



A Secret Baby for
CHRISTMAS

MISTLETOE LOVE SERIES

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

SADIE KING

A SECRET BABY FOR
CHRISTMAS

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Mr. Porter is my best friend's father, and I've had his baby...

David

Chloe is off limits. She's my daughter's best friend: too young, too innocent, and totally forbidden.

One night a year ago, I gave in to temptation.

It was the best night of my life, but the next day Chloe was gone.

She fled the country and wanted nothing to do with me. Why would she? An older man twice her age.

When she turns up for Christmas with a baby, I'll do anything to claim my family.

But will being with the woman I love mean losing the only daughter I have?

Chloe

I've crushed on my best friend's dad ever since I was old enough to notice his rippling muscles and steamy dark eyes.

We had one night of passion, but I freaked out. What would Mr. Porter want with a young girl like me?

This Christmas I'm turning up with a special gift, but will he still want me when he sees the baby in my arms? And will seducing Mr. Porter mean losing my best friend?

A Secret Baby for Christmas is an off-limits, best friend's father, age gap holiday romance between an older man and his daughter's curvy best friend.

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Please respect the author's hard work and do the right thing.

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CONTENTS

Prologue

1. David
2. Chloe
3. David
4. Chloe
5. Chloe
6. David
7. Chloe
8. David
9. Chloe
10. David
11. Chloe

Epilogue

Books by Sadie King

About the Author

PROLOGUE

CHLOE

*M*y rain-soaked clothes stick to my body, chilling my bones and making me shiver. I hug my knees close to my chest and tuck myself into the doorstep, wishing I'd grabbed my coat before I ran out of the house.

But Papa was in one of his moods, and I had to get away. Maman's back in France visiting my grandparents, and I couldn't stay in the house with Papa one moment longer. So I ran, and the only person I could run to is Allie, my best friend.

I've been waiting on her doorstep for the last hour, shivering as the rain soaks my clothing. But I'd rather be here in the cold than at home with Papa.

Finally, a black sedan pulls into the driveway, and Allie's dad gets out of the driver's seat. Mr. Porter is the biggest man I've ever seen, with wide shoulders and height to match. As he pulls his tall frame out of the car, the rain pounds his head, making his dark hair stick to his forehead. He rests his elbow on the open car door and eyes me warily, seemingly unaware that his grey polo shirt is getting soaked.

Allie isn't in the car with him, and I sink further into the doorstep as her intimidating father frowns at me, probably wondering what the heck his daughter's best friend is doing soaking wet on his doorstep.

Allie must be at her mom's this weekend, which means I'll have to go back home to Papa. My stomach sinks to my knees at the thought of returning to my own house today.

Mr. Porter strides up to the front door, jogging up the last few steps. I stand up, my legs stiff from the cold, and take a step forward, preparing to leave.

He'll probably ask me a million questions that I don't want to answer. Panic rises as he gets closer, and my head tilts backwards as he towers over me. But Mr. Porter doesn't ask questions, and he doesn't send me home.

"Come inside."

He unlocks the door and ushers me in as if his daughter's friend sitting in the rain on his doorstep is a normal thing.

I'm dripping all over the floor, and I hurry to kick my shoes off before I get in trouble for ruining the carpet. But Mr. Porter doesn't seem worried about his flooring.

"I'll get you a towel, and you can put some of Allie's dry clothes on."

"Thank you," I whisper, wondering how someone so big and rough looking can be so kind.

He hands me a towel and I scurry upstairs to Allie's room, thankful that he hasn't asked any questions. I don't want to talk about Papa.

Allie's room is at the top of the stairs, and it feels weird to go through her drawers when she's not here. I choose her old pink sweatpants and her One Direction t-shirt. They haven't been the same since Zayn left, so I know she won't mind me wearing it. Then I pull a sweater over the top.

I bundle my wet clothes into the towel and leave it on the floor of the bathroom. I guess I'll ask for a bag to put them in to take them home.

I sit on Allie's bed wondering what to do. I've never been alone with Mr. Porter before. Allie's just moved in with him after living with her mother for a few years. I didn't think that she might be with her mom this weekend.

When I finally work up the courage to go downstairs Mr. Porter has a fire going, and there's a steaming mug of hot chocolate on the coffee table.

“You want marshmallows on the top?” he asks.

I nod, and he drops two pink marshmallows into the top of the mug.

“Thank you.”

Mr. Porter smiles at me, and it softens his face and makes him look less scary.

“Allie’s with her mom this afternoon, but she’ll be back in about an hour if you want to stick around.”

He doesn’t mention anything about taking me home, and I’m grateful for that. So grateful that the knot in my stomach eases a little.

“Thanks, Mr. Porter. I’d like that.”

I take a sip of the hot chocolate, and it’s sweet and warm and he’s been so nice that tears spring into my eyes. I don’t want him to think I’m a silly girl who cries, so I turn away and swipe at my eyes before he can see.

Mr. Porter doesn’t notice, or he doesn’t say anything if he does.

“Do your parents know where you are, Chloe?”

I shake my head. “Mom’s in France and Papa’s....”

I can’t finish my sentence, because I don’t know what to say. Papa’s in one of his moods and best not to be around.

Mr. Porter just nods, and there’s a sad look in his eyes.

“I’ll need to let your father know where you are,” he says gently.

The thought of Papa coming to get me makes my stomach twist, and my hand shakes so badly that I put the hot chocolate down before I spill any.

Mr. Porter is staring at my shaking hands with a frown on his face. I tuck them under my knees so he doesn’t see them shake.

“Would you like to stay for a sleepover?” he asks gently. “Allie would love to have you.”

The thought of not having to go back home today make my tummy relax. Papa will have calmed down by tomorrow, and it will all be back to normal.

“Yes.” I smile shyly at him.

Mr. Porter is being so kind, and he’s not at all as scary as I thought he was. When I smile he smiles back at me, and I notice how his eyes crinkle and his tousled hair falls around his face, kind of like an older version of Harry Styles. He’s got a cute face for an older man.

The fire is warm on my back, and without thinking I pull Allie’s sweatshirt over my head.

There’s a gasp behind me and I turn quickly, remembering the mark too late. Mr. Porter stops my hand before I can cover the welt on my arm.

“How did you get this?”

His voice has gone hard and scary and I pull away from him, wondering what I’ve done to upset him. He drops my arms, and his look softens.

“Who did this to you, Chloe?”

It’s not the first time my father’s hit me, but it was the scariest. He pulled my sweater up and whacked me with the first thing he had on hand, which was his shoe.

The sharp edge bit into my skin and left an angry red welt.

“I deserved it,” I say, repeating the words my papa used. I spilled milk and cereal on the carpet, and he hates his carpet being ruined.

“No child deserves this.” Mr. Porter stands up abruptly. “I’m going to call your father.”

“No,” I say quickly. “He’ll know I’ve been telling, and I’ll get in more trouble.”

I grab hold of his wrist, pleading, but Mr. Porter has anger in his eyes.

“If your mother’s not here to stick up for you, then someone needs to.”

He strides out of the room, and a few minutes later I hear his raised voice. I sneak over to the door that's been left partially open and peer through.

Mr. Porter is on his phone pacing in the hallway. He must be speaking to Papa.

“You lay a finger on her again, asshole, and I'll personally come around and beat the shit out of you.”

I cover my mouth to stop from gasping. No one has ever stuck up for me like that. Not my mother and not the school counsellor I talked to. Everyone's too scared of my father. He runs the biggest law firm in town, he knows every cop by their first name, he has the mayor over for dinner, and his generous donations keep half the town running. People shake his hand on the street. Everyone wants to stay on the right side of my father.

But Mr. Porter isn't afraid of him. In fact, he's threatening him, and all for me.

My heart beats wildly in my chest. Mr. Porter turns, and this time I notice his face isn't just cute. It's *handsome*. He's hotter than Harry Styles, and he's sticking up for me.

My body heats in a weird way, and my tummy flutters. As I listen to Mr. Porter telling my papa off, my heart rises out of my body and floats over to him. Now I know what love feels like, and I'm in love with Mr. Porter.

Eight years later...

Frank Sinatra plays quietly from the old-fashioned record player in the corner of the living room. The tree lights fade between green and red, with the only other light coming from the embers of the fire in the grate and the Christmas candles burning on the coffee table giving off a scent of gingerbread and cinnamon.

My heart pounds as my stockinged feet sink into the plush carpet. I don't make a sound as I approach the figure sitting in

the armchair, but somehow he knows I'm here.

“Shouldn't you be in bed next to my daughter?” Mr. Porter says without turning around.

The deep voice made gravelly from the bourbon he's drinking reverberates through my bones and makes my core pull up tight.

“She had too much wine, and she's snoring.”

Mr. Porter chuckles. “My graceful daughter, snoring? Don't tell her mother.”

It's no secret that Allie's mom wishes her daughter was petite and graceful, but Allie takes after her father. She's a big girl like me, and graceful isn't a word I'd use to describe either of us.

Allie's mom went on a cruise for Christmas. She hates the holidays as much as my family, which is why Allie invited me to spend Christmas with her and her dad like she does every year. It makes it easier for her not having to choose which parent to spend the holidays with. They've been divorced for years, and I can't imagine why they were ever married. Mr. Porter is kind and supportive as opposed to Allie's mom who's manipulative and disapproving.

But it's not Allie's mom I'm thinking about as I stand in front of Mr. Porter in my stockinged feet and slinky Christmas dress. His gaze pulls away from the fire to land on me.

I'm wearing a sparkling golden dress with a thigh-high slit up the side, and when I came out in it earlier this evening, Mr. Porter almost dropped his glass.

I've felt his eyes on me all evening, throughout the Christmas dinner and the board games we played afterwards. Every time I looked up, Mr. Porter was looking at me, and not just any look. A hungry look, like I'm the final piece of Christmas pudding and he wants to eat me all up.

It's a look that's had my skin heated all day and my imagination taking me to all the darkest places of my Mr. Porter fantasies, of which there are many.

I've been crushing on my best friend's dad for as long as I can remember. Ever since he stood up to my father when I was twelve years old. My papa never hit me again after Mr. Porter threatened him. He's still an angry man and disapproving of everything I ever do, but he hasn't laid a hand on me since that day.

And this is the man I have to thank for that.

My girlish crush hasn't gone away. I tried to repress it. I tried to date boys my own age, but they're so immature. All they want to do is drink beer, try to score weed, and compare the cars that their daddies bought them.

