buy groceries at the mart, talking to people, I've never been happier."

"It gets cold up here in the winter, worse than Edinburgh," Lennox pointed out.

"We have fireplaces and central heating," Kimman pointed out. "I'd rather be here, than there, I can work remotely and... you think it's a bad move."

“No, I don’t,” Lennox said. “Ty is prime to take over as lead manager, we’ll keep the penthouse if we need to go into Edinburgh, I can work as easily from here as I would there. My resources never go away, and like you said this feels like home. Especially since you’re here with me.”

“Then...” she drew out her words.

“Welcome home, my love,” Lennox kissed her lips.

“Yes!” Kiman fist pumped in the air before she pushed him back and straddled his waist. She bent over him, her hair forming a curtain before she kissed him. “I love you.”

He flipped her and this time Kiman was at the bottom and a laugh escaped him. “I love you more, sweetling.”

“I love that you use that term too, it makes me feel cherished,” Kiman smiled up at him.

‘Alastair isn’t the only charmer, *Mo Chridhe*,’ Lennox moved against her, and she felt his hardening erection once more. “Shall we partake?”

“Lets.”

Kiman pulled him into her kiss, nothing could ruin how she felt right now. Not one thing in this world meant more to her than that exact moment and nothing could destroy what they created. By loving each other, they both found home.



Chapter Nine

The news came to them in Shieldaig by television. Anika Petrov was found dead, in a seedy hotel room in an area one would not expect her to be. Lennox found he couldn't find an ounce of sympathy to be had for the woman, not even the usual, thoughts and prayers one said at a person's death.

She was bad woman, and she died the way she tried to treat other women, in filth, alone and scared. He hoped she was, afraid, feeling every ounce of what she did to Kiman and others while she was alive, as the life was drained from her. Kiman was with him when the news spoke of Anika's death, she just sat there in stunned silence.

"Are you alright?" Lennox took the cup of tea from her hands.

"Shocked, I guess," she admitted. "I expected to face her in court one day. It seems that destiny had another type of justice in store for her. I wonder if she committed suicide?"

"No, love, a woman's suicide is more pretty, delicate," Lennox explained. "She thought herself to be rich and royalty, unstoppable, if this was suicide, she would've picked a fancy hotel, pills and be laid out in an elegant night gown for staff to find her. No, she was taken out to protect the bigger fish, especially now the news outlets are beating the bushes."

His opinion was confirmed when Samara called later that morning. She was on the speaker so both of them could hear while they got ready to go on an excursion, he planned to show her Shieldaig by boat.

She was strangled by a length of braiding cord and left in the hotel room," Samara explained. "The place is a working girl's den and the cleanest thing in the room was the white pristine rope used to kill her, like braided satin."

"They used that in the mansion, like it was some sort of treat," Kiman's voice held disgust. "Seems fitting she died by the rope that bound others."

“She’s no longer viable to help them, the world knows her name and face now,” Samara said. “They sent her to threaten Kim and now she was a loose end.”

“I’m sure Rizzo had a hand in this,” Lennox said grimly. “He’s the type that would solve problems with killing his partners. Berry has been quiet all this time...”

“And as soon as his name was called in the civil suit, he turned himself in to Baz at Interpol,” Samara told them.

“Really, Baz hasn’t called,” Lennox snapped.

“He hasn’t had time,” Samara explained. “After the shooting, he saw the benefit to being a witness, he’s under protective custody in secure housing. He’s already naming names and Rizzo was at the top. Baz is chasing them all down and going through the evidence Berry preserved in case of an event like this.”

“And becoming a witness means a deal was made and he’ll not face consequences,” Kiman said with a disappointed sigh.

“That’s not the case,” Samara said. “I promise you, he will face jail time in some way, but it will be in secure prison, after he testifies there will still be a price on his head. After he serves his time, he’ll be given a new identity and dropped into some place a man like him wouldn’t think of living.”

“That’s at least some justice I think,” Kiman replied.

Lennox made an annoyed sound in the back of his throat. “Not enough.”

“When the dominoes start falling, you’ll see the value of it,” Samara replied. “Rizzo has gone to ground; he’s been suspended from parliament and his title removed. A full-on investigation into his finances has begun, but he’s left his home, and no one knows where he is.”

“I suspect, he’s hiding trying to find a way to worm out of this situation,” Lennox muttered. “But he won’t not this time.”

“I’m glad you decided Shildaig was the best place to stay, Rizzo has some heavy hitters he associates with that have

resources,” Samara explained. “Men with guns who aren’t afraid to use them, the incident outside of the House of Sessions was a warning so to speak.”

“And I was not allowed to answer,” Lennox said mildly, which belied how he felt. It was his intent to wrap his fingers around Argyle Rizzo’s neck kill him.

“Are you coming up for the weekend?” Kiman asked her cousin before he could speak. “The highland games sound like fun. The others are already here in variously locations all over town.”

“I plan to leave soon when Leslie gets here, and ready to place bets on the first round of caber tosses.” Samara replied.

“Are you placing your bets, behind me then?” Lennox asked. “We’re family after all.”

“We shall see,” Samara laughed. “And Kiman, I’m really interested in your idea about another safe house in Shildaig, we can talk about it more when I get there.”

“Looking forward to it, see you soon,” Kiman said disconnected the call.

“You suggested a new safe house in Shildaig?” Lennox asked.

It was a clear day and he hoped it stayed that way for the weekend. There was nothing worse than trying to participate in the games with a damp muddy kilt. They both stood to put their coats on, today was a shop day for food, they would also stroll through town and maybe have lunch at one of the fish shops.

“I didn’t want to give that part up, helping women and children who need to be protected,” Kiman replied. “This gives Samara another safe house for the underground, for cases that may prove too dangerous to stay in Edinburgh. I can use the money from the wedding for the initial startup and if the court case is settled, use that to keep it funded.”

Lennox buttoned the front of her thick cardigan as he spoke. “It’s a great idea, after the boat, maybe we can find a property while we walk today.”

“I can button my own clothes,” Kiman said in dry amusement.

“I know,” he answered lightly. “If I can undress you, I certainly should be able to help button you up.”

“You are such a Teddy Bear,” she laughed. “Anyway, Shieldaig is pretty far out, no one would expect a woman running from abuse to come up here unless there’s family. Samara asks for areas where their families are located on intake forms. She never sends a victim to familial areas, it’s the very first place abusers look. Trust me I know.”

“They went to Ghana to look for you?” Lennox asked.

Kiman nodded. “And luckily Samara knew I wouldn’t find help or healing there, and would be ostracized, I wasn’t there long before we left to come to Edinburgh.”

“You’re speaking better about your trauma,” Lennox opened the door to the manor.

“Facing it, is helping me overcome it and do what therapy couldn’t do,” Kiman admitted. She slipped her hand through the crook of his arm. “Having you with me every step of the way, is a gift as well.”

“Thank you, for saying that. I only ever wanted to make sure you are okay,” he said.

“Because of you I am,” Kiman smiled up at him. “My plan was to run, and you helped me face the people who tried to destroy my life. It’s a part of why I love you so much.”

‘And I love you.’”

Her words warmed him, and Lennox found himself wearing a wide smile as he went down the lane from the manor house into the village. The quaint little cottages with small gardens lined the path to Main Street. Made of brick, some were painted white with blue around the windows and others beige with green in the same pattern.

Meeting the road that connected to Main Street, was where the old, historic, stone buildings graced the area. There was the doctor’s office, and the small hospital for minor injuries or if

women didn't want to travel to give birth. The bank and tea shops, fish and chips cart, old churches and even a small museum made up Shildaig. The old ruins of the church were at the far end before you made the turn to the fish markets, that opened up to the docks where two seaside restaurants served fancier food and you could rent homes that overlooked Loch Shildaig. He'd seen this place all his life but now with Kiman at his side, exploring the village, it looked crisper and more beautiful.