I hid my crush, thinking I'd never stand a chance with the hot older man, and knowing Allie would kill me if she suspected the dirty thoughts I was having about her dad. It's not right, is it, an eighteen-year-old wanting her best friend's father? People would talk, and I couldn't do that to Allie.

But this Christmas changed all that.

As Mr. Porter's eyes travel up my dress, taking their time on every curve and lingering on my breasts, my already heated body prickles with need.

I'm not a child anymore, and the glass of wine I had at dinner has made me bold. I'm a woman with womanly needs, and I refuse to suppress my need any longer, no matter what society might think of us.

I'm supposed to be sharing a room with Allie, but she crashed after the big meal and the drinks. I've tried dating other men, and no one compares to Mr. Porter. He's permanently in my brain. He clouds my thoughts and fills my body with an ache that only he can relieve. This is my chance to get the relief that I need, and I'm going to take it.

"What are you doing here, Chloe?"

His voice is croaky, and his eyes are hooded. I'm emboldened by wine as I take a step closer, my leg brushing against his thigh.

"I think you know what I'm doing here."

My heart hammers in my chest as I slide my leg over his and climb onto his lap, straddling him and causing the split in my skirt to ride right up my thigh. I'm wearing a black garter belt underneath and the lace pokes out, making him suck his breath in as he spies it. I dressed for seduction, and he doesn't stand a chance.

Mr. Porter goes completely still, his gaze locked on my thigh. I panic, thinking I've made a huge mistake.

Then he groans as his hand slides up my leg, pressing roughly against the soft skin.

"You should leave, Chloe?"

His husky voice is at odds with the way his hands glide over my legs, as if he already owns me.

He does own me.

Mr. Porter groans, and his face is tortured. There's a battle going on inside of him.

Does he still see me as the little girl he saved in the rain, the best friend of his daughter, or the woman I've become, the consenting adult ripe and ready for him to do with as he pleases?

I lean forward so my hips rock against him and my breasts push out toward him, my nipples hard and aching for his touch. It's my turn to gasp as the thick length of his cock protrudes into me. I've never felt anything so hard and so *big*.

My eyes go wide and Mr. Porter chuckles, but it's pained.

"Feel what you do to me, temptress?"

So he does want me.

A surge of confidence makes me lean forward to put my hands on his shoulders. My breasts slide forward to his eye level, and he groans as his gaze flicks to them.

"We can't do this."

But even as he says it, his hand runs up my hip, over the satin fabric of my dress, and cups my breast in his palm.

His eyes are hooded with desire and pain, and I want to win the battle that's raging inside him. The honorable man fighting against his lust.

I lean further forward until my lips are by his ear.

"You can do whatever you want with me, Mr. Porter."

He groans and his hips jerk forward, grinding against my panties. Letting me know exactly what he wants to do to me.

"You're asking for trouble, Chloe," he warns as his other hand slides up my skirt. His fingers graze my damp panties, and he groans again.

"You're wet for me."

"I've been wet for you since I touched myself for the first time." I whisper it into his ear and am rewarded with a groan. The power I have over this powerful man has me dizzy with desire and makes me bold.

His hand slides over the gusset of my wet panties, making me shiver with desire.

"And how old were you when you first touched yourself?"

I can't tell him the dirty truth, that I've been masturbating over him since I was fourteen. I don't want him to think of me as that young.

"Since I was sixteen," I lie. "I've thought about you every time, Mr. Porter." My lips nibble on his ear, and he growls. "But I'm a woman now. I need a man's touch."

His hand grabs my breast hard like he's trying to steady himself.

"Has any boy touched you, Chloe?"

"No," I say truthfully, "I've been saving myself for you."

He growls again, and his cock twitches under me. I wiggle my hips, giving him a taste of what could all be his. But he's still fighting it, and I want to win the battle.

"I've been saving my cherry for you, Mr. Porter."

He jerks forward and grabs my hips, grinding against me with a new look in his eyes.

“I want you to take it, now,” I add breathlessly.

Any doubts he had are gone. His expression is pure, unadulterated desire.

“We shouldn’t be doing this,” he says as he tears the slit in my skirt. The fabric rips up to my hip, exposing the garter belt and panties.

“Be my first, Mr. Porter.”

I scramble for his belt, freeing his cock and getting the first glimpse at what I’ve been fantasizing about for so long. It’s large and thick and glistens with sticky precum. My hands clasp him around the base, and he groans as if in agony.

His hands are on my panties, and with a twist of his wrist he rips them off.

“We shouldn’t be doing this, Chloe,” he says as he lifts my hips up and lines me up with his cock.

“Fuck me, Mr. Porter,” I whisper into his ear, loving the power I have over him.

He’s powerless to resist, and it’s everything I ever wanted.

Then his dick is at my entrance, his eyes find mine, and his mouth kisses me roughly as he pulls me down his shaft hard, impaling me on his cock.

I cry out at the biting pain then bite my lower lip, not wanting to wake Allie. If she knew what I was up to with her father, she’d kill me.

I’ve never felt anything like the sensation that I’m feeling now. As the shock of pain subsides, I rock against him, and I’m full and it’s intense and better than anything I imagined.

Mr. Porter pulls me close to him, and his lips kiss my neck and throat.

“Chloe...” he groans, “you temptress. I’ve been wanting to do that for so long.”

His words fill my heart, and as he holds me to him, I know peace for the first time in a long time. I've got Mr. Porter right where I want him and I don't care that happens after, but I know life will never be the same again.

We move together slowly at first, then the kisses turn from tender to urgent as our bodies respond to each other, rocking and writhing and pulling until an impossible pressure builds in my core. I lose control riding Mr. Porter, and then he comes too, and it's the best moment of my life.

DAVID

One year later...

I shrug on my coat, needing to get out into the cold air. Hans slides his arm around Allie, and it ventures down to her butt and he gives it a squeeze. A growl escapes my lips. I'll never get used to the sight of a man touching my daughter, but the pure look of love she gives him makes my growl turn into a low rumble. If she's happy, I'm happy. I just don't want to see it all goddamn day. I'm happy that my daughter has found someone to love, but it only makes my heart ache more for the woman I lost. And the loss is all the heavier because I can't share it with anyone.

As I'm about to leave the cabin that I'm sharing with the happy couple for Christmas, there's a knock on the door.

Allie pulls it open, and the vision standing on the doorstep makes my heart stop. For one long moment, I forget to breathe.

"Chloe!" Allie squeals as if they're twelve years old again. "You made it!"

"Hey!" Chloe embraces my daughter, and the hug lasts long enough for her to raise her eyes to me. My jaw must be on the floor. She's the woman who's haunted my every waking moment for the past year.

I fought my attraction to my daughter's best friend, but when she seduced me at Christmas last year, I was powerless to say no. We shared one incredible night, but the next day she was gone.

Now she's here on my doorstep.

There's a mewling noise behind her, and my eyes drop to the car seat at her feet. I forget to breathe again.

Squirming in the car seat is a tiny baby wrapped up for the cold, its pink face the only part of it on display.

Allie notices the baby at the same time as I do and seems just as surprised.

"Who's this?" Allie asks.

Chloe bends down to unbuckle the squirming bundle from its seat. It's tiny. It can't be more than a few months old...

Chloe holds the baby up to Allie, but her gaze is on me.

"Surprise," she whispers.

I stare at them both in shock my head, trying to process what my heart already knows. It's my baby. It has to be.

Allie squeals and pulls Chloe into a tight hug. Over her shoulder, Chloe's gaze finds mine. But the passion from last Christmas is gone. Her look is as cold as the snow outside the cabin.

"Where have you been?" I ask too harshly. But I've been trying to chase down this woman for the past year.

Allie turns to me with a frown. "Dad, that sounds harsh."

My innocent daughter doesn't know what I got up to with her best friend. And if she did, she wouldn't want anything to do with me.

Maybe it's for the best that Chloe's feelings seem to have changed. I tried to message her after our night together.

Her grandma fell ill, and she went to France to be with her mom. She's always been close to that side of the family. In the first few weeks, we messaged each other. I called her most days, and we chatted long into the night.

But then it stopped. The texts became less frequent until they dried up completely. I thought she must have met a

French man there. Someone her age and more appropriate. The thought made me wild with jealousy.

Many times I thought about jumping on a plane and going to see her. But for what? She's half my age. She should be with someone young. I told myself it was for the best. That she'd forget me and I would move on.

But seeing her here with my baby changes everything.

Allie has hustled Chloe into the cabin and out of the cold. She's fussing over the baby, unaware that it's her half-sibling.

"What's her name?" I ask, staring intently at the tiny bundle.

"*His* name," Chloe corrects me, and a flare of pride punctures my chest. I have a son. "It's Hugo."

"Hugo." I roll the name of my son on my tongue. It's a strong name with reference to her French heritage. I like it.

"How old is he?" Allie asks, holding Hugo up and making funny faces at him.

Chloe's eyes dart to mine before she answers. "Three months."

Three months. I knew it. She had Hugo nine months after our hook up.

"I can't believe you didn't tell me."

Allie sounds a little annoyed at her friend, and I can't blame her. I'm just as annoyed. But how could Chloe tell Allie she got pregnant by her dad?

"I didn't tell anyone," Chloe says. "You know what my papa's like. He wanted to keep me in France for the rest of my life. If it was up to him, I'd have given the baby up for adoption and joined a nunnery."

She says it jokingly, but my blood chills. I might have never known about Hugo if her father had his way.

There are so many things going on in my head and my heart, and I retreat to the living room and pour myself a finger of bourbon. It goes down in one swallow, and I pour another.

Ever since I saw Chloe with my baby in her arms, memories of our night together have surfaced. I've spent a year dreaming about this woman and imagining a future with her. Now here she is, and she's bought my future right to me.

Allie holds Hugo a little too comfortably, and I wonder how long it will be until I'm a granddad. The thought has me reaching for another drink. I'm old enough to be a granddad, not start another family. And yet...

Seeing Chloe with my baby in her arms leaves no doubt in my mind what I want. I want her, and I want my son.

I'm angry she didn't tell me she was pregnant. I've known Chloe since she was a girl, and I thought she would've come to me with this. She kept my son from me, and worse she went through a pregnancy all on her own, with only her weak mother and overbearing father. I shudder at the thought of what her last year must have been like.

I want to shake her and demand to know why she ran from me instead of coming to me. I want to take her in my arms, to claim the child as mine, and to tell her she doesn't have to go through this alone.

But as I watch her with my daughter, the two girls laughing together, I realize now isn't the time.

They need time to catch up, and I need time to clear my head. I'll get my answers later.

"I'm going for a walk."

Chloe looks at me, but I can't bear to meet her gaze. I can't bear the coldness there. If she's not here for me, then my heart will break. But why else would she come back?

Grabbing my coat, I go out into the cold air.

CHLOE

I thought I had prepared myself for seeing Mr. Porter again, but I wasn't prepared for the shock waves of desire that raced through me when I saw his bulky frame standing in the doorway.

He's even hotter than I remembered, and it was hard to tell my body to keep breathing.

After our one night of passion last Christmas, I freaked out. It felt so good in the moment, but then I went back to my bed and lay awake all night thinking about it. I seduced him. And at the time I felt powerful, but in the early hours of Boxing Day, I felt like a fool. He probably gets women throwing themselves at them all the time.

I packed my suitcase and left Allie a note and left their place before anyone was awake. A few days later, grand-mère got sick and I flew to France.

David texted me, and at first I thought he was just being kind. We messaged each other, and I thought maybe he did care about me.

Then my period was late. When I realized I was pregnant, I freaked out. I couldn't tell him. He's a grown man with a grown up daughter. There's no way he'd want to go through all that again.

But for the past year, he's been all I could think about. I had to come back, even if just to see him one more time.

But as the door closes behind him, I think I've made a mistake. I don't know what I expected, but it wasn't for him to

head out as soon as I arrived with his son. Although it's not like I'm making it clear the baby is his.

I don't know how I'm going to approach this with Allie. I've thought about it so many times over the last year. There were so many times I wanted to call her, but what would I say?

"Hey, I hooked up with your dad and now I'm having his baby, but don't tell him because I'm pretty sure he won't want another baby at this time in his life?"

It's one sure way to lose my best friend as well as the father of my child.

A cry from Hugo has my attention snapping to him. His face is screwed up, and his lips are opening and shutting in the telltale way they do when he's hungry. "You ready for some milk?"

I carry him over to the couch and use a pillow to prop him on while I nurse.

Allie's new boyfriend Hans doesn't know where to look as Hugo latches onto my breast. Hans makes his excuses and heads to the kitchen to get lunch ready. I'm so used to popping my boobs out anywhere to nurse that I forget it makes some people uncomfortable.

"Why didn't you tell me you'd, you know, had a *baby*?"

Allie tries to sound playful, but there's real pain behind her eyes. I don't blame her. I hated not telling her, but I didn't know how to without dropping her father into the story.

Besides, I was embarrassed. Girls from families like ours don't become teenage moms. At least that's what Papa kept telling me in his disappointed voice.

"I didn't know what you'd think of me." Which is the truth. Allie's always had a plan for a great career, and she's always talked about how women should have their own ambitions. She got that from her mother. "I thought you might side with Papa in trying to convince me to give the baby up."

Allie looks appalled. "Are you serious right now?" She's hurt, and I feel bad that I didn't trust her. "I'm your best

friend, Chloe. I thought we told each other everything.”

“You didn’t tell me about Hans.”

In the last few minutes, she’s filled me in on how she secretly crushed on Hans for the last two years and never mentioned it to me.

She sighs. “Yeah, I guess that’s true.”

Hugo tugs on my breast as he nurses, and it’s comforting watching him drink my milk. My fingertips brush over his downy hair, and I smile at his little face.

“He’s adorable,” Allie says, her tone gentler.

“Yeah, he is.”

“Are you with the father?” she asks tentatively.

I take a while answering. I hate lying to my best friend. I thought maybe I could come back here and come clean, but she’s been through her own drama in the last few weeks, and I don’t want to add to it. Besides, I refused to put a father’s name on the birth certificate, so no one will ever know unless I choose to tell them.

“No,” I say. “It was a one night thing.”

She looks surprised, and I don’t blame her. I’ve never been into casual sex, and she knows it.

“Oh,” is all she says, and I’m grateful she changes the subject. But she knows there’s more I’m not telling her. Allie’s as perceptive as her father and as kind.

“I’ll get a crib brought up from reception. Is there anything else you need?”

It’s been a long few days, and now that I’m here with my beastie, I can finally relax. I let out a long sigh and lean heavily into the couch as exhaustion seeps through my body.

My grand-mère passed away a few weeks ago so I delayed coming, and then my flights got cancelled because of the bad storm they had here. It was almost impossible to get another flight with it being so close to Christmas. Papa didn’t want me to come back to the States so I did it all behind his back, which

added an extra layer of anxiety as if travelling halfway around the world on your own with a baby wasn't anxiety inducing enough.

Hugo was cranky on the flight, and neither of us slept much. I picked up a rental car and we headed straight up the mountain, only stopping for nursing and diaper changes.

I let out a long yawn, and Hugo does the same.

"I'll put him down for a sleep, then take a nap too. If you could sort out the crib, that would be awesome."

Allie brightens, glad to have something to do.

"Hans," she calls to the kitchen. "Can you grab Chloe's luggage from the car? I'll organize a crib."

They jump into action and I sit back quietly with my baby, letting them fuss around me.

I've taken the first step. I'm back in the States. But does the man I've been dreaming about want anything to do with me and my baby? By the way he's gone off on his own, it seems not.

Maybe my trip was all for nothing.

Tears sting my eyes, but I don't let them fall. Being a single mom has toughened me up, and I won't cry now.

Hugo fusses, and I put him over my shoulder and rub his back to get any gas out.

I've got a baby to look after, whether the father wants any part of it or not. And at some point, I have to tell Allie. But not yet. For now, I want to get some rest. I'll tell Allie when the time is right.

DAVID

Motherhood suits Chloe. Her skin glows radiant in the light from the chandelier that hangs over the dinner table where we're all seated for dinner.

Hans cooked tonight, and I'm impressed by his culinary skills. He's good on the slopes and in the kitchen and he seems to make my daughter happy, which is the main thing.

But it's Chloe I can't keep my eyes off as she eats the poached fish with buttery potatoes. The extra weight from motherhood suits her. It fills out her curves and makes her skin glow.

The nursing top she's wearing hangs loose, and her breasts, swollen with milk, press against the thin cotton fabric. I'm seated opposite her, and my gaze is drawn to those beautiful breasts. They're more luscious than I remember, and seeing them across from me rather than in my dreams is tantalizing.

I try to follow the conversation, but with this goddess distracting me, it's hard. I want to crawl over the table and bury myself in those breasts.

The baby sleeps in a crib next to the table, and I can't help peeking over at him. My son.

I haven't had a chance to get Chloe alone, and she's refusing to look at me. I can't understand why she didn't come to me when she was pregnant. I'm angry that I didn't know, but relieved that she's here now.

The conversation over dinner is led by Chloe and Allie, laughing and catching up on their past year. It's clear Chloe

doesn't want to tell Allie anything about us, and I have to respect that. For now.

I thought I could put the young temptress behind me, but now that she's here and she has my son, there's no way I'm letting her go. I'm just waiting for a chance to get her alone.

After dinner, I retire to my own room. The girls are still chatting, and I don't think I'm going to get a chance with Chloe this evening. I'm just pleased that they seem to have made up, and any hard feelings Allie had about being left in the dark about Chloe's pregnancy have disappeared. They're laughing like old times, and the sound is comforting.

I sit at my desk and open my laptop. Even with Christmas looming, there's always work to do when you're a business owner. I spend a few hours going over my accounts, but the figures blur on the page. The more I try to concentrate, the more I think about Chloe.

It's after midnight and the cabin is quiet when I finally shut the laptop and come out of my room looking for a glass of water.

The Christmas tree lights are on, and Chloe's sitting in one of the chairs with Hugo at her breast. My heart stops. It's a perfect vision of motherhood. My woman and my son. Except neither of them is truly mine. Not yet.

She looks up at me and smiles, the first unguarded look she's given me since she's been back.

"Does he ever sleep?" I try to remember what Allie was like at that age, but it was so long ago.

"He's a hungry boy. If I feed him now, he might sleep through till five or six."

That explains the tiredness under her eyes. It can't be easy being a young mom, especially doing it on her own.

I crouch down in front of her. My hands instinctively go to her shoulders, needing to touch her.

"Chloe, why didn't you tell me?"

She looks up at me and sticks her chin out, her eyes defiant. “Tell you what?”

I sit back, momentarily startled. She’s not going to admit I’m the father.

“Come on. He’s mine. I know he’s mine. The dates match. And he’s got my dark hair and the same little frown.”

She lowers her eyes with a big sigh, giving in.

“I didn’t know how to tell you.”

Hugo finishes nursing and Chloe puts him over her shoulder, rubbing him gently to get rid of the gas. He looks sleepy, and I hold my arms out.

“May I?”

Chloe hands me the baby. He’s so tiny and warm. I pull him close to me, and his little face screws up in a yawn as his eyes close. I touch his downy hair with my fingertips, so soft and so dark.

“He’s beautiful. Perfect.”

I smile down at the little face, and my heart opens. This is what I want. I want my son. I just have to convince Chloe to let me back into her life.

“He’s falling asleep.”

“I’ll put him down in his crib.” She reaches out her hands for him, and reluctantly I hand him over.

Chloe’s staying in the room by the kitchen, and I follow her in there. There’s no way I’m giving up this opportunity to speak to her alone. I watch her put Hugo down in the crib and tuck him in. He’s asleep already, and we both sneak out the door.

“Drink?” I ask, pouring myself a bourbon.

Chloe shakes her head. “I don’t drink much these days.”

Of course she doesn’t. Not while she’s breast-feeding.

I pour myself a drink, and we sit on the sofa with the Christmas tree lights flashing red and green against her pale

skin.

She's still the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, more beautiful in the flesh than in the fantasies I've had about her for the past year. So many questions run through my mind and so many doubts.

I decide to start at the beginning, with the question that's been running through my head all year before I knew about Hugo.

“Why did you leave?”

When I woke up the morning after our incredible night together, Chloe was gone. I didn't even get a chance to tell her how I felt.

She sighs, long and hard. “Because I'd just thrown myself at you. I seduced you and it felt like a win at the time, but I didn't want to stay around for the rejection afterwards.”

Her words pierce my heart. Did she really think that's all she meant to me?

“Why did you think I'd reject you?” I'm horrified she thought that of me.

Chloe rolls her eyes as if the answer is obvious. “Come on, Mr. Porter. You're Allie's dad. You're twice my age. We shouldn't have done what we did.”

She's right. All those things are true. We shouldn't have but we did, and I don't regret a thing.

“But when I messaged you, I thought I made it clear it wasn't a one night thing for me, Chloe.”

Her grandma got sick in France, and she went to spend time with her family there. We had a long distance text thing going on, and I thought we were slowly building a relationship until the messages stopped.