Who knew he would find such happiness, walking into a flower shop to buy flowers as a centerpiece for the kitchen table. And taking the small shopping buggies into the food mart, and picking up necessities for the house. The games would have food for sale, but since the open field by the manor house would be the site of the event. They would need extra food and drink inside for anyone who came for a visit. After returning home and putting their purchases away, Lennox knew what he wanted to do next.

"Have you ever been up in the highland across the rocks?" Lennox asked.

Kiman shook her head. "I can't say I've had the pleasure."

"Come on, love, I have something to show you, another secret spot," Lennox grinned. "Take my hand."

"I'm intrigued," she said slipped her small hand into his larger one. "If you said come with me if you want to live, you'd have achieved action hero level."

"I could do a combat roll across the grass," he teased.

"I'd rather you didn't, I don't want everyone seeing my good stuff under your kilt," Kiman answered.

Lennox couldn't help but let his laughter ring out. "Oh, the things you say charm me to no end."

She smacked him on the ass on the way out. "Glad I can do it for you."

He was chuckling as he led her past the tree line at the far end of the open field. He could see the path between the rocks, one worn with age and constant use by him and the

generations of his family before him. If you didn't know these hills you wouldn't see where he stepped, Lennox could follow this path with his eyes closed.

"Watch where I find my footing and follow it exactly," Lennox commanded. "As we go higher it can be dangerous if you don't know where to step."

"I'll be with you, so I'll be fine," Kiman said lightly.

He stopped and turned to her. "No, you watch my steps carefully, in case you ever need to run and I'm not with you."

"Why wouldn't I be with..." Realization bloomed across her face. "You think Argyle and his mercenary friends are coming, you're showing me this in case you get hurt or—"

"Kiman its imperative to me that you're safe," Lennox heard the pleading in his voice.

"I refuse to go anywhere without you," Kiman said firmly, he saw the fire of anger and determination set her brown eyes ablaze. "I'll watch your every step, but just know, if this hiding spot is never needed. It will be us together using it or not at all."

"Kiman..." he said her name gently.

"Show me," she snapped, and Lennox could feel the anger and hurt rolling off her in waves.

He led her up the path through the rocky ledges and grass covered mount and she matched each of his steps precisely. Nestled right under a massive hill with a rock ledge was a little house, no more than two rooms. The jagged rocks at his back meant no one could breach it from the back, the only way to find it was the path he took. Over the years he'd weather proofed the building, removing the thatched roof for galvanized steel and the wooden shutters were now glass windows.

With black tin shutters you could pull closed. Even the stone he'd painted to blend into the area, in the daylight you saw a house but at night, it was just another blur of rocks and hills. The attack would come at night, he didn't know when,

but in the eventually he was killed, Alastair would find her safe in the Marshall homestead.

“How long as this been here?” Kiman asked as the made their way to the front entrance. The entire building was more like the old cottages where a man had to bend to get inside.

“This was one of the first things to be built on this land,” Lennox replied. “It was my grandfather’s, five generations back that first came to Shildaig for refuge after standing with King Robert the Bruce. Marshalls have been born and died here and anyone who takes over as the patriarch of the clan, lives in the manor house and part of it is to keep the original homestead preserved.”

“No one could tell it’s here unless you’re looking,” Kiman said. “It’s got a mountain behind it and an outcropping of rocks in front of it.”

“Aye, my people chose it because of that exact reason,” Lennox smiled. “Shall we look inside?”

“We might as well,” Kiman sighed. “It feels more like a fortress than a family home now.”

Her words stunned him, and he looked at the exterior of the homestead. Kiman was right, it no longer felt like the place that made him excited when his Da first showed him the secret stone house. He would change it back to rights, before the first snow could whiten the hills.

Lennox opened the heavy wooden door with a creak and ushered her inside. There was the familiarity and it instantly surrounded him, the smell of the last wood burnt in the small hearth still lingered and the leather armchair sat close by. In the second room, he’d changed the bed out from the straw mattress years ago to something mice wouldn’t live in. There were no more cracks where they could come in or the damp could seep through. There was a small cupboard in the living area with food and medical supplies, there was also a satellite phone and gun in there was well. Kiman didn’t need to know that right now, he watched her she looked around slowly.

“Reminds me of some of the homes in Ghana, smaller, sometimes one or two rooms, but you can feel the warmth of family and love within it,” Kiman said. “It’s not dusty at all.”

“I come up every few months, and make sure to open the windows air it out. I’ve done it twice since we’ve been here,” Lennox explained. Added more drinking water and supplies.”

“For our benefit?” Kiman asked.

“That and sometimes people get snowed in when they are hunting in the hills, storms come through quickly and hard sometimes,” Lennox added. “The homestead is always open; the only rule is to replace what you use or take. If someone uses it, I usually come back to a thank you note and extra supplies. Only family knows its up here, people like Big John.”

“Ah,” Kiman said walking around.

“Do you think you can remember the way to get us down?” Lennox asked.

“Yes, I can,” she said without hesitation. “I’m still mad at you for thinking that I’d ever come up here without you.”

Lennox pulled her into his arms and kissed the top of her head. “I know.”

“No, you don’t, you don’t get it,” her voice implored as she looked up to his face. “There’s no you and me anymore, it’s us, Lennox, not one or the other... us.”

He kissed her gently. “I love you.”

Kiman sighed; they both knew that his mind wouldn’t change about trying to send her up to the homestead. She led him back down without him saying a word, but he noted her precise steps with pride. Kiman was right, they were together in all things, except for her safety. When it came to her life or his, hers was all he cared about, if he had to die for her to be safe, Lennox had made his peace with that, he just couldn’t tell her, because Kiman would fight for him just as hard.



Chapter Ten

Lennox stretched as he looked around the field for the Shialdaig Highlands games. There were tents to represent each clan, on the outer edges, of the area, each flying their family coat of arms. Streamers and flags were everywhere, and the air smelled of food and of course ale and whiskey. He could see many of his family all wearing their kilts, vests, or dresses, along with the Bacchus family, Campbells, McPhersons, and a few other clans. Sammie although a doctor looked formidable in his kilt and white tank shirt, his large muscles seemed to flex by his every moment. He waved at Lennox who gave him a wave in return, *cocky whelp*.

“My, my my,” Kiman came up behind him and wrapped her arms around his waist. “I like this look, black tank shirt, a kilt, black boots and socks, are you sure you’re my husband?”

Lennox turned. “Do these arms feel different as they hold you.”

“No at all, I came for a kiss,” Kiman stood on her tip toes to kiss him. “There, I feel much better.”

“Glad to help,” he chuckled. “Where’re the others?”

“Indigo, Samara, and Eden are trying foods. They’ve got about six different things on the picnic table.” She pointed to where the women were sitting. “Alastair is throwing that big metal ball with a chain....”

“The hammer throw,” Lennox filled in the correct name.

“He’s pretty lean did not expect he’d have so much strength to him,” Kiman commented casually. “But from the bets he’s the one to beat.”

“He is rather proficient,” Lennox answered as he stretched his arm.

Saul is doing something throwing big rocks,” she continued.

“Ah,” Lennox replied. “The stone throw or *clach air a chur*.”

“The rest of them, are all over the place running amok, except Rohan,” Kiman looked over to where he sat. “He’s on his second pint and seems sad, I think woman trouble.”

“Usually is,” Lennox looked to where his young cousin sat. “I’m sure a fight later will get rid of all the angst.”

“A fight, you mean like a brawl?” She asked surprised.

“Exactly that, you can’t have this amount of male testosterone and not have a few fisticuffs ensue,” Lennox laughed.

“Jesus, Scottish men,” Kiman shook her head. “Well, I’ll let you be, good luck Teddy Bear. You throw those logs—”

“Cabers,” he corrected.

“Cabers, you got this as Eden would say.” Kiman called back as she walked away.

He shook his head and got in line with the other men who would be in the toss. Sammie slapped him on the shoulder.

“Look at you still out here,” Sammie said. “The usual wager again this year?”

Lennox nodded. “Aye, I plan to win.”

“You’ve said that two years in a row and you’re always second place—to me,” Sammie grinned.

Lennox looked to where Kiman sat, and she waved. “I’ve got incentive this year.”

The premise of the toss is that the nineteen-foot log, aka caber is placed with the heavy side up and the thrower must throw it away and in a vertical line. The throw length must be at the twelve o’ clock position for the competitor to win, and Lennox had every intention of winning, they thought age made some of the players weak, but experience was always best. They went four rounds, with the most precise of each contestant being the one who wins. It was his turn to toss, and the caber was held up by his stewards one being Alastair and

the other his cousin Tennyson, so she could slip his locked hands beneath the log.

“Ready there, boyo?” Alastair asked, his long hair was pulled back into a ponytail.

Lennox took a deep breath. “Aye.”

He straightened his back and stood, muscles straining under the weight of the caber, the majority of the heaviness was held by his shoulder. Most men walked but his method was tried and true from the time he tossed his first caber with his da cheering him on. Lennox ran a few brisk steps and used his hands to lever the caber up and forward with a loud grunt. He watched as the long log went up in the air and did a full flip before landing in the exact position he needed.

“Yes!” he bent backwards, fists in the air and let out a roar.

“Outstanding!” Kiman’s voice was loud and clear between the cheering. “Go Teddy Bear go!”

“Teddy Bear, so Saul was right,” Sammie laughed.

“I told that boy I would wallop him for gossiping,” Lennox muttered, good naturedly.

At the end of the event, Lennox did win and as he passed Sammie who held out a stack of folded bills Lennox said one word.

“Incentive.”

Kimman ran up to him and hugged him tight and she smacked a loud kiss on his lips. “You are amazing, Teddy Bear.”

“Aye, Teddy Bear, is amazing,” Alastair said solemnly but a grin was pasted on his face.

“Come ‘ere, you cheeky bastard, let’s show your boy how I chased you in these hills to box ye around the face,” Lennox made a grab for him, and Alastair danced away.

It led to a full-on family row on the grass with the two best friends and Alistair’s boys, plus more of the male family members in a pile. Lennox managed to get a glance to where

Kimán stood; Eden, Indigo and Samara were now where Kimán stood, and they were all shaking their heads.

“Thank god, I’m having a daughter,” Eden said with a sigh.

Rohan came up. “She’ll do the exact same thing when she’s living in these hills.”

“Well hell, I thought you were in there,” Indigo said looking back at him.

He shrugged. “Wasn’t in the mood for a tussle.”

Eden looked at him worriedly. “What’s going on with you, who do I have to fight for breaking your heart?”

“My heart’s not broken... yet.” Rohan gave a thin smile.

“Nothing a good brawl in a ball can’t fix,” Lennox sat up long enough to drag Rohan in by the hand.

“Argh No!” Rohan yelled.

It was too late, he fell in and was swallowed by the mass of arms and legs, soon his laughter was as loud as the others. Minutes later they all rolled away, with grass and dirt all over their faces not to mention sweat.

“Brawl in a ball,” Indigo said. “Nice.”

“Come kiss me wife.” Lennox got up and moved towards Kimán with his hands extended.

She stepped backwards. “No sir, you are a sweaty mess, to the shower with you.”

“Not quite yet, there’s much more fun to be had,” he caught her around the waist and kissed her regardless.

“Ewww,” she wrinkled her nose in disgust. “Man sweat and dirt.”

“It’s a highland man, Love!” Lennox said the words loudly and his laughter rang out as he moved away, feeling lighter and happier than he had in years. As the sun set on the games, it was time for dancing and the revelry began. Lennox finally took that time to shower and change. Lennox had the seamstress to make his wife a dress out of the formal tartan

color of lighter green as he wore. She looked stunning as they danced, the light of the fires playing across her face.

“You are so beautiful,” Lennox said huskily.

“And you say that to me every day,” Kiman said with a soft smile.

“My wife should feel how much I cherish her for all the days of her life,” Lennox told her.

“Want to go inside and cuddle the rest of the night?” Kiman suggested with a wicked nip of his finger.

“They’ll be out here until sunrise,” Lennox said, and an idea made him smile. “But we can go back to the hills homestead. Their lovely party won’t disturb us up there.”

“It’s dark, darling husband,” Kiman pointed out.

“I can see that path in the dark with my eyes closed, I was a Billy goat in those hills.” Lennox kissed her hard with a longing and desire that burnt like fuel along his veins whenever he touched his wife. “Shall we?”

Kiman laughed. “Yes, it’s always a new adventure with you.”

They moved slowly away from the crowd and Lennox took the stairs two at a time to turn out the lights in the family room, and bedroom. Leaving only the kitchen lights over the granite island, they would expect they’d gone to bed. Hand in hand, they snuck off into the darkness letting it swallow them up, as they moved past the trees. As sure footed as a mountain goat, he led them up the path to the homestead in the hills and when he and his wife were snug inside, closed the door and threw the deadbolt behind them.

She rubbed her arms. “It’s a bit chilly.”

“Not a problem,” Lennox went to the hearth and in minutes had a warm fire going on. “And there we go....”

His words trailed away when he stood and turned, Kiman let the dress pool at her feet, and she was deliciously naked beneath.

“No panties, no bra?” He asked, his voice hungry with desire.

Her smile was sultry. “I was hoping I wouldn’t need them. I’ve been like this all day. Maybe I should’ve told you as a bit of incentive.”

“All day,” he repeated the words as he unbuttoned his shirt. They were close enough that her nipples grazed over the thatch of hair on his chest. “If I knew that, it wouldn’t be incentive darling, we’d not left the manor house.”

A soft gasp escaped her. “It’s like electricity, when we touch.”

“Take off my kilt, my love,” Lennox commanded softly, and he waited patiently for her to open the leather straps that held the fabric together. It fell from around his waist to reveal he was just as naked as she. “I think we both had the right idea.”

She ran her hands up his chest. “Watching you today, how could I not be aroused?”

Lennox slipped his hand to the back of her neck. “Let me try to assuage that ache for you.”

Lennox kissed her slow and deep tasting her and groaning at the feel of his body against hers. Lennox had to control his urge to pin her to the bed and fill her again and again. Her body drove him mad with desire, the scent and feel of her. Lennox kissed his way down her body as he helped her step out of the puddle of fabric around her ankles. He reveled in the smooth, creamy skin of her torso and dipping his tongue in her navel until she giggled and shivered.

“Come up here and kiss me again, I miss the taste of you,” Kiman urged softly. “You know if you ever tell me that, I’m dropping whatever I’m doing and carrying you over my shoulder to my bed,” he teased.

“I’ll keep that mental notation,” Kiman said and tapped her temple.

Lennox watched as she moved back to the bed, the mahogany color of her skin seemed to catch the light of the

fireplace coming into the room, and her skin looked like it was caressed by the flame's golden hues.

She was a vision lying there naked, waiting for him to join her on the gray blankets on the homestead's bed. Lennox came to lay with her on the bed and as he covered her body with his own, their fingers laced together as they kissed. The kiss deepened and then he was lost in Kiman's taste. The way she lifted her hips to press closer to his erection only made him want to get closer so that not even a sliver of air could get between them.

Kimman's scent surrounded him, the soft perfume she wore, the creams she used on her skin. As their passion grew, he loved the way she rubbed her toes on the back of his calf and her hands when she squeezed the taut muscles of his ass. The beat of his heart increased with his desire, Kimman's curvaceous body dipped in all the right places and over. In their time together he learned each sensitive spot that drove his wife wild. Lennox left her lips to trail kisses along her neck then moved lower to her full breasts.

"Taste me everywhere, don't leave out an inch of skin," Kimman's voice was a breathless whisper.