She looks down and fiddles with her nursing top, tucking the straps into place.

“I was in France already when I found out I was pregnant. I didn't know what to do. I was nineteen and surrounded by

family, but I've never felt so alone."

I take her hands in mine and turn to her on the couch. "You should have told me. You didn't need to be alone. I would have come straight over there to bring you back."

She nods. "I know you would have. But I didn't want to leave my grand-mère. I knew she was dying, and I wanted to be with her for the last months of her life."

That makes sense. Chloe was always close to the old lady.

"And I felt stupid. Like a silly girl getting pregnant off a fling. I was pretty sure that you didn't want to be saddled with another baby at your age."

I raise my eyebrows, and she adds hastily. "I mean, not that you're old. Just that your little girl has just grown up. I'm pretty sure you don't want to go through all that again."

I tilt her chin so she's looking up at me.

"Don't presume to know what I want."

If she'd told me I would have been there, no question. She's what I want and Hugo too.

"Then the pregnancy started to show..." Her brow furrows, and she looks away. "You can imagine what my dad was like when he found out."

I remember Chloe as a twelve-year-old girl sitting on my doorstep, shivering in the rain with welts on her body. Anger flares through me, and I clench my fists.

"Did he hurt you?"

I don't give a shit that her father is the highest profile attorney in the state. If he hurt her, I will hunt him down and I will slit his throat.

She shakes her head.

"No. He hasn't laid a finger on me since you threatened him the first time. But he took my passport. He wanted me to have the baby quietly in France and adopt it out. He didn't want me to come back and bring shame on the family."

She says it bitterly, and all the hurt she's been holding inside comes out in her expression. I drop to my knees and take her hands.

“Oh, baby. I'm so sorry you went through that alone.” I'll kill her father if I ever get my hands on him for hurting her this way.

“A single teenage mom isn't the kind of image that Papa wanted for the family.”

I hate that she went through all this alone and that she felt she couldn't come to me. But she's here now, and there's a chance to make it right. But I have to make sure it's what she wants.

“Why did you come back, Chloe?”

She looks up at me, her eyes wide and shining with unshed tears.

“Because no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't stop thinking about you.”

My heart soars at her words, and I pull her close to me.

“I tried to forget you. I thought I could do it alone. But I had to come back. I refused to give up the baby, and Maman backed me up. She found my passport and helped me book the flights while Papa was back here for business. I told her it was for Allie's wedding, which was half the truth. But I needed to see you. I didn't know what you'd do, but I needed to see you.”

Tears spill out of her eyes, and I brush them away with my thumb.

“Baby, don't cry. I'm here now. I'm here for you.”

I tighten my grip on her, not ever wanting to let her go. She sinks into my shoulder, and her breasts rub against my chest.

“I'm here, Chloe, and I'll look after you now.”

She lets out a long sigh. “But that's impossible. What about Allie?”

I put my finger to her plump lips. “No more talking. We’ll figure it out.”

Then I kiss her. I kiss my woman for the first time in one long year, and it feels heavenly.

My hand moves over her neck, caressing her skin. She leans into me, her head tilted up. I’ve been wanting to do this for so long, and now she’s here in front of me.

Chloe seduced me once before. But tonight I’m the one who’s taking control. I’m taking what I need from her, because I need her. One long year has shown me that.

My hands run over her breasts, and she takes a sharp intake of breath.

“They’re sensitive.”

It’s a damn shame because they look fucking amazing and I want to play, but they’re also full of milk for our son and I respect that.

“I’ll be gentle.”

I skip her breasts and slide my hand down her torso, feeling every new curve as I kiss the sensitive skin behind her ear. She whimpers at my touch.

“Have you been with anyone else, Chloe?”

She shakes her head. “No. Only you.”

I took her cherry a year ago, and she saved her pussy for me. “Good girl, Chloe.”

She smiles at the praise and kisses me hungrily. Her leg hooks over mine, but I push her back.

That’s not how we’re doing this this time. I’m in control, and I’m taking my time and giving her exactly what she needs.

I roll her onto the couch and tug at her stretchy maternity leggings. Her stomach is still round from the pregnancy and I get on my knees and worship it, kissing every stretch mark, every battle scar she got from having our son. Letting her know how much I appreciate her.

I tug the leggings down her ankles and pull her panties off. She gasps as the cool air hits her pussy, but I don't give her time to get cold.

My mouth creeps up her thighs, kissing the soft skin gently. The scent of her arousal stirs me, making my dick rock hard. But I want to take care of her first.

She reaches for me, but I press her hands back onto the couch as I pull her hips toward me.

“Sit back and enjoy this like a good girl.” She gasps at the praise, and that makes me smile. My girl's got daddy issues. She never got approval from her dad, and now I'll be the one to give that to her.

My fingers caress her soft folds, and she whimpers.

“Are you still sensitive down here?”

She shakes her head. “I'm all healed.”

“Good.”

My palm rubs against her mound, pressing against her curly hair.

“You tell me if it gets to be too much, baby.”

She nods.

“Now sit back and let me make you feel good. I want you to come for me, okay? Come for me like a good girl.”

My good girl's eyes roll backwards as I sink a finger inside her.

She moans and moves her hips forward so my finger slides deep into her. I dip my head between her legs, licking up the sweet, sticky juices.

Her hips buck at my touch and I slow down, kissing and nibbling until she's writhing against me. I slip another finger inside, and she rides my hand as I tongue her sensitive spot.

“Good girl, Chloe.” I pause to give her some dirty talk. “Fuck my fingers like a good little slut.”

She bucks at the filthy talk and I lick her again, tasting every part of her until her little whimpers turn to stifled cries. She's trying not to make a noise as I pull her toward release. I feel the pressure building in her pussy and I finger fuck her harder, warming her up for my cock.

Her hands reach for the back of my head and she pulls me against her, riding my face and taking what she needs from me.

Then she's over the edge, her pussy convulsing as her legs go rigid and the orgasm races through her body. Juice releases all over my tongue and dribbles down my chin to get caught in my stubble. Once she's stopped trembling, I sit back on my haunches.

“Good girl, Chloe.”

She's breathing hard. Her exposed pussy is glistening with juice. I can tell she's not satisfied, but that's good because my cock is hard for her.

“Come here.” I pull her down onto the floor. “Come and ride me like a good girl.”

CHLOE

I'm powerless to resist this man. It's what I've longed for through all those horny months of pregnancy and the years of teenage longing before then.

Now here he is before me taking off his pants. We're not alone in the cabin, but I can't stop this now.

I need to fuck him, and I need to fuck him quickly in case anyone comes out to get a drink of water and discovers what we're up to. Because we definitely shouldn't be doing this, which makes it all the more exciting.

The urgency has me fumbling at his belt buckle until his cock pops out. It's huge and glistening with a purple throbbing vein.

I've wanted this for so long, and the surge inside me is so powerful it almost knocks me off balance. Mr. Porter is sitting back on his haunches and I straddle him, not giving him time to move. I need this man, and I need him now.

My desperate need is reflected in his eyes as he grabs himself by the base of his cock and lines it up with my entrance. This is no soft love making. There's a need we've both had for too long that we need to satisfy.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes." I gasp as his tip rolls around my entrance. "Fuck me, Mr. Porter. Fuck me."

He groans at the words at the same time as I slide my hips down, impaling myself on his cock. It feels so good. I can feel

every ridge bumping against my pussy walls.

I bite my bottom lip so that I don't cry out and wake the whole mountain.

We stay like that for a moment, rocking together, our bodies pressed close. In the dim lights, his eyes look black and hooded with desire.

“Fuck, Chloe, I've waited too long for this.”

His words make me feel powerful and confident in a way I haven't felt in the previous year. His hands grasp my hips and he pulls me up slowly, sliding off his cock. And then one hard thrust pulls me back down.

He groans so loud that I cover his mouth. “Shhh, you'll wake the mountain.” I giggle.

“I don't give a fuck. You're mine, Chloe, and I don't care who knows about it.”

His words have me so turned on as I slide up and down his velvety cock.

My breasts are sensitive but I pull my top off, wanting to give all of myself to him. Mr. Porter catches my breast in his hand and encloses the nipple in his wet mouth.

Shoots of electricity zap through me, and I gasp at the way my entire body responds. I'm not going to last and I ride him hard, loving the pressure that builds in my core.

Mr. Porter pops my breast out of his mouth.

“Come for me, Chloe. Be a good girl and come.”

The praise makes me wild, and I bounce up and down his cock. I want to please him; I want his approval, and the encouragement he gives me has me so turned on that I'm about to explode.

“That's it, Chloe. Almost there. Good girl.”

All my life, all I've ever wanted is approval from my Papa. Now I'm getting it from Mr. Porter, and it's my undoing.

My orgasm explodes inside me, and I sink my teeth into his shoulder so that I don't cry out. All the pent up longing from the last year flies out of me. My juices flow all over his cock, and my breasts squirts milk onto his chest.

I'm embarrassed for a moment until Mr. Porter pulls my body close to his.

"Good girl," he says. "I'm proud of you."

He pats my hair, and contentment floods my veins. But I want him to have his release too.

"What do you need, Mr. Porter? What do you need to come?"

"I just need you, baby. Be a good girl and get on your hand and knees."

I slide off his cock and do as he asks. My elbows sink into the carpet and the lights of the Christmas tree wink on and off, oblivious to what we're up to.

Mr. Porter grabs my hips and kneels behind me. His cock circles my entrance, and then he thrusts hard. I put my fist in my mouth so I don't cry out.

I didn't think I could feel so full, but now he's going deeper and filling me up in a way I never thought possible.

He leans forward, and his breath tickles in my ear. "Touch yourself, temptress."

I reach a hand between my legs, and I slide it over my sensitive nub. The juices make it nice and slippery, and as I roll my hand back, my fingertips brush his balls.

He gives a groan, and I love it that I have this effect on him, that I can make him groan even from this position.

My fingers go back and forth as my palm rubs my nub. Mr. Porter pistons into me, his cock going deep and hard. It's so fucking sexy, and the pressure of an orgasm builds.

"I'm gonna come again."

"Good." His voice is croaky and harsh like he's about to lose control. My fingernails trail down his balls, and I feel

them pull up tight.

My pussy clenches and releases my orgasm, making my entire body shudder. I feel him explode inside me in thick creamy ropes. It fills me up and runs down my thighs as my pussy tugs every last drop out of him.

When we're done, he pulls me into onto his lap and kisses me gently.

"I'm glad you're back, Chloe."