She lifted the heavy globes of her breasts, offering them to his greedy mouth as if she was feeding him sweet fruit to please him. Lennox took the gift and greedily sucked the tantalizingly thick nipples into his mouth down to the areola. Kimman cried out, a soft whimpering sound as she arched against him and held his head to her breasts. His groan of satisfaction was hungry, and it was he who now lifted both smooth dark amber globes to feast on, giving them both the attention of his seeking mouth.

It delighted him to no end to feel her hips rise and fall to the rhythm of the teasing suction of his lips. Lennox craved her in this state, one that would never satisfy him and would keep him coming back for more. He parted her thighs and settled between them, watching as he teased the full aroused lips of her sex with his finger and feeling her tremble in anticipation.

“Lennox, taste me,” she pleaded in a soft impatient voice.

Her body’s musk tempted him. Lennox parted the lips of her sex with the scissor movement of two fingers and teased her with soft long lashes of his tongue against her clit. Kiman arched up slowly, bowed off the bed and he watched her hands twist in the cloth of the blankets. Kiman seemed to hold her breath even as her chest rose and fell in anticipation of his next taste.

He groaned as he watched her essence build like sweet nectar in a flower and flow from her core. Unable to resist, he tasted her essence with greedy lips and with a carnal sound, he pressed his mouth to her pussy and began to ravenously taste, lick, and penetrate her, until she was frantic and writhing on the bed.

Kiman cried out, “Don’t stop, please, Lennox, please.”

The way she moved, like a dancing flame, the taste of her and she was so fucking wet. Lennox closed his eyes and thanked the heavens for his wife while asking for patience to quell the raging need within him. If he didn’t, he would take her right then and there, ending it too quickly for the both of them. The need to watch and feel her come multiple times outweighed his own need. Along with an intense love that shattered his soul.

Kiman brought out something primal in him, a need that only she could quench and leave him sated. His used his tongue to hungrily tease her clit with a fast pace, stopping only to intermittently lick at her essence that flowed at his touch. Kiman was frantic because of his touch; her hands were in his hair, and begging for her release while calling his name in wild abandon.

“Oh yes, I’m going to come.” Kiman called out urgently.

Lennox raised his head to look at her. A vision of sensual beauty with her head arched into the pillow, legs spread wide and body taunt with lust.

“Play with your breasts,” he commanded softly.

He groaned when she massaged them and squeezed her nipples, Lennox buried a digit inside her, he fucked her with his fingers as she touched her breasts and drove herself higher. It was beautiful to watch, her taking and finding her own pleasure.

“Don’t fight it, let me taste you come.” He ordered his voice a harsh with need.

Kiman shuddered and trembled as he returned to sampling her pussy while he used his fingers to take her to the peak. Her body tensed suddenly as an orgasm claimed her and she could hardly take a breath. Kiman came and her juices flowed, much to his delight against his seeking tongue, and she drove her hips hard against his fingers. His primal groans of satisfaction seeing her come and at her taste filled the room.

“I... more... just take me,” she said breathlessly.

“Look at me, let me see you come,” he ordered and used his fingers to drive her to the peak again. Kiman opened her eyes, and he looked into the brown swirling storm of desire and Lennox almost drowned in the passion and love he saw in her gaze. The glitter of unadulterated need, while he built her desire once more. Their passion was pure madness, one he succumbed to willingly.

Her lips were full, from his kisses, Kiman bit her bottom lip and he leaned over to sooth the soft flesh with his tongue before he kissed her. The soft sounds of desire that escaped her were taken in by his mouth. Lennox made her come a second time, and when she cried out his name, her nails scored the skin of his shoulder, marking him as her own. He watched her fall over the precipice to the abyss of ecstasy and he held her in his arms.

Kiman’s body trembled; her face pressed against the soft mat of hair on his chest. and she reached down to stoke his hard shaft until a groan escaped him. He could no longer resist the urgent need to feel her sex sheath him like a glove as he buried himself inside her. Lennox covered her body with his own and joined their bodies in one deep thrust, that made their cries mingle together.

“God, you’re like hot velvet, clenching around me,” Lennox said between gritted teeth. “Don’t move just for a moment, my love.”

“I feel so full of you,” she gasped against his shoulder as her hips raised beneath him. “I can’t stop—it feels too good.”

An agonized groan left his lips as his control slipped away. “Then move love, take me in and with you.”

The fire between them burned white-hot and soon their bodies met in frenzied thrusts and writhing hips. Lennox grabbed her hips and pushed deep inside her and lay still. He was still trying to hold on to his control and not take her too roughly, but Kiman would not be denied. She ran her hands down his back to his ass and clenched her fingers into the taut flesh there, pulling him into her.

“Fuck woman!” his voice was harsh, the sensations causing him to pound into her.

“Don’t hold back, come with me,” Kiman kissed him.

Lennox gave himself over to the desire and the pace he set was pure and designed to send them both over the edge. He watched her eyes flutter closed and Kiman was swallowed up by pleasure. As they kissed, she lifted her legs higher around his waist and locked them at the ankles, he fucked her until on her every breath was a soft cry. He was lost to the to their primal need, Lennox pushed himself to his knees and spread her wonderfully thick legs wide so he could watch himself sink into her pussy. Each time he withdrew, his cock was coated, glistening with her juices.

Lennox kissed her hungrily before speaking. “You’ll not hide your pleasure for me love, let me hear it, I want to feel you come.” He thrust into her hard. “Yes there, right there, you’re trembling. You feel so fucking good wrapped around mycock.”

Kiman’s soft cries escaped her just as he felt her pussy clenching around him. The sweet pleasure was almost unbearable, and Lennox gritted his teeth as his balls tightened

until a guttural groan escaped him when his cock jumped with the first jolt of his own release.

“Ah God!” his voice was harsh before it was muffled in the skin of her neck.

Her cries of ecstasy only heightened his own pleasure as he spilled his seed inside her. The sensations of his release crawled along each nerve and pulse point of his skin, in heated waves. Unable to hold back the guttural savage sounds that escaped him, Lennox arched, his body was taut with each muscle straining while he gave himself over to something so intense. There were no words in English or Gaelic to explain the feelings rolling through him. Finally, his body released its tight hold, he still held his weight off his Kiman on trembling arms, and gently kissed her soft lips while their bodies were damp.

“I swear it’s the air here in the highlands that makes my desires burn so hot,” Lennox said pulling her against him.

Kiman laughed softly. “My darling man, you’ve been this way in the penthouse as well, our need for each other is what makes us burn together.”

“Very true,” Lennox murmured. “Shall we rest for a while?”

“Hmm,” Kiman made the noise of agreement while he felt her body relax.

He closed his eyes as well, feeling his breathing slow and match hers. How he wished they could stay there and hide from the world. But the endgame was coming chasing them like banshees on the wind. They couldn’t hide from it, only fight for their life together, and Kiman’s chance to be truly free from the darkness that tried to shadow her soul.



Chapter Eleven

They were in a waiting game, one that made Lennox impatient because he couldn't act. The games had been four days ago, and while they went about their lives as normal as possible. Alastair and his family had gone down to Fife, for one last visit before they settled in to await the birth of his daughter. In Shieldaig all was quiet, Ty was in the kitchen with Kiman who was making cookies and from the conversation that filtered toward his office with the door cracked, Ty wasn't patient.

"Tyson, they are too hot..." Kiman said in exasperation. "Now look at you, it's burning your tongue... I'll get the milk."

"Thanks," Ty said after a minute.

"How many times are you going to do this before just waiting for them to cool?" Kiman asked with a sigh. "That's number three so far."

"They're so good with the chips hot and gooey," Ty answered.

"You're hard-headed," Kiman told him firmly. "Stop! Don't make me crack your knuckles!"

"Sorry," Ty answered.

"Crack him on the knuckles, some of those are mine," Lennox yelled down the hall.

"I've got yours set away from the others!" Kiman called back. "Tyson has already eaten a dozen."

Lennox laughed and the sound filtered away, there was so much happiness here. He wondered if he was ever meant to be this happy, he was the beast of the hill after all. *Men like you always destroy what you touch*, Lennox recalled the words from one of the last women he tried to have a relationship with. She'd been mad he wouldn't propose and ended the relationship, she lashed out, but the words still struck the mark.

From that day on, he made no connections, any woman he took to his bed knew there would be no relationship, until he met Kiman. From the day she interviewed in his office, he was done with everyone else and ended the current casual dates in his life. For over a year he was patient, loving as their connection formed slowly and strengthened. Now, the woman he loved was his wife and he wondered if being this happy was to be snatched away in penance for his many sins.

The underlying danger was still there, making him antsy because he knew Argyle Rizzo had some kind of Plan B to escape justice. Regardless of the evidence against him, men like him didn't buckle under pressure like Berry. Lennox knew Rizzo's type well and had tangled with such men more than once. Argyle would play out his endgame with the hopes that he survives and comes out on top.

His money was the biggest motivator, Rizzo wanted to spend the money he'd funneled away to a bank account in Switzerland, the one that wasn't found and seized, in his dead sister's name. Lennox laughed to himself, while he worked at his desk in the office, the authorities couldn't take it, they didn't know where to look. But his people found it easily and removed the money sending it to an organization across the world fighting this brand of horrendous crime.

Rizzo was living off benefactors who still had a hand in the pot. They took care of Anika Petrov and the only loose ends were Kiman and him. The recordings, all of it could be explained off without a witness, he wondered if any more victims had come forward. Another storm had rolled in across the loch and into Shieldaig, outside the rain pummeled the manor house. The sunset couldn't be seen that evening, only the black tumultuous clouds. Lennox picked up the phone to call his cousin Baz, wondering if any new victims had come in.

Baz answered on the second ring. "Hello cousin, are you still sore from tossing cabers, then?"

"Not at all," Lennox said smoothly. "Have ye recovered from all the whiskey you drank?"

“Finally,” Baz groaned. “I’m ever drinking with Uncle Martin or Tennyson again.”

“So, say we all at some point or the other and yet the next family gathering we end up with drinks in our hand,” Lennox chuckled. “I called for an update, have any other victims of Rizzo or Berry come forward to add to the indictments handed down?”

“Aye, but we’re keeping that under wraps,” Baz said. “Until we have him and the others in custody, we have their statements, but we’re asking them to be quiet for now, so they are not targeted.”

“Good advice,” Lennox replied. “Bodes well for Kiman’s civil suit.”

“Yes,” Baz agreed. “There are more than a few, and the civil suit Saul is heading for Kiman will have additional evidence. Rizzo was using parliament for some shady dealings, and they want this handled quietly. I can tell you now the case against the government since he was their representative will be settled quietly, with an NDA in the stipulations.”

“Kiman and Saul will sort that out, I just wanted to know if we had any progress,” Lennox hesitated. “I’m waiting for Rizzo to drop the other shoe and its not happened yet.”

“No news is good news,” Baz said just before the line got static. “Can ye hear me, Len?”

“Bloody lines,” Lennox muttered. “I can but more than likely the storm is knocking out the land lines, the sky is dropping buckets of water.”

“He’s going to act at some point just be ready for...”

The line went dead, Lennox looked at the phone and sighed before putting it back in its cradle.

“The joys of living in a country village,” He murmured. He was just about to go into the kitchen to find the battery-operated lanterns when his cellphone buzzed. “Well at least, we’ve got some kind of service—Hello?”

“Len,” Alastair’s voice was clipped. “We’ve been trying to reach you for hours.”

“I just talked to Baz and the phone went dead, we’re in the middle of a storm,” Lennox explained. “I’m surprised you got a cell call in.”

“One of your contacts called Alex since he couldn’t reach you and Alex got me, we’re on the way,” Alastair said briskly. “Get ready, Rizzo has a team of mercs coming your way.

“Tennyson, and a few others have the roads into town covered, I’ve heard nothing,” Lennox instantly felt the ominous sensation run down his spine. He opened the drawer to his desk and pulled out his Smith and Wesson forty-five-millimeter Glock and made sure the clip was full. He shoved two more loaded clips in the pockets of his jeans.

“They’re coming via waters—lower—cliffs near the entrance of town,” Alastair’s voice began to go in and out. “On—way—”

The line became pure static, and Lennox cursed under his breath. They probably cut the landlines from the main box and are working their way towards his house. The military man in him took over, and Lennox strode towards the cabinet in his room and pulled out two rifles before moving quickly to the kitchen.

“Ty,” when he turned, Lennox threw one of the rifles at him. “They’re here.”

Cookies were forgotten and he saw the fear in Kiman’s eyes, her voice trembled as she spoke. “What’s happening?”

“Rizzo has a team and they’re here,” Lennox explained gently. “The landlines are cut, and the storm knocked out cell service as I was talking to Alistair.”

She took a deep breath. “Tell me what to do?”

“Shoes, sweater and coat, in case we have to leave the house,” Lennox ordered. “You stay behind me at all times, when I move you move.”

“I can help,” Kiman protested, she caught his arm stopping his movements and repeated. “I can help.”

He gave a stiff nod. “Have you ever fired a gun?”

Kiman nodded. “Samara made sure I could.”

He went into the office once more and came out with another handgun. “This is a thirty-eight sig, safety off and if it’s not me or Ty, you shoot them.”

“Where?” She asked.

““The place that will make them the most dead,” Lennox answered.

He turned out the kitchen lights, before putting the outside motion detection lights on, the battery switch, in case the power was cut. It would be there first warning when their assailants got to the house. After that task was done, he made sure the house was dark. *They may be hired mercenaries, but I was paid to kill for her majesty’s army without consequences,* Lennox thought. He planned to show no mercy.

Ty came downstairs. “I made sure everything is black upstairs, I saw lights through the rain, coming across the grass from the north side. Brought your blade boss.”

“Much appreciated,” Lennox put it in the back of his jeans before he cupped Kiman’s face and kissed her. “If this goes wrong, you run for the hill homestead.”

“Not without you,” she said firmly shaking her head.

Lennox gave her shoulders a little shake. “Do you hear me, *Mo chridhe*, you run!”

Kiman said nothing, she looked away and swiped the tears that ran from her eyes angrily. The outside motion sensor lights went on and Lennox raised his high-powered rifle, banned in Europe but he doubted anymore they were coming into his house with pea shooters. The light blinded the ones in night vision goggled, and he heard muttered curses while they dragged them off.

Good, now we’re on a level playing field, Lennox thought grimly.

The back door was opened slowly, and Lennox waited for at least three different men to come into his home before he fired his weapon. The first man dropped with a soft cry of pain, Ty took out the next and then Lennox the third before the rest of the men rushed inside and started firing.

“Move back to secondary position,” Lennox tapped Ty on the shoulder and with rifle raised and trained on the doorways, as he moved backwards.

He could feel Kiman match his steps, *that's it my love, follow my lead*. Tyson shot at the men coming through the back door, the front door was kicked in and Lennox was ready, his aim was precise, and his aim was to let no one else in the house. Tyson's cry and his jerk backwards told Lennox he was hit.

“How bad?” Lennox called out.

“Shoulder, straight through,” Ty called back. “Fuck!”

“Family room!” Lennox called.

They moved, quickly with Ty scooting back on his ass with one arm to get into the room.

“We're going to clear a path for you,” Lennox told Kiman. “Head for the hills.”

“Not without you,” Kiman held the gun steady facing the door even as tears ran down her face, she didn't even swipe them away. She was brave, even though he could see she was terrified.

“She's right boss, we don't know who's out there, I can keep them pinned down in here. I think they're at least four left, I'm not sure. But if you go with her, you can get her to safety and come back for me.”

“Fuck no Ty!” Lennox said sharply.

Ty put his hand on Lennox's shoulder. “She needs you more than me, Len—I either live or die, I knew the stakes were against me from the time I joined the military.”