He holds me to him, and in this moment it seems so right that I'm in his arms. But we're sneaking around in the middle of the night. It's not right.

"What about Allie? She'll freak out."

"You leave Allie to me. Yes, she will freak out, but she'll want us to be happy."

He seems so sure, but I have my doubts. Allie hasn't really forgiven me for not telling her about the baby. I see the hurt in her eyes when we talk. Our friendship is hanging by a thread, and this might end it for good.

"She'll think I've gone behind her back. She won't want me as a friend anymore."

The thought of losing my best friend breaks my heart. I want Mr. Porter, but do I have to give up my best friend?

He kisses me on the top of the head, a reassuring kiss.

"I'll talk to her."

He has a lot of faith in his daughter. She's going to freak out. I know she will. I want a few more days just to enjoy being back and to have a good Christmas.

"Don't tell her yet. Let's wait till after Christmas. She's going to be upset, and she's been through so much. Let's let her have a good Christmas and then tell her."

Mr. Porter frowns, but he nods. "If that's what you want, baby, we'll wait to tell her. But only till after Christmas. I want the world to know that you're mine."

He puts his arms around me, and I sink into them. But I can't help the niggling feeling in my stomach.

He might think Allie will accept it easily, but he's a man. He's used to the world falling into place for him. I'm not so sure either of our families are ready to hear that I'm with Allie's dad.

CHLOE

I wake the next morning to Hugo's cries and pull him into the bed with me. Propping a pillow behind my back, I lift my top and he latches. The relief for both of us calms me in the most unexpected ways. I had no idea motherhood would be like this. But the pride I take in feeding my child is immense.

It's still dark outside, and the cabin is still. My mind drifts to last night under the Christmas tree with Mr. Porter. I still think of him as Mr. Porter, Allie's dad, even though he's told me to call him David.

It was easy to fall into his arms, and I didn't realize how much I needed the release. Everything about last night makes my heart sing. He wants me, and he wants Hugo. It's everything I hoped for.

It's just Allie we need to convince.

I chew my bottom lip as I think about my best friend. She'll flip when she finds out what I've been up to with her dad. We were inseparable as kids.

After the incident when Mr. Porter found me on the doorstep, I began staying over at the Porters almost every weekend up until I was about fourteen, when Mr. Porter was going on too many business trips and Allie moved back in with her mom.

Her mom wasn't as welcoming as her ex-husband had been, and by then she was remarried to a slimy man who I got

bad vibes from. It was only after catching up with Allie last night that I found out what he did to her mom.

It's crazy how Allie and Hans reconnected, and I'm so glad it worked out for her. They're sweet together, and I like him already.

It's a few hours later, and I've got Hugo in the baby sling as me and Allie wander the streets of Hope.

"Oh, that color's perfect," she exclaims, staring at a blue scarf in a shop window. "It's the exact same shade as his eyes."

I don't have to ask who she's talking about. She's barely stopped talking about Hans since we came out together. It's the first time we've been alone, and she's already given me the full unabridged version of how she got together Hans several times.

We go into the shop, and I can't help smiling at Allie's excitement. I'm glad she's found love, and Hans seems like a decent guy. Although I'm reserving my judgment until I know him better to decide if he's good enough for my best friend.

"How about you?" she asks as she looks through the stack of knitted products. "Anyone special to buy for?"

I try to hide my smile, because I'm not ready to tell her about last night with her dad. I want a few more fun days with my best friend before things change forever. Because I'm under no illusion that even if Allie talks to me again, it will ever be the same between us. If I'm with Mr. Porter, I'll effectively become her stepmom.

I shudder at the thought, because it makes me feel old. I don't want to be Allie's stepmom. I want to be her best friend, to have girly nights together and eat cupcakes and have spa days.

"Just my family," I lie.

"Oh, this would be perfect for Dad." She picks up a silver hip flask with an intricate pattern carved around the edges. "I

like to get him something nice since he doesn't have anyone else to buy for him."

Guilt stabs at my heart, and I shake it off.

"Why did your dad never re-marry?" I ask cautiously. I've always wondered. He would have been a catch for anyone.

Allie sighs. "I don't know. He dated over the years."

I bristle at her words. I don't know what I expected, but jealousy pierces my heart and I grab a clothing rail for support.

"You okay?"

"Yeah, just looking at these ponchos." They're baby-puke yellow, and Allie gives me a quizzical look.

"But he never settled down?" I prompt, wanting to know more about her dad.

Maybe I'm just another one of his dates. Maybe he will never marry again. The thought has me reeling. Because ever since I woke up this morning, my stupid brain has been imagining a future with Mr. Porter, a happy family future that might never exist.

"He told me if he ever married again, it would be for love, the kind of love that blows you away. Or something like that. I guess he's never met anyone who made him feel that way."

Her words stick in my chest. Could I be that person for him, or am I just another woman to date? There's so much I'm unsure of. He told me he wants the relationship out in the open, but that doesn't mean he's thinking of a future. I'm inexperienced with men and especially older men. I have to admit that with Mr. Porter, I'm way out of my depth.

One the other side of the shop, I spy a deep red knitted beanie in a military style that would look great on Mr. Porter. But it's the matching baby one next to it that makes me buy it. The thought of Mr. Porter and Hugo in matching hats is too cute. Despite my doubts of only a moment ago, I'm still going to buy him a gift, because I'm a hopeful fool and I want my happy ending.

“Aww, too cute,” I exclaim, holding up the matching set. “For my Papa,” I add hastily.

Allie looks at me with her eyes narrowed. She knows how volatile my relationship with my dad is, and she knows enough about him to know he wouldn't wear a crimson beanie.

“So, do you still see the father?”

She's prying gently, but as my best friend she's allowed. “It's complicated,” I say and regret it immediately.

“You want to talk about it over a hot chocolate? There's a new bakery in town with a cafe attached, and the food is awesome.”

I would love to pour my heart out to Allie, to let her know all my fears and doubts and also my happiness. To tell her how happy her dad makes me.

But I shake my head. “I'm not ready to talk about it.” She looks hurt but only for an instant. Allie's too nice to hold a grudge.

“I don't mean to pry. But you don't need to go through this on your own, Chloe. If you ever want to talk, I'm here.”

She squeezes my hand, and I have to look away as tears spring to my eyes. I just lied to my best friend, and it's about the shittiest thing I've ever done.

DAVID

Allie's taken Chloe and the baby to Hope for some last minute Christmas shopping. While they're gone, I pace the cabin like a wild animal. Now that I've had a taste of Chloe, I want more. I want the world to know she's mine. But I respect her concerns about my daughter.

They've been best friends for a long time, and she doesn't want to lose that friendship. I'm sure Allie will come around and be sensible about it, but I respect Chloe's wishes.

I head to the sauna in the resort, but my body's too heated as it is. A dip in the plunge pool cools my overheated blood but does nothing to quench my longing for Chloe.

Hans is visiting his sister today. In Sweden they traditionally celebrate Christmas Eve, and Allie will join him tonight which gives me the entire evening alone with Chloe. My cock stirs thinking about all the things I'm going to do to her, and I half crouch my way out of the plunge pool before I get reported.

A few hours later, Hans is back to collect Allie. They're staying the night at his sister's place in the woods, so we have the place to ourselves. They'll be there to open presents with Han's little nephew tomorrow morning, then be back here for Christmas breakfast.

We'll spend a nice Christmas together, but as soon the day's done, I'm telling Allie about me and Chloe.

“Take care on the roads.” I give Hans a final warning. It’s been snowing on and off all day, and he’s got my little girl in the car with him.

“I will, sir.”

As soon as the door closes behind them, I lock it and turn to Chloe. She bites her lower lip and giggles.

“Everything okay, Mr. Porter? You look frustrated.”

God, I love it when she calls me that. Like the sassy little girl she is.

I lunge forward, and she gives a yelp as I grab her around the waist and pull her close to me.

“Frustrated? I’m about to blow a goddamn fuse if I don’t get inside your pussy.” It comes out as a growl, and she whimpers against me.

We’re in the hallway and I push her back against the wall, pressing my body to hers so there’s no escape.

“Where’s Hugo?” Because I won’t neglect my son just because I need his mother.

“He’s sleeping. We’ve got about ten minutes until he wakes again to nurse.”

I grunt in frustration. “Ten minutes isn’t enough for what I want to do to you, temptress.” I nip at her throat, and she shudders as my breath hits the spot just behind her ear.

“But it’s enough to have a little taste,” she says with a mischievous sparkle in her eyes.

She wiggles out of my grasp and drops to her knees.

“What are you doing, temptress?”

Her hands unthread my belt buckle, and she slides my hard cock out of my pants and into her hand. “I’m having my dessert before the main course.”

Her breath tickles my cock, making all my nerve endings stand on end. Her plump lips close around me, and I jerk

forward as my cock responds. Chloe gags, and my cock pops out of her mouth.

“Sorry,” she gasps. “I’ve never done this before.”

Fuck me. I’ll take her virgin mouth as well as her pussy. I’ll take every goddamn hole she has and claim it as mine.

“It’s okay, baby. Lick it like an ice cream cone, then suck it hard like a lollipop.”

She smiles up at me. “Okay, Mr. Porter.”

Then her tongue is on my cock. With gentle strokes, she licks me from base to tip, and it’s slow and clumsy and so fucking good.

“Be a good girl and kiss it.”

She does what she’s told, her swollen lips heating up my dick. The gentle kisses turn to licks and then she’s sucking me into her mouth, her wet heat enveloping my cock and sending shoots of pleasure through my body.

“Fuck.”

I grab her hair to steady myself, and she gives a whimper as I ease myself further into her mouth.

“That’s it, baby. Open your throat like a good girl.”

She splutters and gags, and I pull out to let her adjust to the sensation.

“You’re too big,” she whines, and her eyes are wide with lust.

“I’m the right size for you, baby girl. Open your throat and take me like a good girl. We’ll be here all night practicing until you get it right.”

Her lips glide over my cock, and I get lost in the pure sensation of her mouth sucking me as her tongue flicks around my tip.

She’s everything I ever wanted, willing and horny, and if she’s this good on her first time I can’t wait to fuck her mouth after some instruction. But for now, I’m enjoying the

awkwardness of it. Her first time slurping me up like a lollipop.

“Touch yourself,” I command.

She reaches a hand into her yoga pants and moans as she finds her own pleasure.

It’s so damn erotic that it makes my balls pull up tight, and I’m about to lose it. I should pull out, but I want to claim her mouth. I want her to taste my cum and swallow me down.