“I'll not leave you here to die,” Lennox snarled but as his continued his voice cracked. “I won't lose another man—a

friend.”

“You’re not,” Ty shot him a grin. “They don’t know who they’re fucking with, take Kim and go!”

“Fuck!” the word burst out of Lennox’s mouth because he knew, Ty was right. “Okay, we’ll loop around and go through the mudroom to the kitchen. “Stay alive, Ty, don’t make me have to climb into hell to kick your arse.”

“On it, boss,” Ty said, and they heard more boots in the hallway. “Go now they think they have us pinned.”

“Come love, there’s secrets in this house yet.” Realization bloomed in Lennox. “Come with me Ty, when we go, you hide in the crawl space. They’ll have to search the house; it gives us time to run and you to be safe.”

“Boss I can—” Ty started to say.

“Do as I fucking say,” Lennox said. “Move when I say and lay down suppression fire, make them think about regrouping.”

Ty emptied his rifle at the doorway, making the men shout and duck for cover.

Taking Kiman’s hand, Lennox kept low and moved into the corner of the family room. He tapped the wall and when he heard the hollow sound he pushed, and the bookcase moved with a soft click. The space was tight, and they stood so their bodies could shuffle through the small area to the end. He looked back as Ty closed the case and lay his head on the ground. Kiman was already shrugging out of the sweater she had on and used it to staunch the flow of blood on Ty’s shoulder.

“Keep pressure on it,” Kiman whispered.

Ty nodded. “Go it, go with Lennox now, I’ll be fine.”

If he could hide her there, he would but even the smallest sound would be heard from the hallway and the air was dusty and thin. Kiman would have nowhere to hide from being sprayed by bullets and Ty would be silent as a mouse. They had been in worse conditions, covered in mud, snow and

blood. No one could hear them breath, until it was too late. Lennox knew the best chance for Kiman was the hills, so he would get her here and come back to Ty. Lennox would make sure his love was safe, but he refused to leave one of his people behind.

Together they climbed over the bodies of the first men in the kitchen and made it through the back door. There they were in a mad dash in the rain, across the slick grass and almost to the tree line, a few more steps and the trees and underbrush would hide them, when a shot rang out. Lennox heard the sound and then the pain that bloomed in his upper back taking him to his knees.

“Lennox,” Kiman screamed and went down with him.

“Ah the newlywed couple,” Rizzo’s voice drawled. “I knew it was best I wait outside.”

Lennox rolled on his back, breathing through the pain. Upper left chest, no exist wound, the pain was enough to blur his vision and his breath was tight in his chest.

Lennox lifted his upper body, regardless of the agony and pushed Kiman behind him. “You will not touch her!”

“Who is going to stop me?” Rizzo laughed as the thunder rolled. “You’re done for, Lennox Marshall, the so-called beast of Bacchus Hill, a common street thug I took down with one bullet.”

“Come try me without the gun, ye cunt,” Lennox would fight till his last breath.

“I don’t think I will. But I will shoot you and take Kiman, we can have a little fun,” Rizzo laughed again. “It’s not even about her, but the establishment she could take apart. No one wants that, we like our little exclusive club.”

“I will break your arms off, if you take another step,” Lennox tried to struggle to his feet.

“You’re done!” Rizzo screamed at him. “I’m going to kill you, fucking Lennox Marshall.”

“Not if I kill you first,” Kiman stood slowly and raised her gun.

Rizzo looked surprised. “Well now, this is interesting, you always had that fire in you... Ah Kiman—.”

Rizzo didn't get to finish his sentence. A shot echoed in the night, and Lennox watched surprise and then fear register over Argyle Rizzo's face. He looked at Kiman and held his chest while blood spilled between his fingers.

“Shut the fuck up,” Kiman said coldly as he dropped to the ground.



KIMAN LOOKED AT RIZZO on the ground as his blood spilled into Marshall land and felt nothing. She was tired of his voice, of being afraid, and looking behind her back for the next boogeyman to take shape in the dark. He was dead, Anika was dead, and she had every intention to live and testify against anyone and everyone involved in the so called ‘establishment.’ She kept the gun and moved turned her attention back to Lennox. He was injured badly, and she wasn't about to watch him die in the wet grass, not the man she loved. A new kind of fear filled her, losing him and then the urgent need to protect him filled her being.

“Come on Teddy Bear, we have to go.” She pulled at his arm.

They were both soaked, and he had begun to shake, from the chill or the blood loss, maybe both. She wasn't sure but she knew it was imperative to get him to safety and fast.

“Go without me love,” Lennox felt himself weakening. “I'll hold you back.”

Kiman grabbed his face. “You will get your big bloody frame off the ground, and I will help you up those rocks and we are going to be safe. Even injured you are as surefooted at a Billy-goat. We're going together or not at all.”

Lennox looked into her eyes and give a nod. “We go.”

With a groan of pain, she helped him to his feet and more lights seemed to be coming up the hill just before the cliffs.

“Should we move his body?” Kiman asked. “If they see him, they’ll know which way we went.”

“Aye,” Lennox staggered toward his body.

Kiman was shocked when he got Rizzo over his shoulders and moved with slow steps towards the tree line. *How did he have so much strength between the pain?* Kiman wondered but when he dropped the body in the darkness between thicket of a sweet rose, briar patch. Lennox was weakening enough that he had to brace himself against a tree and she rushed over to use her own body to hold him up.

“They’re coming” Kiman said urgently. “We have to go!”

“The bullet’s still in, it might have nicked a lung,” Lennox said.

“Come on we need to get you the the homestead,” Kim put her arm around his waist and braced him on the good side.

They heard shouting and Kiman could see lights though the trees. “We’ve got to be quick about it, others might be coming this way to look.”

“The rain should wash—away the tracks,” Lennox groaned. “I may pass out love, just leave me.”

Kiman heard a soft wish of sound and then a man’s scream as an arrow hit him in the chest. A face appeared out of the shadows, and she raised the gun.

“It’s me lass,” Big John said. “Get him up to the homestead, I’ll keep them away.”

Lennox gave a soft laugh. “My wife won’t go alone.”

“We went through this already,” Kiman snapped. “Move your arse.”

A laugh wheezed out of him. “Oh, how I love you.”

The rain did not let up, as they climbed through the rocks, Kiman worried about him slipping or falling down between the jagged stone, moss, and grass covered it, yes, but if he fell

from that height, he would more than shatter a few bones. His breathing was shallow as they moved and more than once he stopped.

“Please, love,” Lennox implored. “Leave me.”

She pressed her forehead against his, the rain having them both soaked and as it ran down her face, it blended with her tears.

“What is my life without yours, we became one remember?” she said fiercely. “Fight for me, for us, fight!”

He nodded and finally she saw the silhouette of the homestead in the dark. Relief assaulted her as they climbed the last steps and the flat surface of grass before the door was there. Kiman unlatched the door; she got him inside and he sat on the floor while she secured the barrier and braced it with the heavy wood of the old armchair so no one could kick it in. Kiman rushed into the bedroom and pulled the blankets back and came back to Lennox.

“Lost too much blood, Love,” his voice was fading, and her heart began to break.

“You’re not leaving me, I’ll march into hell and fight for you to come back,” she said between her sobs.

With strength she didn’t know she had, dragged him into the small bedroom and levered him into the bed. She thought about their time there loving each other, naked and warm in the homestead, now she needed to keep Lennox alive until help could get to them. His body shook from the cold and Kiman thought about what to do in case of hypothermia.

She got his clothes off, and piled the blankets over him before she went to start the fire, remembering he said in the dark and under the rock ledge smoke or light would not be seen. Kiman went to the pantry and found the medical supplies, and tried to remember what Samara taught her. The lessons from her cousin were to give her a sense of control, but now she would use the knowledge to save her man’s life.