“Get ready to take my cum like a good girl.” She sits up, and her hand moves quicker between her legs until I feel her release.

She moans and the sounds vibrates over my cock, and it’s too much to take. My cock explodes into her mouth, shooting hot cum to the back of her throat. Her eyes go wide and I pull her head down my cock, thrusting deep down her throat so she takes everything I’ve got.

It’s pure release and feels so fucking good as I pump everything into her, and she sucks and swallows down every last drop.

“Such a good girl.”

Her eyes go shiny with the praise, and she pops me out of her mouth. “Did I do okay?” She looks up at me expectantly.

“You did great, baby.”

I want to tell her she did more than okay, that she’s my reason for living. That she makes me feel younger and more alive than I have in years.

The sound of Hugo’s cries has her head jerking to the door, and the moment is lost. I help Chloe to her feet, and she hurries to get Hugo.

I have to share her with our son, but I’m not at all jealous. He can have for her a few hours. But tonight, Chloe is all mine.

CHLOE

We spend the next few hours fussing over Hugo and picking at the sharing platter Mr. Porter ordered from The Lodge.

For the first time, I feel like a family. This is how our life could look, all three of us hanging out together. Hugo has tummy time on the baby blanket and Mr. Porter rattles his toys in front of him, making him giggle.

Snow has started to fall heavily, and we keep the fire blazing and the scented candles lit. It's the perfect Christmas Eve, heavy with anticipation of what's to come once Hugo is in bed.

Mr. Porter helps bathe Hugo and reads him a bedtime story. I give him a final feeding and he goes down easily with a belly full of milk. Then I'm alone with Mr. Porter and all the passion from earlier bubbles up.

We make love on the rug by the fire and again with me bent over the back of a chair.

His appetite for me is insatiable, and I can't get enough of him either.

Now that we've found each other again, our bodies are making up for lost time. I lose count of the number of orgasms I have, each one bigger than the last.

It's after ten and we're sitting by the fire, our naked bodies entwined. I lean back into Mr. Porter, and his strong arms encircle me. He's got a bourbon in one hand, and I'm having a hot chocolate. Hugo will wake soon for his last feeding of the

night and I should probably get dressed, but my clothes are strewn all over the floor and it feels too good to sit here naked with my man.

I sigh contentedly, and a yawn escapes my lips.

“I better get you to bed.” Mr. Porter nips at my ear. “Our son will need you soon.”

“Not just yet.” The fire’s too warm, and it’s too nice in his arms.

There’s the sound of a key turning in the lock. Startled, I turn to Mr. Porter, and his gaze snaps around to the entryway.

There’s the creak of the front door opening, and he frowns.

“Stay here,” he whispers, getting up.

I scramble for my clothes. If someone’s breaking in, I don’t want to get caught naked.

Not so for Mr. Porter. He stands up with his dick swinging between his legs and strides to the entryway, obviously not afraid to confront an intruder while butt naked.

But before he gets too far, the door from the entryway to the main cabin opens, and Allie and Hans appear.

My heart jumps into my throat. We’ve been sitting in the dark with only the fire, and Allie snaps the light on. She gasps when she sees her naked father. Her face looks horrified and she turns away quickly, covering her eyes as her dad covers his bits with his hands.

“Dad! What are you doing wandering around naked?”

I’m pulling my pants on when she sees me, and her eyes go wide. “What the...?”

She takes me in, half dressed and my hair disheveled, and her gaze goes to her naked father.

“No...” She shakes her head as she scans the room, taking in the clothes scattered on the floor. “Are you two...?”

But she can’t finish her sentence.

“Fucking?” Hans provides.

I wince at the harshness of how that sounds. Because what we've been doing all night is so much more than that, isn't it?

Allie turns on her dad. "Are you fucking Chloe?" Her disbelief turns to rage as she sees the truth in his eyes. He puts his hands up in surrender, leaving his dick swinging between his legs. It would be comical if Allie didn't look so angry.

"It's not like that."

Allie cuts him off. "Then what's it like, Dad? I'm out for one night, and you seduce my best friend."

"We thought you'd be gone overnight. How come you're back?" I venture to ask.

Her eyes snap to mine, and there's pity in them. "I'm so sorry, Chloe. I'm so sorry my dad can't keep it in his pants."

"There's a storm coming in," says Hans. He's rubbing Allie's shoulder, trying to calm her down. "After last week we didn't want to get stranded, so we left after dinner."

Allie gives him a look as if telling him off for being practical at a time like this.

I've got my clothes on by now, and Mr. Porter is shrugging on his briefs.

"It's not like that," I say quietly. This isn't how we were supposed to tell Allie, but there's no point in hiding the full truth now.

"Then what's it like?" She looks so confused and hurt, and I hate that I've done this to her. "I don't get how I'm out for one night and this is what happens."

"We're together." Mr. Porter takes my hand firmly, and the sturdiness of his hold steadies my heartbeat.

Allie frowns. "Together? How can you be together when Chloe just got here yesterday?"

I look away because I'm a coward, and I can't face the hurt on my best friend's face. Mr. Porter doesn't say anything, and the wheels must be turning in Allie's head because she gasps.

“How long has it been going on?” she asks. “How long, Dad?”

She’s yelling now, and both Hans and Mr. Porter are trying to calm her.

“Just calm down, Allie, and we’ll talk about it.”

“I’m not fucking calming down. I’ve just walked in on you fucking my best friend. Are you the reason she left?”

Her voice gets high-pitched, and then Hugo’s cries add to the noise. I dart away to get him from the bedroom, glad of the distraction. When I come out of the room with Hugo in my arms, Allie is staring at us. She looks at Hugo and then back at her dad, realization hitting her.

“Oh, my God...” She sinks into a chair. “I think I’m going to be sick.”

Hans rubs her back, standing guard over her like a protective polar bear.

“You’re the father, aren’t you, Dad? It’s you?”

Mr. Porter nods, and Allie drops her head into her hands. “Get out,” she says to her dad.

Tears fall from her eyes and I want to hug her, but Hans has a frown on him like he’ll kill anyone who gets near Allie. I decide I do like him.

“Allie Cat...” Her dad takes a step toward her. And she practically growls at him.

“You’re the reason Chloe left. You seduced my friend and got her pregnant and neither of you thought to tell me?”

The hurt in her voice tears at my heart.

“You left Chloe alone for a year to go through this on her own?”

“I only found out about Hugo yesterday, when Chloe came back.”

Mr. Porter takes another step toward his daughter, and Hans steps between them. Mr. Porter looks like he wants to

murder his daughter's new boyfriend, but he doesn't come any closer.

"But I'm not going to let her go through this alone. I don't run away from my responsibilities, Allie. I'll do what's right by Chloe."

His words are supposed to comfort Allie, but they cut like a knife through my heart. Is that what he's doing with me? Is he doing what's *right*?

I thought we had something, but he's only with me because that's the right thing to do. If you knock up the teenage best friend of your daughter, the right thing to do is to step up and be the father. He doesn't love me; he's just doing the honorable thing.

But I don't have time to process my new reality, because Allie is in pain and it's all my fault.

"It's not all him," I try to tell her, but she turns on her father.

"Just get out, Dad. I don't want you here tonight."

"Allie..."

"Get out. Go stay with your buddy at the lodge. I need to process this, and I don't want to see you."

The hurt in Mr. Porter's face cuts me. He reaches out a hand for his daughter, but she ducks out the way.

"Just go."

He gives her a nod, and his gaze meets mine. His expression is hurt, unreadable.

It was a mistake to come back here. I've broken up their family and broken my own heart again.

I want Mr. Porter to say it isn't true. That he's not just giving it a go with me because it's the right thing to do. But he doesn't say a word.

Instead, he grabs his coat and heads off into the night.

DAVID

Now whips at my cheeks as I take the path that leads to The Lodge. Christmas lights twinkle to light my way, and the sound of live music thumps through the ground.

When I pull open the door to The Lodge, the music gets louder. It's late on Christmas Eve, and the bar is humming. I nod to the receptionist who's wearing a Santa hat. It's fallen lopsided across her forehead, and her rosy cheeks and lipstick-stained champagne glass tell me even the staff are partying tonight.

There are two bars at the resort. But the quiet lounge bar where I usually go for a drink is already closed. If I want to drown my sorrows, I'll have to face the club with the younger crowd.

I head through the door into the bar where groups of revelers are scattered about the place. A live DJ spins records from a booth, and groups of young people dance energetically to the music.

I give the dance floor a wide berth and head to the bar at the far end of the room. Taking a seat on a bar stool that's as tucked into the corner as I can be, I order a bourbon.

My head's swimming with what just happened, and I knock the drink back before ordering another.

I didn't think Allie would be that angry, but it's a lot to take in for her. It was clear she wasn't going to listen tonight, and the best thing I could do was give her some space. I only hope Chloe understands.

I go to text Chloe and realize I've left my phone at the cabin. It must have slipped out when my clothes were discarded earlier.

The thought of the mind-blowing sex with Chloe puts a smile on my face. It's never been like that with any woman before. She's sexy and confident and responsive. It's the best sex I've ever had in my life.

I want Chloe, and I want a second chance with a family with her. But does that mean giving up the daughter I already have?

"You're out late, old man."

I look up as Axel slides onto the bar stool next to me. The silver flecks in his hair catch the light under the revolving disco ball.

"Didn't know there was a high school disco tonight."

He chuckles as he looks around at the young crowd. A group of college kids line up tequila shots on the bar next to us. One of them jostles Axel with his elbow and apologizes profusely when the tall resort owner gets up off his stool and turns his bulky frame toward him.

The bartender catches Axel's eye, and a silent question passes between them. Axel gives the bartender a slight nod.

"It's Christmas. Let them stay," he mutters as he gets back on his stool.

The bartender pours the shots and the college kids knock them back, then head onto the dance floor whooping.

"I think I'm in the wrong bar," I mumble.

I guess the oldies are in their cabins for Christmas while their children are out partying. There'll be a few sore heads at Christmas dinner tomorrow.

Axel slaps me on the back and orders himself a drink.

"I saw you come in on the monitor." Axel runs his resort with a steady hand and a ton of security cameras. There's

nothing that goes on here that he doesn't know about. "You look like you swallowed a lemon."

I take a sip of bourbon. I've been on friendly terms with the resort manager ever since I started coming here years ago. When I'm here we hit the slopes together or go fishing and often share a drink in the evenings.

"My daughter kicked me out."

He winces and signals for the bartender to bring me another drink.

"Allie doesn't seem like the type to kick her old man out on Christmas Eve. You're not trying to make her marry someone she doesn't want to again, are you?"