She looked at the wound, it was barely leaking now, and she worried about internal bleeding. He seemed to struggle for

breath on his back so she managed to grab the cushioned seat from the armchair and used that to help pile the pillows so he could sit up. Lennox was barely conscious and when she moved him, he groaned out a curse but tried to help her maneuver his body, so he was not lying flat. The homestead was warming up, but if she was still shivering from the cold, combined with blood loss, he would be even colder. She managed to move him enough to pack his wound with pressure bandages and then found the whiskey with the food store.

“Come on Teddy Bear, take a sip, it’s your favorite brand,” Kiman coaxed gently holding the bottle to his pale lips. She tapped his cheeks none too lightly. “Hey, husband, I said take a sip.”

His lips curved in a small smile, and she lifted the bottle, watching his throat move as he swallowed. She stopped when he coughed and let him rest while she went looking for anything else that could keep him alive. In the next hour she mixed water with electrolyte powder, pouring the liquid into his mouth, ever so often hoping it would help with the effects of the blood loss. If Kiman wasn’t checking on him and making sure he was still breathing.

She sat in the wooden chair, facing the door, gun in hand and ready to defend him. Exhaustion was in the very fiber of her being, her shoulders slumped, but never once, did she close her eyes, the rain seemed to be tapering away and the wind waned, enough she could hear when footsteps scuffed against the rocks and low voices were outside. A feral savage noise escaped her as she lifted the gun, the door handle, jiggled and without hesitation Kiman fired a shot at the top of the door. The one and only warning they would get.

“I will kill you where you stand, get away from the door!” she screamed and fired again. “Get away!”

“Bloody fucking hell!” Alastair’s voice was sharp. “Kiman, its us, it’s the family, Let us in!”

“Gentler Da, she is in fight or flight mode,” she heard Saul say.

“More fight,” another voice she didn’t recognize said, and that gave her pause.

His voice gentled. “Kim, it’s us, Sammie is here, he’s a doctor and Samara and Baz are on their way.”

It took a moment for her to register they were friends not foe. When the recognition finally filtered in, she pulled the armchair away, sobbing loudly as she flung open the door.

“Lennox, he’s hurt,” Kiman took Alastair’s hand. “Help him, please, please.”

She heard the sound of her own voice, the pain in her plea, the thought of losing him doubled her over in agony as she cried. Saul held her while Sammie rushed past them to the bed where Lennox lay to assess him quickly.

“I can get intravenous fluids into him to bring his pressure up, but he has lowered breath sounds in the left lung, no exit wound and I think internal bleeding,” Sammie said briskly. “He can’t go down that bloody path like this, but he needs a life flight immediately.

“Then we go up,” Alastair said briskly. “Beyond this out cropping there is a wide expanse that can hold a life flight. Get on the satellite phone to Baz, Rohan, tell him to get them up here now.”

She watched as everything moved in a blur, Sammie got Lennox stabilized even though he never opened his eyes.

“Why isn’t he opening his eyes?” Kiman thought and only knew she said it out loud when Sammie answered her.

“He’s weak from blood loss,” he said and hugged her before looking her dead in the eye. “He’s in a bad way, but I can promise you, we’ll fight for him, like you did.”

She nodded and stood watch over him as they carried him further up the hills and watched the air ambulance land. She wasn’t allowed with him, between Sammie and the medical equipment, there was no room for her. She watched the helicopter lift into the skies with tears streaming down her face, before the rest of the group helped her down the rocks.

“Ty, he’s in the secret crawl space from the family room to the mudroom, he’s hurt,” Kiman told them.

“He wasn’t when we got there, he was out sitting in the kitchen eating cookies,” Rohan said. “His shoulder is being patched up now. He said you made the best cookies and he’s not letting them go to waste.”

Her smile was fleeting. “Good.”

“We found Rizzo’s body...” Saul broached the subject tentatively.

“He shot Lennox, so I shot him,” she said without hesitation. “If that means I go to jail, that’s fine.”

“Nothing like that is going to happen, he was here with men who were trying to kill you,” Saul said firmly. “I would like to see the prosecutor who would think this is a good idea to prosecute after all he’s done. Tonight, it all crumbled to the ground.”

“I wouldn’t care one way or the other,” Kiman felt numb. “It crumbled because Lennox put his life on the line for me. We need to go to the hospital right away when we get down, I won’t have him fighting for his life without me there.”

Samara was there when they got back to the manor house, and she was wrapped in warm blankets and tucked into a warm SUV. Without hesitation, Samara drove this distance to the Highlands Hospital like a woman possessed. By the time they got there and were rushed in, Sammie was waiting to greet them.

“His blood pressure bottomed out on the flight, the doctors and nurses got back it up and stabilized before they rushed him to the surgery,” Sammie explained.

“How long do we have to wait,” Kiman asked.

Sammie ran his hands through his long hair. “As long as it takes, they said we should be hopeful but...”

“He’s going to be just fine,” Kiman said firmly refusing to think otherwise.

‘Your clothes are damp and you’re muddy,’ Samara said gently. ‘You won’t get into a hospital room looking like this.’

‘Give me a minute,’ Sammie went to the desk and spoke to the nurse before coming back. ‘They can show her where to shower and give her some scrubs to wear.’

‘Follow me,’ The nurse said gently. ‘You’ll be okay, Miss.’

‘Mrs. Marshall,’ Kiman corrected.

She began to cry again when she tried to wash her body and Lennox’s blood went down the drain with the mud and dirt. Samara stepped in silently and helped Kiman wash her braided hair and when she was clean, there was even a pair of shoes for her to wear. An hour passed and then another as they waited on word about Lennox’s condition.

The family waiting area filled with the Bacchus family, then Lennox’s family from Shildaig as word got passed about him being hurt. They didn’t sit away, the Marshall’s surrounded her, as if giving her their energy and warmth. *He said they would take care of me if....* Kiman couldn’t finish the thought. Someone brought her tea; another wrapped her in a family blanket of the Marshall colors. *They have tons of these blankets,* she thought, and a small laugh escaped her. They probably thought she was going mad, because someone just wrapped their arms around her and started to hum gently. The family vigil grew and grew, patiently waiting for any word on Lennox’s condition. Finally, the doctor came in and pulled down the mask from his face. She looked into his eyes and wanted to crumble to the ground, Lennox wouldn’t want that, he would want her to be brave.

‘Mrs. Marshall?’ The doctor said gently.

Kiman firmed her shoulders and stood. ‘Yes?’



Epilogue...

Light filtered in—the evening sun warmed through the glass even though the outside grew colder. The manor house was warm, the smell of bread and pasta was in the air while the fireplace crackled gently. The breathing was close to his skin, then a gentle hand checked and caressed his forehead.

“I’m alive, *Mo chridhe*,” his voice held humor even though his eyes stayed closed. “Just like I was thirty minutes ago when you checked.”

“I was just making sure,” Kiman said. “You cannot blame me for worrying.”

Lennox opened his eyes to look at his wife’s beautiful face. “I don’t, but I wonder how long this stage will last. I’ve been fine for two weeks now.”

“No, you’ve been out of the hospital for two weeks” Kiman informed him. “But you’re still healing.”

“So, you keep telling me,” He replied and snagged her waist before she could escape and kissed her soundly. “You won’t even allow me to taste your body’s delights.”

“You still have stiches in your body for another week,” she pointed out. “And Sammie said no exertion for at least a few more weeks after that.”

“Aye don’t listen to that man, I’m perfectly fine,” Lennox winked at her. “I’ll even stay perfectly still and let you take advantage of me. I just want to feel my love wrapped around me, driving us both to the peak of pleasure.”

She shifted her hips and Lennox knew he was affecting her, and his desire built, but Kiman still wouldn’t be swayed.

“Just a bit longer,” she pressed soft kisses on his face. “I almost lost you, so be patient.”

“Fine,” he growled. “But this is considered torture; cruel and unusual punishment.”

“You’re being melodramatic,” she laughed. “I’ll be back with dinner so we can eat in front of the fireplace.”

“Don’t be long,” he called and sat up with just a small grimace.

The stitches were the worst part, they were tight and itchy and if he could have reached them, Lennox would already have taken them out and been done with it. But they were in his side close to under his armpits, plus Kiman kept a watchful eye on him, even soothing them with coconut oil when the itch of healing became unbearable.

Two weeks ago, he was fighting for his life, and no matter what he did, Kiman wouldn’t leave him to a fate of death. He awoke in a hospital bed, and Kiman’s held his hand, and her head was lying on their joined fingers.

“Kiman,” he whispered, and she was up instantly, kissing his face with her tears hot on his face. From then on, she fussed and worried, even chastising Alastair who smuggled him in his glass of whiskey.

“If you do it again, you’ll be banned until he’s better,” She told Alastair in no uncertain terms.

“Aye, I’ll be good,” Alastair promised, but it just meant they had to be sneakier to get around his darling wife in protective mode.

He heard how she protected him and kept him alive in the homestead, how could he fault her for anything? She said there was no him or her, but together as one, and she meant it, her fierceness and strength that kept him alive. That knowledge humbled him, more than she realized, no one had ever fought for him.

In the time away from home, his family and Alastair had the manor house cleaned and renovated from the attack that happened there. Aunt Magda came in to bless the house and the land, to remove any negative energy that was imprinted on the house because of that night. It was very much their belief that negatives acts could imprint on the home or surrounding area, so it had to be cleansed. Lennox had no problem with it,

and it felt lighter when they came home, he and Kiman settled in feeling more connected in their home than ever before.

“My love,” he whispered the words and moved his hands to hold her tight.

Yes, he could be patient, because he was gifted a life like this and a few weeks out of a lifetime wasn't too much too much to give. Argyle Rizzo was dead, his name in ruins and Lennox hoped he was dancing on the devil's pitchfork in hell. The dominoes fell quickly after that, the news of what Rizzo did in Shieldaig and the mercenaries that were with him, who were left dead on his land. People started turning themselves in, not willing to be dragged out in cuffs, by the task force led by Samara or her agency and Baz on behalf of counties outside of Europe.

Mansions were raided around the world, money schemes and networks unraveled, one of the biggest trafficking organizations was brought down to the foundation and even that was smashed to dust. Saul was leading the charge with seven other lawyers who were all representing the victims. Offers of settlements coming in for her and other victims who had stepped forward were coming in quicker than they could read them over.

Still now she and others would testify in front of parliament in a few weeks, the corruption could only be answered by a hearing overseen by the lords and lady justices of the judiciary high courts. More poisoned blood needed to flow before healing began and Kiman was stronger than he ever thought possible to face it. The story about how she shot through the door of the homestead to warn anyone away was told over and over again much to his pride.

“I can't go into the village without someone giving me a gift,” Kiman said each time she went to buy anything in town. “Today I have four Yorkshire puddings.”

“It will wear off soon, they are proud of their kin for standing up for me like you did,” Lennox told her. And that bullet hole is staying in the door, when we take out children into the hills, I'll tell them how their Ma saved my life.”

Kimman kissed him after that. “That’s sweet, but please don’t tell our children stories about guns and violence.”

“Oh honey, they’ll be proper Scots and fighting by the time they’re three,” he laughed.

He smiled at the memories of their conversations, Kimman had even accepted the olive branch from her mother and sister to talk. She was still reserved, there was a lot of water under that bridge to take care of, but at least that was a start to them healing in a right proper way as well.

“And here’s dinner,” Kimman said coming in with a tray. “Pesto pasta, roasted chicken and lovely brussels sprouts.”

“Sprouts,” he wrinkled his nose.

“Stop it,” she set the tray down and came around to sit behind him on the sofa before handing him his plate. “They are delicious, and I made them with bacon and butter and brown sugar.”

“Isn’t Ty coming up to eat?” Lennox asked. “If I have to eat the mini cabbages, so should he.”

Ty’s wound healed quicker than his and he knew it was the right choice to let Ty run the Skymile hotel. A friendship and loyalty like what they had could not be measured and they’d shared one more life-threatening situation together. Lennox hoped it was the last they faced, and they could both just have good, relaxed lives with the violence in the past.

“I’m not Ty’s wife, and I think he’s got one of the girls in the village taking care of him,” Kimman told him. “I think he caught her eye; I saw her taking him dinner, yesterday and they were sharing a dram of whiskey once outside on the benches.”

“Lucky,” Lennox murmured.

“Excuse me?” Kimman gave him a look that made Lennox gulp.

“The whiskey, love,” he answered quickly. “Since I’m convalescing and all that.”

“Uh-huh,” Kiman stared at him and took a bite of her pasta.

Lennox leaned forward to kiss her nose. “You can be very scary sometimes.”

She smiled. “I know.”

After dinner, they sat by the fireplace, this time he lay with his head in her lap watching the television while she read. The way she ran her fingers through his hair relaxed him, and a low rumbling purr escaped him.

“I love when you do that,” he murmured.

“I can tell, by the noises you make,” she said amused putting her book away and ran her hand down his chest and under his shirt. “I wonder what would happen if I scratched your belly?”

“Something completely different if you take your hands a few inches lower” he looked up to his wife with desire in his eyes. “I’m a Scotsman, a little injury doesn’t keep me down.”

“The small injury was lifesaving trauma surgery,” Kiman pointed out.

Lennox shrugged. “Semantics.”

“No, a bullet wound,” she countered.

Lennox took her hand and kissed it. “How I love you, woman, with every breath in me. I breathe now because of you.”

“I love you too,” she leaned over and kissed him and sighed against his lips. “You’ve charmed me and worn me down, I give in, we can go upstairs. But you have to promise to be careful or even lie still.”

“Your wish is my command,” Lennox said somberly, yet a wicked smile pulled at his lips.

“I’m sure,” she said dryly, as he stood easily and held out his hand to her.

With fingers laced they went upstairs to their room and with the fireplace warming their bodies. Their passionate bond

was reclaimed once again, Kiman was warm against him later that night, sleeping soundly while he slipped from their bed and went downstairs. He found the cookies that were made fresh that day and went into his office for a quick dram of a good Shieldaig single malt. Lennox sat at his desk and chewed at the moist cookies happily.

“Are the fae giving her flour? He said to himself. “These are bloody well delicious.”

Just as he lifted his glass to his lips and took a long sip with a sigh, his hand stilled at her voice.

“Lennox Aidan Marshall.”

“Bullocks,” He sighed in defeat and put the glass on the desk. “I’m coming back to bed, my love.”

“Finish the dram, Beast, and brush your teeth from the cookies,” she said, her footsteps creaked on the two-hundred-year-old stairs as she called back to him. “Our children will be a handful and stubborn like their father.”

“I love you my magnificent wife,” Lennox answered loudly and drained his glass.

“I’m sure.”

The dryness in her voice made him laugh out loud, his life was just a matter of days passing days for the longest time. With Kiman as his wife, Lennox knew he had truly begun to live.



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About the Author

Dahlia Rose is the USA Today best-selling multi genre author from Urban fantasy to Romance with a hint of Caribbean spice. She was born and raised on the island of Barbados and now currently lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. Her life revolves around her family and her grandson who she's fondly nicknamed 'the toddler overlord, long may he reign.' She has a love of dark fantasy, crazy sci-fi B-movies, and delving into the unknown. Dahlia writes from romance to suspense, giving her characters the voices they deserve, if she doesn't, they surely won't let her sleep. With over seen dozen books published, Dahlia has become a reader favorite. Not only because of her writing but her vivacious attitude in talking to her fans online and at various events. Being a BIPOC, author of color, her books feature strong heroines with a Caribbean or African American culture, that is showcased in the vibrancy of her words. Books and writing are her biggest passions, and she hopes to open your imagination to the beauty of possibilities between the pages of her books.

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