A week ago my daughter climbed out of her cabin window rather than go through with the marriage my ex-wife had arranged for her. Axel thinks it's hilarious. He doesn't have kids, never wanted them, and he chuckles at me now, shaking his head.

"I'm seeing her best friend."

Axel raises his eyebrows, and the grin slides off his face.

"Dude. How old are you?"

"Yeah, yeah, old enough to be her father. I'm a dirty old man. But a dirty old man in love."

"Ahhh." Axel nods sagely, as if the motherfucker's ever been in love before. He's been single every time I've ever been here. "That makes it complicated."

He doesn't know all of it, but I don't mind sharing. Axel's the closet thing I've got to a friend up here.

"And she's had my baby."

Axel chokes on his drink, and some of it spurts out of his mouth.

"You got your daughter's best friend pregnant?"

It sounds terrible when he puts it like that. "Yeah. But I didn't know until she turned up yesterday with the baby."

He's staring at me with his mouth open.

"And this is why I stay single. That's one big, complicated mess you got yourself into."

I take a sip of my drink, because he's not wrong. It's a mess that I need to untangle.

"So what you gonna do?"

I tap my finger against the glass, pondering the question.

I want Chloe and my son, but I value the relationship I have with my daughter, especially as her mother's so unstable. I've got to be the steady force in her life, the one who guides her. Sure, she's got Hans now, but I don't know him well enough yet to hand over complete control of my little girl. Whatever I do with Chloe, it has to be big so they both know it's serious.

"I'm gonna marry her."

Axel's eyebrows shoot up his forehead. "You're serious about the girl then?"

"Her name's Chloe." I don't like her being referred to as 'the girl' as if she doesn't mean anything to me.

Axel nods his head in acknowledgment. "Chloe. You're serious about her?"

"She's the love of my life. I've missed her every day since she left. When I'm not with her, all I think about is her."

Axel's looking at my funny, and I don't blame him. This isn't usually how guys talk. He takes another drink.

"Wow. You got it bad. Women aren't worth the trouble if you ask me."

"You just haven't found the right one yet."

Axel snorts. "There is no right one for me. Some men are made for love, and some men are made to be alone. I'm happy to be alone, thanks. I don't want a woman invading my thoughts and distracting me from the good things in life."

I shake my head at him, because he's got it all wrong. "Women are the good things in life, bro. Everything else is just what we do to distract ourselves when we can't be with them."

"We'll have to disagree there. But back to your, umm, situation. Sounds like you need to make a big move. Let her know how you feel, let your daughter know you're serious. She might not like having her best friend as a stepmom, but I bet she'll like seeing her old man happy."

I nod slowly, because he's right.

"You've been a miserable bastard for the past year, so if this woman changes that I'm sure your Allie will come around."

Axel indicates for the bartender to fill our glasses. Once they're full, he holds his up for a toast. "Here's to a happy ending."

"To a happy ending."

We clink glasses, and my chest feels lighter knowing what I need to do. But it's no good going back to the cabin now. I came out without a key, and I don't want to wake anyone. Besides, Allie needs time to cool down.

"You got anywhere I can crash tonight? I need to give my daughter some space."

Axel nods. "We'll get you a room."

"Thanks man."

He fills my glass again, and we drink. My head's foggy from booze, but I feel lighter. I can see a way forward. I'm going to marry Chloe and make her officially mine; I just need the blessing of my daughter.

CHLOE

Christmas morning used to be my favorite part of the holiday as a child. We had French celebrations on Christmas Eve, but on Christmas Day, we opened the presents.

But this Christmas morning is different. I haven't heard a thing from Mr. Porter since he left last night. I got up early to feed Hugo and peeked into his room. The bed was made, his belongings untouched. He hasn't been home.

For all I know, he picked up some other young girl at the bar and spent the night in her room. The thought makes me shiver, and I pull Hugo close to me. He wiggles against me and gives a cry of protest.

"Sorry little one," I whisper into the top of his head.

After Hugo's feeding and diaper change, I put him on the play mat for tummy time. The fire from last night has turned to ash in the grate, and the Christmas tree looks dark and sad without its lights. I flick them on, but it doesn't do anything to cheer my heart.

Last night, Allie was so upset that she wouldn't talk to me. The betrayal on her face broke my heart. She couldn't understand why I kept it all from her.

Then when Mr. Porter left, I realized how fragile our relationship is, if you can even call it that. Allie asked him to leave, and he left. Will he always choose his daughter's wishes over mine? But then isn't that how it should be? Wouldn't I always want him to put Hugo over me?

It's a parent's instinct to protect their children, but the fact he left, that he didn't stick up for me has me questioning his motives. The words echo in my head.

"I don't run away from my responsibilities Allie. I'll do what's right by Chloe."

I'm just a responsibility to him. But he's everything to me. Of course a man like Mr. Porter wouldn't cast a teenage mom out. He'll try to make this work out of a sense of duty. But at what cost? Do I want to be the woman who breaks up his family? Who causes a rift between Allie and her dad?

I can't be that woman. It was a mistake to come back. I don't know what I was thinking. That it would all be all sunshine and roses, and Allie would be okay with it, and we'd be one happy family? That's not how this works. It might be different if Mr. Porter loved me, but he's never told me that. I'm just someone he feels responsible for, and I don't want to be that.

It's not yet six a.m., and the cabin is still and quiet. After the emotions of last night, I expect Allie will sleep for a few more hours yet.

Quietly I pack my bag, stuffing baby toys and diapers in as quickly as I can.

I scribble a note to Allie and a separate one to Mr. Porter, then head out into the snow with Hugo.

It's still snowing, and a heavy layer sits over my car. Luckily I put chains on my tires coming up here, and they'll give me more traction as I head down the mountain.

I'll find the first hotel I can and then book a flight back to France. Papa was right. There's nothing for me back here.

DAVID

*M*y head aches when I wake up. I'm too old to drink bourbon the way I was drinking it last night. But speaking with Axel has my mind clear.

The sooner I can make it official with Chloe the better, with or without my daughter's blessing. I just hope once Allie's cooled off she'll be reasonable. I have to trust that I raised my daughter right, because I don't want to lose her.

I splash cool water on my face and head out of the Lodge. There's a different woman at reception, and she's wearing dangling earrings with presents on them and a Christmas sweater over her uniform.

"Merry Christmas," she says brightly.

"Merry Christmas," I mutter.

"Lucky we're all in for Christmas. They've just closed the roads."

"Again," I murmur as I hurry past the reception desk. She seems to want to chat, but all I want to do is get to the cabin and claim my woman.

She nods sagely. "It's the worst season we've had for storms."

I pull my coat up and head into the snow. It's utterly cold as it hits my cheeks, and I trudge to the cabin as quickly as I can in the snow drift. My head's down, looking at the path, so I don't notice which cars are parked outside.

Axel gave me a spare keycard for the cabin, and when I open the door, it's all quiet inside.

I shrug off my coat and boots and move through to the living area. Allie's in the kitchen with her mouth open in a wide yawn as she stretches her arms above her head. I glance around but can't see Chloe, which is good. I need to speak with Allie first.

She sees me and stops mid-stretch, her yawn turning into a scowl.

"Are you ready to talk?"

Her eyes narrow. "Talk about how you knocked up my best friend?"

I wince at her harsh words, but she's allowed to be angry, for now. "I know it's not easy to hear and not who you would have chosen for either of us. But I love her."

Allie leans on the kitchen bench and I stay on the other side, letting her have the distance.

"But Dad, she's young enough to be your daughter."

I nod slowly. "I know. But the thing with love, Allie, is that it strikes when it strikes. The age difference doesn't matter between me and Chloe."

"It matters to me," Allie says huffily.

She folds her arms like a petulant child, and I'm reminded of when she was six years old and trying to get me to buy her a new Barbie from the toy shop.

I employ the same tactics I used back then. Firm and fair.

"I'm going to give you some time to adjust, because it's a shock. But Chloe and I are together, and you'll need to find a way to get used to it. I won't give her up, Allie, not her or Hugo. I love her too much."

I keep eye contact with her, needing her to understand how serious I am. This isn't something I'm going to compromise on. I want Chloe and my son, and I hope to hell I can have my daughter too, but that will be her decision.

After a long moment she sighs, and her shoulders deflate.

“Why didn’t you tell me? I feel betrayed, Dad. You two went behind my back. You were sneaking around laughing at me.”

Tears prick her eyes, and my fatherly instinct is to comfort her. I move into the kitchen, and she lets me take her in her arms.

“Allie Cat, it wasn’t like that. We weren’t laughing at you. We hooked up...”

Allie shudders. “Don’t say that again.”

“Okay. We, um, had one night of passion...”

“Dad!” She pulls out of the hug and looks up at me, shocked. “That’s even worse!”

“Okay. We, um...” I’m not sure how to put it in a way that won’t disgust her, but at least we’re kind of laughing about it, and I know it will be all right.

“We had a date.”

“You dated?”

“Umm. Not really.” I run a hand through my hair, not knowing how to talk about this with my daughter. “Okay. You know she has a baby, so you know what happened.”

Allie winces, but I go on. “What I’m trying to tell you is that it was Chloe’s choice to disappear after that night. I didn’t know she was pregnant; I didn’t know about Hugo until she turned up here two days ago. I’ve been miserable for the last year without her. I thought it was a casual one night thing for her...”

“Eew!” Allie interjects.

“But since she’s been back, I know we’re meant to be together. Allie, I’m going to ask her to marry me.”

Allie gasps in shock and stares at me. “Are you serious?”

“Yes. And I’d like your blessing.”

She rests her head on my chest and takes a few long breaths.

“I can’t say I’m crazy about it, and I need some time to get used to the two of you being together. But if you make each other happy, then I’ll find a way to be happy for you.”

I kiss the top of her head, feeling relief and also pride at my daughter’s maturity.

“We’ll be discreet.”

She crinkles up her face again, and I chuckle. The sooner we get out of this shared accommodation, the better. I want to show off Chloe as my woman, but I’ll respect Allie’s feelings if I have to.

Just then Hans shuffles out of the bedroom with a worried look on his face.

“I’ve just been speaking to Axel. The roads are closed. Another storm’s set in.”

“Do you need to go out and clear pathways?” Allie asks.

Hans shakes his head. “Not for now. We can enjoy Christmas, but we can’t let anyone leave the resort until the roads are safe.”

As they discuss the storm, I head to Chloe’s room. She must be having a rare sleep in or hiding from Allie.

But when I peek into her room, she’s not there. Neither is Hugo, and their stuff is gone too. A horrible feeling pools in my stomach.

I jog back to the living area. “Has anyone seen Chloe and Hugo?”

Allie shakes her head. “I only just got up.”

My eyes scan the room. There’s none of the baby paraphernalia that’s become a feature of the cabin, no wet wipes or colorful toys or muslin feeding cloths. That’s when I notice the envelopes on the table.

One is for Allie, and the other has my name scrawled on it.

I rip it open, tearing half the note in my haste. My heart's hammering in my chest, and the note confirms what the pain in my heart already fears. Chloe and Hugo are gone.

“Fuck.”

Allie looks as heartbroken as I do.

I reread the note, panic rising in my chest. She thinks I was only with her out of a sense of duty. She doesn't realize I love her. And she won't come between me and Allie.

She's so wrong.

I grab my keys, and Allie steps in front of me. “You can't go, Dad. The roads are closed.”

“Chloe and my son are on that road somewhere. I need to get to them.”

The thought of Chloe and Hugo driving in this weather has my head spinning. It's dangerous, and anything could happen to them.

“We don't even have chains.” Allie puts her hand on my shoulder to hold me back. “That's why me and Hans came back last night.”

She's right. My car will be useless in this much snow. But I can't leave Chloe alone out there.

“Fuck.”

“I know a way.” Hans steps forward and grabs his coat. “Follow me.”

I slip my coat and thick boots on and follow him outside. The snow has stopped falling momentarily, but it's thick and already covered the tracks from Chloe's car. How did I not notice it was missing when I came in this morning?

“Where are we going?”

Hans leads me away from the lodge up a steep bank and around the back of the resort.

“To get your woman back.”

He's got a grim set to his features, and I like his determination. Maybe he is worthy of my little girl.

We stop in front of a large shed, and he grabs a set of keys from his pocket.

"Axel will kill me for this," he mutters as he unlocks the door and slides it open.

Behind the doors is a bright red snowmobile with Wild Heart Mountain Rescue written on the side. I'm so relieved I could kiss him.

"You ever driven one of these before?"

It can't be any different from a motorbike.

"Never."

I'm already climbing on as he hands me the keys.

"Keep the nose up and don't go too..."

His words are cut off as I rev the engine. With a little pressure, the snowmobile bumps out of the shed and I'm heading down the mountain. I give Hans a grateful lift of my hand but keep my eyes focused forward.

I'm going to claim my woman and my child, and no snowstorm is going to stop me.

CHLOE

*M*y windscreen wipers are going full tilt, and I still can't see much ahead of me. Hugo wails from the back seat, probably picking up on my anxiety.

"It's okay, baby," I say in what I hope is a reassuring voice, hoping he doesn't hear the panic lying just underneath. It's not okay. It's far from okay.

The road is thick with snow, and visibility is low. Even with chains on my tires I'm creeping along, terrified each corner is going to send us skidding off the mountain.

There's a straight bit up ahead, and I pull as far to the side as I can. If it was only me in the car I'd risk the journey and keep going. But it's not just me I have to think about now.

There's a little guy in the back seat who's depending on me to keep him safe and alive. If I'd known it was going to turn this bad I wouldn't have come, but in the last hour the snow turned from a light dusting to a full on deluge.

I can't go on in this, and I can't turn back. The best thing to do is stay in the car and wait it out.

I keep the engine running for warmth and climb over to the back seat.

There's a blanket in the trunk, and I reach over to get it then take Hugo out of his seat. It takes a while to calm his crying, but at least it's warmer with his body pressed to mine. We'll have to wait out the storm here and hope we don't freeze to death.

I try my phone, but we're in a dark spot. Once the snow stops, I'll walk back until we get a signal and call for help.

"I'm sorry your maman's such a hot mess."

I kiss the top of his head, and tears spring to my eyes. I came here thinking we'd find a family, but now I've lost the man I love and my best friend and we're stranded in a snowstorm. This is the worst Christmas ever, and if we survive, I promise I'll make it up to Hugo.

"We'll have turkey every Christmas and pumpkin pie. You'll have loads of presents, because your maman will spoil you."

He smiles at the sound of my voice, and I keep talking just to see the smile on his face.

Thoughts of Christmas spent in France without Mr. Porter have tears stinging my eyes. I came back because I couldn't live without him, but I'm just going to have to find a way.

Hugo snuggles into my chest, and I zip my jacket around him to keep him warm. I should turn the engine off to save battery, but we're too snuggly now.

He settles to sleep, and I lean my head back on the chair rest thinking about all the ways I've messed up my life, but having Hugo wasn't one of them. Despite what's happened, despite it not going the way I wanted it to, at least I'll always have him. My boy and my reminder of Mr. Porter, the only man I'll ever love. If we can only make it through the next twenty-four hours, I vow I'll dedicate my life to Hugo and giving him the best upbringing I can.

I'm dozing when I hear the faint buzz of an engine. I scramble to sit up, and Hugo gives an annoyed wail.

"Sorry, little guy, but this might be our way out of here."

I fumble for the door and manage to push it open, clearing the snow that's piled up around it. I step onto the side of the road with Hugo held close just as a snowmobile zooms around the corner.

Relief floods me as I raise an arm in the air, signaling for it to stop. From the markings down the side, it must be mountain rescue checking the roads for dumbasses like me.

The snowmobile pulls to a stop, and relief turns to happiness when I see who's driving.

Mr. Porter cuts the engine and jumps off as nimble as someone half his age. He strides toward me, a pained look on his face.

"I thought I'd lost you." He throws his arms around me, pulling me and Hugo into his chest. His solid frame is reassuring, and I lean into it. He's here. He came for me.

"I love you, Chloe. Don't you know that?"

His words are all I ever wanted to hear, but is he just saying that to appease me? His eyes search mine, and they look haunted.

"Don't go. Stay with me always. As my wife."

I gasp at his words. Is he just making an honorable woman out of me because I have his baby?

"I don't need your pity," I tell him, and he grunts in irritation.

"It's not pity. I love you. How many more times do you want me to say it?"

He seems frustrated, and finally something gets through to my sleep deprived brain. He loves me. He wants to be with me.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes," he says with exasperation. "Don't ever run away from me again. I love you, and I love Hugo."

"What about Allie?"

"Allie is fine. It's a shock, but she's given us her blessing."

"Are you sure I won't come between you two?"

"Yes." He pulls me close. "I'm sure. Now stop talking and kiss me."

He draws me to him, and as our lips lock, all the doubts flee my mind as I finally know I'm his. I'm really his.

“Jesus.” He pulls away too soon. “Your lips are like icicles. Come on, get your things. We're going back for Christmas.”

I grab a bag of essentials out of the trunk, and he straps it onto the snowmobile.

“We'll come back for your car and the rest of your luggage when the snow clears.”

I take a seat behind him on the snowmobile and sit Hugo between us. He giggles as the snow stings our cheeks and the wind whips at our faces.

As we head back to the cabin, my body's cold but my heart's warm. I gave Mr. Porter a Christmas surprise, and now he's giving me the best gift of all: his heart.

EPILOGUE

DAVID

One year later...

The chords of the wedding march fill the chapel, and there's a shuffling sound as all the guests turn to watch the bride walk down the aisle.

I take a steadying breath before turning. My heart leaps in my chest at the sight of Chloe in her simple white dress that hugs her curves and fishtails out as she sashays down the aisle.

Her father is as grim-faced as ever, until he gets closer and I realize he's fighting back tears. It turns out the old man has a heart after all.

Chloe's eyes meet mine as she approaches, and her expression is hopeful and happy and warm. I'm the luckiest man alive to be marrying this beautiful woman today.

Her father kisses her on the cheek and murmurs something in her ear. Then it's the two of us and the priest.

I take Chloe's hands in mine and try to convey everything I feel for this woman in the look that I give her. I'm making a commitment to her today, and this time I'm marrying a woman of my choosing.

I repeat the words the priest says and go through the traditions that Chloe wanted to include as a nod to her French Catholic family.

Hugo giggles from his place on his grand-mere's knee. He wiggles free of her clasp, and before she can catch him, he's running toward us on his unsteady toddler legs.

The priest stops in his prayer, and all eyes go to our cheerful boy.

“Maman.” He reaches his tubby hands out for Chloe and she scoops him up, not caring about crinkling her wedding dress. The priest looks taken aback by the interruption, but I can’t keep the grin off my face.

“Continue,” I say.

I’m making a vow to both of them today, so it’s appropriate that Hugo joins us at the front of the church. I’m making a vow to love and protect them both as long as I live.

The ceremony continues with Hugo on Chloe’s hip until it’s time for the ring exchange.

Allie is next to Chloe as Maid of Honor, and she holds out her hands for Hugo then deposits him back with his grandmother.

The ceremony continues, and then I’m kissing my wife and sealing the deal. The priest gives a final blessing, having recovered from the appearance of an illegitimate child in his church.

If he knew about the baby growing in Chloe’s belly, he might be shocked all over again. The thought makes me chuckle.

We’re used to the disapproving stares and judgement that some people have because I’m so much older than Chloe. As if love is confined to a set of rules.

It took Allie a little while to become comfortable with the idea of the two of us together. But when she saw how happy we both were, she came around pretty quickly.

She and Hans had their own wedding a few months ago, and they’ve been waiting for ours until they head off for a year of travelling.

Hans wants to show Allie the country where he was born and they’re following the winter, heading to Scandinavia for the ski season.

I'm happy for them and know my little girl is in safe hands.

The church bells ring as I lead my wife out of the chapel. People throw rose petals, and we stop for photos. But all I can think about is getting Chloe home and out of this dress and of what I'll do to her later tonight when it's just the two of us.

Hugo wants to come up and I lift him into the air, making him giggle. The photographer snaps a photo, and I know it will be one I'll treasure.

As we pose with Allie and Hans and Hugo, I feel tears sting my eyes. I didn't think this old man would find love again, but I was wrong. I have my beautiful wife and son and my daughter and son-in-law. It's more than I could wish for.

It's the day before Christmas Eve, and tonight we'll celebrate our wedding as well as the holiday season. When Chloe turned up on the doorstep a year ago, it was the best Christmas surprise ever. We wanted to mark this day with our wedding, so every year we celebrate the special gifts she brought back for me: a surprise baby and her love.

* * *

Want a peek into what family life with Chloe and Mr. Porter looks like when they invite their mountain mafia relatives over for Christmas?

[Read the bonus scene here.](#)

* * *

Did you miss the one about their mafia relatives? Read Greta and Lorenzo's story in Temptation. A retelling of the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale.

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